

Predicting Weathergate: In Hindsight...

By Art Buchwald

After the Senate gets finished investigating the Watergate, I have another subject for them to delve into. And that is the weathermen on television who promise you a sunny weekend and then it rains like hell. Here is how this investigation would go.

Senator: Please state your name and profession.

Hargill: Archie Hargill. I am the weather forecaster for television station WFOG.

Senator: Now on July 27, according to your own statement, you predicted that there would be clear skies and warm and sunny weather. Do you have that statement in front of you?

Hargill: Yes sir. I may have said it but I don't recall it.

Senator: Those marks are in your handwriting?

Hargill: That is correct.

Senator: Now according to witnesses it rained on both Saturday and Sunday of that weekend. Could you, in your own words, explain why you predicted a nice weekend?

Hargill: I think we have to look at this in perspective. At that point in time I had received information from the Weather Bureau that a cold front was moving in from Canada. I assumed from this information, which I believed to be correct, that the weekend would be sunny.

Senator: Didn't you think you owed it to your viewers to go outside and check to see if it was raining?

Hargill: In hindsight that is probably what I should have done. But in the period we're talking about I accepted the Weather Bureau's assurances that this cold

front would move in.

Senator: Now when you realized you had made a mistake why didn't you go back on the air and admit you had erred? Don't you think that would have been the decent thing to do?

Hargill: I'm not sure. It could have cost the station a sponsor.

Senator: Are you trying to tell me that a sponsor is more important to you than the thousands of people who were making plans to go away for the weekend?

Hargill: Senator, I believe you're putting words in my mouth.

Senator: Let's go back to your log for early July. You predicted, and I'm using your own words now, "Great sailing weather, and a blue sky from Boston to Nantucket."

Hargill: I assume you're talking about the day there were hailstorms all across Cape Cod and a tornado on Martha's Vineyard.

Senator: That's the day.

Hargill: I know this may sound strange, but I don't recall it.

Senator: When you found out about the hailstorms and tornado why didn't you tell the president of your station? Don't you think he should have been informed about this catastrophe?

Hargill: He was in Key Biscayne at the time. I did tell his administrative assistant that I thought something was flukey. But until the tornado actually hit Martha's Vineyard I had nothing more to go on than hearsay.

Senator: So as far as you know the president of the station did not hear of your forecast until the houses were wiped out by the tornado.

Hargill's lawyer: Mr. Chairman, is this relevant to the hearings?

Chairman: In North Carolina we think it is.

Senator: One last question. How can we avoid bad weather reporting in the future? How can we keep young men like yourself from falling in the same trap of perjuring themselves before the television cameras every night? What I'm trying to say is what advice would you give to other forecasters who were thinking of going into the same business?

Hargill: I'd tell them to become disc jockeys instead.