



WINNING "CORN KING" CROWN second consecutive year, Willard C. Kirk, Jeffersonville, O., displays ten ears judges voted best among 1,000 entries at Chicago's International Livestock Exposition grain and hay show. (International)

Writing Suitable TV Show Tough Job; Most Ideas Find Way Into Wastebaskets

By WILLIAM EWALD
New York — (U.P.) — "I have an idea for a television show," the letter started . . .

"First you paint the floor of the studio in large squares like a checkerboard. Then you get 24 midgets. Twelve of the midgets you dress in black and 12 in white . . ."

The misguided missile, the brainstorm of a TV addict who seemed to have blown some tubes, landed in the lap of NBC's Ross Donaldson. It is Donaldson and his weary staff of 11 who wade through the mountainous pile of more than 3000 program ideas that pour into the network each year.

Most, sad to say, wind up in the wastebasket. "We'd like to assure people that we're interested in ideas," says Donaldson, but almost everything we receive from people outside the industry is unusable. The principal thing wrong with them is that they don't give us enough information about their idea."

Donaldson pointed out that the rejection rate of ideas from outside the network is high—only about three to five per cent ever reach the stage where they are seriously considered. And only a fraction of one per cent are bought.

"Even when we buy an idea," said Donaldson "we usually only buy it for one element, like the title. We recently bought a title, 'The Mind's Eye,' because it's

in line with some idea of our own we have in mind."

For viewers who feel they have a hot TV idea baking in their ovens, Donaldson suggested the following procedure . . .

First, write to the network asking for a "policy form." The form is protection for the network — the signer agrees to rely on the "good faith" of the network in determining the amount of compensation.

Then, send in the signed policy form along with the idea. The presentation should be as complete as possible — it should include the title, description of the format, likely casting candidates and budget suggestions. It also helps if you know a star like Danny Kaye or Clark Gable and you can guarantee him for a lead role.

"The presentation can range anywhere from five to 50 pages," pointed out Donaldson. "There is no particular blueprint for writing it."

However, Donaldson suggested that suggestion-box contributors steer clear of common pitfalls.

"When something happens like 'The \$64,000 Question,' we get hundreds of quiz ideas," he said. "Almost all of them suggest programs that give away \$100,000 or a million dollars — that's not really an idea. Neither is a variation of an old quiz show like 'Information Please' or 'Pot of Gold' or 'Songs for Sale.'"

Many of the ideas sent into Donaldson's diggings are not usable for other reasons. Among the nifties he's turned down are trans Atlantic quiz programs, a show based on astrology and one

in which NBC would stage the 20 greatest battles of all time.

One woman, who claimed to have "revelations," suggested a show built around her visions, "I can have a revelation about

anything you want. Just mention it," she said helpfully.

There was even one lady who offered to sell the tearful story of her life for \$3000 for a soap opera "I have it so bad that

people cry real tears when they hear," she pointed out.

And she added hopefully: "I hope you get in touch with me soon so I can have the money before Christmas."

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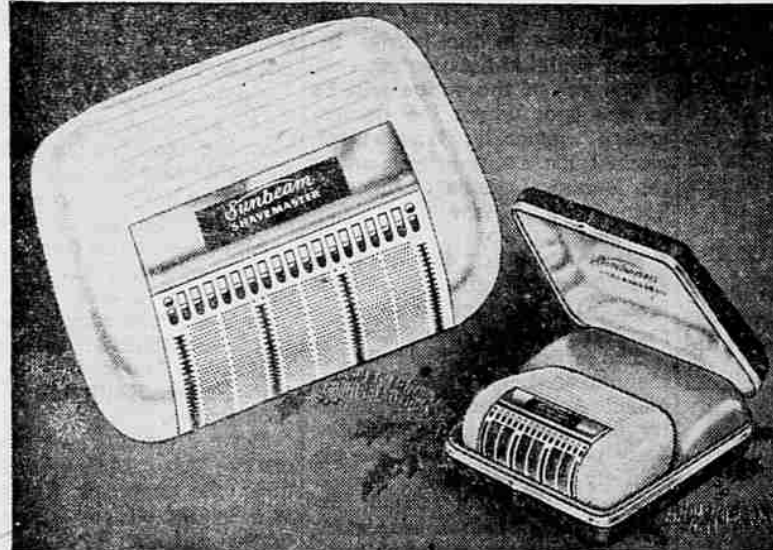
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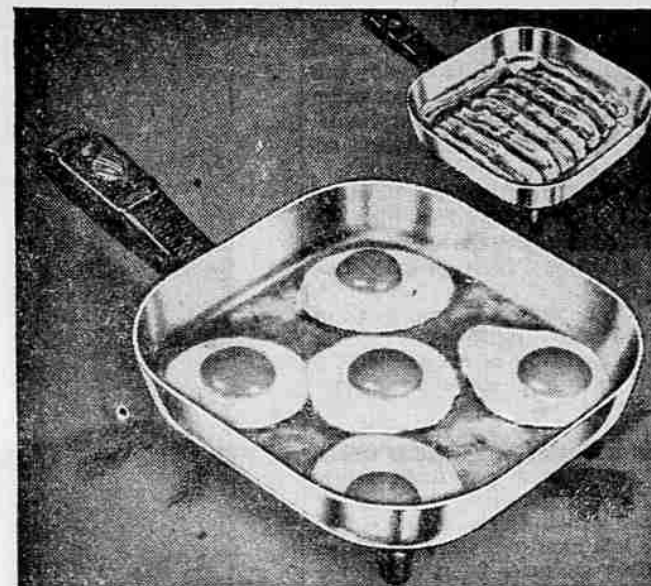
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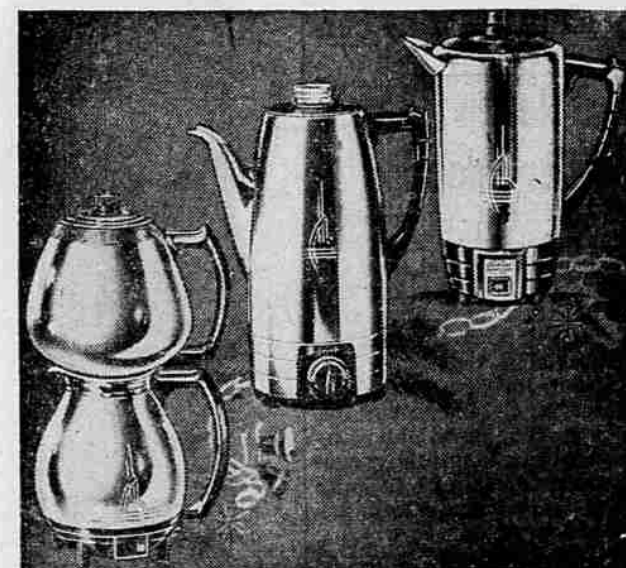
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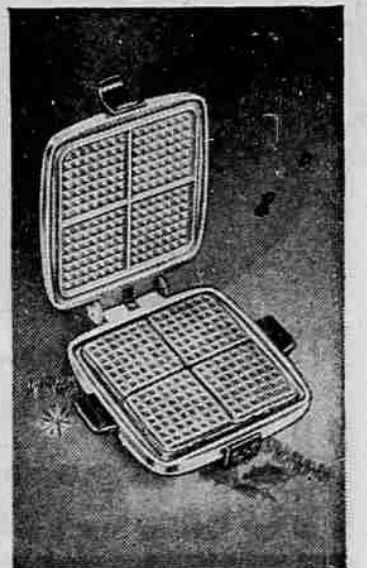
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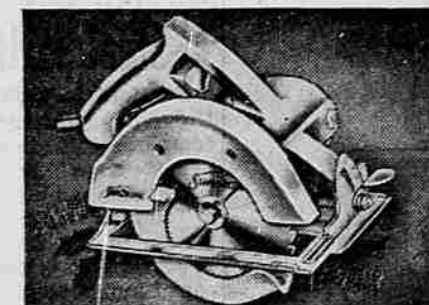
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