

MARK LANE: 'KILLER

TV station 'sanitizes' murderer; Lane asks FCC to revoke license

ON TV

MARK LANE

John Cole, a self-admitted murderer, made his television debut on the Virginia Graham Show last week. However, KTLA "sanitized," to borrow an Army Intelligence term, the broadcast by making false statements to the audience, and Mr. Cole emerged instead as a patriotic agent of some intelligence apparatus.

KTLA continued its deception by deleting all of the relevant comments made about Mr. Cole. For these reasons I have asked the Federal Communications Commission to conduct an investigation leading to the revocation of the public license currently held and abused by KTLA. The moral of the story is that a former "B" movie actor (read Gene Autry) can do almost as much damage when he swaps his celluloid horse for control of the media, as he can by picking up the reins of government (read Ronald Murphy).

It all began about a month ago when the Virginia Graham television program began calling Allan, Ingersoll and Weber, Jane Fonda's public relations firm, in order to arrange for Miss Fonda's appearance on that widely syndicated program. Jane's reply was succinct.

She was too busy speaking at Black Panther meetings, anti-war GI meetings and raising funds for the GI office about to be opened in Washington to "engage in inane chatter about Academy Awards, the members of my family or my film career."

The Graham show persisted. "You can discuss any subject you want and we will not edit it."

Jane replied that if she said anything that was meaningful, the station executives would probably delete it "for fear that Spiro Agnew might indict them for attempted freedom of speech."

The Graham show made a final suggestion. "Why don't you and Mark Lane come on the program, take the full hour and speak about the GI anti-war movement. You can each say whatever you want. What you say will be broadcast as it is said. You will not be interrupted during the hour by anyone."

Jane called and asked my opinion. I said, "How can we turn that offer down." She replied, "How

Jane was introduced first, asked a question or two by Miss Graham, while I waited in a guest room. Steve Jaffe of the Allan firm tapped me on the shoulder and informed me that a production assistant had just told him that the audience had been specially invited. Tickets had been sent to the John Birch Society, to various ROTCs, to an Army Major, and to a lady from the Women's Strike for Peace. Was this a fair cross section of

middle-America, I pondered? Possibly, but hopefully not. Just then a familiar face appeared on the television set in the waiting room. John Cole was the first guest arranged as an inquisitor. He asked Jane what she knew about the Movement for a Democratic Military. She replied that, just as its

name implies, the organization was concerned about bringing some semblance of democracy to the military and an end to racism in the service. The organization, made up of enlisted men in the Marine Corps and Navy, based primarily in California, also strongly opposes the war in South East Asia. Mr. Cole then stated that he was an agent for some unnamed intelligence group and added that he had spied upon MDM. He then proceeded to make several derogatory and inaccurate allegations about the organization, stating in conclusion that its members carry weapons and are organized to use them "just like the Black Panthers." Jane replied, "Oh, you mean only for self-defense?"

After the inevitable commercial I was introduced. I told Miss Graham that her guest, Mr. Cole, made some interesting comments but that he might have shared some even more illuminating stories with the audience had he just searched his memory.

I had just completed a manuscript comprised of interviews with many servicemen who had fought in Vietnam. The book, to be called *Conversations With Americans*, presents the eyewitness account of dozens of men who had participated in, or witnessed, unspeakable atrocities. Among those who I interviewed was Mr. Cole. Not long before his appearance on the program, Mr. Cole had been kind enough to grant me a lengthy tape recorded interview and sub-

all that could be confirmed in writing, of his oral recitation.

In short, Mr. Cole had told me that he had attended IPW (Interrogation, Prisoner of War) School at Fort Meade, Maryland, and that he had received other "intelligence" training at Fort Holabird, Maryland. He was taught, he said, the use of torture:

Cole: Anything that would cause physical harm or give the impression that you might cause physical harm. They use what is known as exemplary cases. An example of this would be if you had four persons that you were going to interrogate within a group, you would select one whom probably you could realize or justify that he did not have the information you were looking for. In the presence of others you would interrogate this man and be rather ruthless in your treatment. The more he would refuse to answer your questions, or was unable to answer your questions, the more strenuous and more painful and the more varied the method of torture would become. The pressure would gradually increase and now the others would be looking on, and eventually they would see the man beaten. Could be any one of a number of things that you wanted to do. Virtually anything you want to do to a person is permissible up to and including killing the man. This is so the others would talk. They see him going through pain and they don't want to go through it, so if they have the in-

formation, they have seen someone who didn't have it and they saw what happened to him. They know that it is better to talk than not to talk.

Lane: What methods were taught in terms of physical punishment?

Cole: It starts out with simply a man putting a knife, one method is this putting a knife at a person's throat. And with the man tied hand and foot, generally tied to an object, forcing this man under threat

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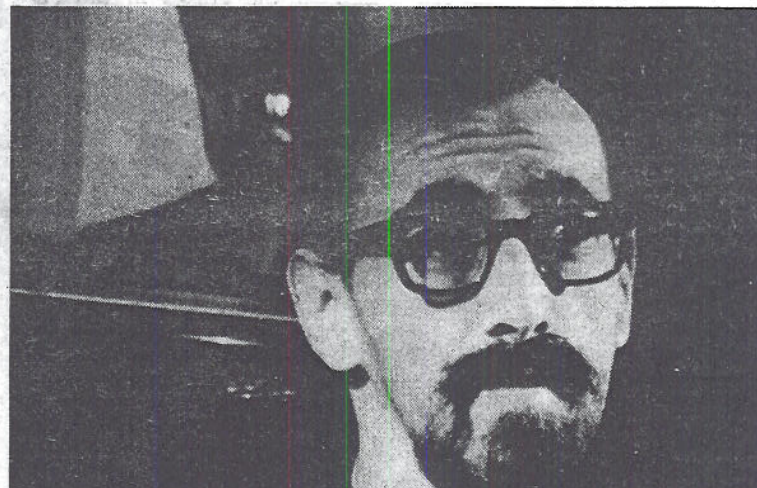
of death to talk, small cuts, burns, lacerations, beatings, and so on. If you had to beat it out of him. Another one was an electronic method, whereby a person would be wired to a generator, and this was taught at Holabird and at Fort Meade too. Through electric shock the man would be virtually jolted into talking. Every time he refused to answer the question or was unable to answer a question or gave an answer that was not suitable to you, he would receive a rather powerful electric jolt.

Lane: What kind of equipment were you instructed to use in the field?

Cole: We could use any type of equipment that we wanted to. There were no restrictions placed on us.

Lane: What type of equipment for electric shock?

Cole: For electric shock there was the generator and a volt meter whereby we could actually set the current that would run into him.



You could set it for the length of time and for the amount of current that you wanted to blast into him.

Lane: Where would the electrodes be attached?

Cole: They could be attached to his genitals, to any part of the body for that matter, armpits, crotch, back, stomach, neck, head, around the eyes. The arch of the foot is another one, the back of the knee is another one, the spine, all along the spine, anywhere you can inject a shock, as in there you have the spinal nerve or what's known as the sonic nerve.

Lane: Were these techniques taught?

Cole: Yes, these were taught.

Mr. Cole then told me of the techniques that he actually employed while questioning prisoners in Vietnam.

Cole: Perhaps the prisoner knew something; perhaps he didn't. He seemed like he might talk, then all of a sudden he seemed to stop right away and he refused to say another word. By then this man was tied and this is when the magnesium shavings went on. They were put in his crotch, in his armpits, at times his arms might even be freed from the tree and tied down like this, with the magnesium shavings in there so that when they were ignited his arm would be pressed right against his side and they would burn right into the armpits. They same would be true with the crotch and so on. He was beaten severely in the genitals.

Lane: With what?

Cole: With the sticks and under the kneecaps. His kneecaps were shattered. He was naked. Eventually the clothes would just be torn off of him. When he floated in that pond, or in the river, the creek or whatever, these guys had no clothing on whatsoever that could identify them as Vietnamese PWs. One interrogator felt that this man would talk. The interrogator was given a 45 automatic and he pointed the gun at the back of the man's head and told him to talk. Asked him question after question and the man refused to budge, and the interrogator said, I think you will talk. And we stuck matches down beneath the eyelids of this man. There was one in the right and one in the left, and these were just ordinary cardboard matches. We then lit a match and the interrogator held it in front of his face so that the other prisoners could see this. He refused to answer the questions. The interrogator lit it and burned his eye out. The man was screaming at this point. A second match was lit, the man's head was held back against the tree. Fortunately he saw the flame again and he was then asked the same question again. I suppose the man didn't

had collapsed; he was no longer conscious. He was on the tree and the interrogators simply said, "Kill him." And that was it.

Lane: How was he killed?

Cole: Forty-five. In the head. Very quick. And with that, why, he was cut down off the tree and another person took his place on that tree. At this time, however, the second one did begin to talk. From that point on everyone talked, and the

interrogator ran it through three or four times. They began to talk. This interrogation—total time of it I believe was three days, at the end of which there were still four of them that were still alive. That I do recall, and they thought that they were going to be taken back. We decided that we had all the information that we were going to get. We simply shot them, and that was it. I myself, personally, shot one of them.

Lane: Was this typical of interrogations during the 22 months that you were still there?

Cole: Of all the ones that we conducted, yes.

Now that Mr. Cole's background and expertise have been established through his own words, we return to the Virginia Graham program. Naturally I did not wish to burden middle-America with the specifics that Mr. Cole shared with me (indeed many of the more

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hideous ones I have even spared you, dear reader), but I did wish to acquaint them with a brief synopsis of what Mr. Cole had told me earlier. And so after suggesting that Mr. Cole had more relevant material to offer I told Miss Graham and her audience that he had admitted to torturing and killing Vietnamese, and that he had also told me that he had learned some

of the techniques which he later applied in Vietnam, right here in America. The ladies gasped. So much air was so quickly inhaled that I feared for our respiratory safety. Mr. Cole was on his feet to observe that all this was part of his cover, the enigmatic explanation leaving us no less bemused than we were before it was offered.

The program continued on with Jane speaking eloquently and movingly of the plight of the American Indian—the first but, forgive us O Lord, not the last victims of American genocide. When Virginia insisted that even with our little peccadillos this was still the greatest country in the world, the audience, at last finding some outlet for its pent-up emotion and nationalism, roared its approval. Jane observed that those who speak of love for their country have the obligation of curing the ills, not just celebrating its isolated symptoms of health.

A hand picked representative of the military was on hand to call, in full dress greens, shined brass, fruit salad chest, paratrooper boots (Mort Sahl would have observed that the outfit—really was impressive—if you're twelve years old), for the bombing of China. When it was pointed out that had he taken a sane position he would be facing a court martial before the sunset, he rejoined, "When I wear this uniform I am an agent for the country. I speak for all America," and the audience got off its second roar.

Just after the program was completed I asked a production assistant how John Cole happened to be invited. She replied that Cole had not been specifically invited by the producer, but that he came as a guest of the John Birch Society. If Cole is an agent, as he now claims, his alleged association with that organization raises an interesting question.

Several days later we were

asked to attend a private screening of the program. Jane and I both demurred, but Steve Jaffe went. He reported that all was well. A day or two later Jim Gannon, the program's staff photographer, called to report that the *Detroit Free Press* was interested in flying a reporter to Los Angeles to talk with me about the revelations concerning Cole. Gannon, who had also attended the screening, had called the newspaper. He told me that the highlight of the program was a split screen effect when Cole was confronted with his own description of his atrocities. Through the minor miracle of two cameras Cole was shown listening nervously while I refreshed his recollection.

Two weeks later the taped program was shown in Los Angeles. It all seemed very familiar; Cole's attack upon the MDM, Jane's response, the ambivalent introduction of me by Miss Graham—"a curious man," until I began to speak. While my mouth moved and Cole was shown watching and sweating, there was nothing but silence for a moment. Then an off camera voice—as if from heaven—explained it all. "We are having difficulty with the audio portion of our program. Please bear with us."

As soon as the now silent exchange was completed and the audience had its opportunity to gasp, the sound returned—and just in time too, for Miss Graham was ready with a commercial.

The audience at home, which presumably outnumbered the studio audience, never did get to hear what it was that John Cole later admitted was true. And thus a man who had in the past detailed his admission of torture and murder was presented to the people as a patriot, a government servant beyond reproach. Those sophisticates who could not accept the glib announcement about audio problems (the explanation was too quick to be credible), were left to wonder if I had said "fuck."



Carolyn Mugar

Still unwilling to preclude the possibility that there might have been a technical flaw, I called the program's assistant producer the next day. He said that "the deletion was a programming decision by KTLA."

RKO General is responsible for the program. I spoke with Mr. Frazier, who is a vice president of that concern and the executive producer of the Virginia Graham Show. He reported, "I was told that Cole didn't want that portion on the air, so our lawyers (RKO General) and KTLA's lawyers met and worked it out."

I was also informed that the contract between the Graham program and KTLA gives the station the right to delete material if the material is in violation of an FCC regulation or if it is untruthful.

Of course, no regulation was violated, and Cole admitted on the air that my statements were accurate. In any event I had offered to the Graham program copies of the Cole tapes and films and the Cole release.

EPILOGUE

Chastened by the experience and anxious to learn what television conduct is acceptable and indeed what etiquette is beyond reproach, I watched the Graham Show the next evening.

A doctor who runs what he calls "The Beauty Pavillion" was a guest. He spoke of his concept of professional responsibility — inserting silicone into women's breasts to increase their size. Miss Graham gushed about "your marvelous book." No hostile question was asked. The audience had not been prefabricated. Words of wisdom poured forth from the wise physician. "I always say if you can't

look feminine (with good sized breasts), you might as well be a boy."

Also some breathtaking predictions. "Pretty soon a woman of 100 years old may have the best breasts on the beach." We were told the many advantages of the operation. "It's absolutely reversible. As the styles change the breasts can be made smaller or bigger."

And of the professional ethics involved: "The AMA absolutely approves of these operations." Yet opposes medical assistance to those whose lives may depend upon it—he might have, but did not add.

"There is no limit to the size the breast can be enlarged." Asked to comment upon the young actress also on the program the doctor took a look at her and said, "Maybe we oughta let a little air out. Anyway she oughta wear a brassiere."

When the doctor revealed that Teflon Jello is the latest thing for breast enlargement, Miss Graham came into her own. She asked, "Will it change the taste?"

The doctor closed the show by suggesting that women at the age of 28 might very well have their first face lift.

Did you see that newspaper photograph a few weeks ago showing black children in South Carolina with worms crawling out of their mouths? They were suffering from the effects of starvation and lack of medical care.
