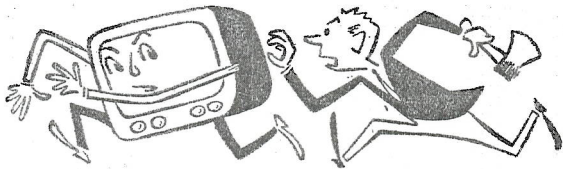


Terrence O'Flaherty



The Family That Taps Together

THE BIGGEST television series of the year now promises to be "The Watergate Family" starring Richard Nixon's personal singing group "The Elitist Gossips" who have been auditioning all over Capitol Hill in recent weeks and are expected to be in good voice by the time the show gets on the air.

For those who follow backstage stories it is interesting to note that in the beginning these new performers were hand-picked for their ability to tap rather than sing. The latter talent came as a surprise to nearly everyone. With great performers, however, almost any skill comes easily — if the demand for it is great enough — and surely no public clamor has been quite as substantial as the one which will bring them to your TV screens next month.



Sam Ervin

"The Watergate Family" began last year as a summer show sponsored by the Washington Post and written by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. Despite bad notices from the White House's Clark MacGregor and other local scribes on the Washington scene the series continued to build viewer interest throughout the fall and winter to the point where its future as a regular series this spring was virtually assured.

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RICHARD NIXON, the well-known capital media critic who has often pointed out the need for a good, solid family series on television — preferably about living Americans striving for rewards against great odds — has already expressed a strong personal interest in the outcome of this show.

While it is evident that singing will play a big role the exact nature of the format has not been fully described. At this time it appears to have elements of "Mission: Impossible" as well as generous overtones of situation comedy. Because of this, many of the nation's newspapers are undecided whether to assign coverage of the series to drama critics, television columnists or political reviewers. The sports department is another possibility, of course.

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JOHN MITCHELL, of the well-known performing team of Martha and John, is expected to play a large role, but he appears to be holding out for script approval.

The series is fully-sponsored by the United States Senate for the first 13 weeks with the option for an additional 13 if necessary. The host for this dramatic sing-along will be Sam Ervin, the Democrat from North Carolina and famous cover boy of Time Magazine. The gavel-to-gavel series will be shown on the PBS network and seen coast-to-coast starting May 15.

At the present time it is not known whether or not the show will be telecast live all day or delayed for prime time showing at night. Weekend wrap-ups are also planned by the public broadcasting network as well as partial coverage by the commercial nets.



John Mitchell

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THERE IS SOME danger that the cast may sing away too much of the plot in try-outs before air-day. However most of the nation's entertainment critics share the old show business belief that too much rehearsal never hurt anybody's performance once the lights go up.

The original working title "The Family That Taps Together Doesn't Always Stay Together" — has been abandoned. While appropriate, it just wound't fit the television screen.