

wheel, the car had a tendency to flip at high speeds. Perhaps a race driver could handle the car, but what about ordinary Americans, many of them younger and anxious to go for higher speeds than the car was able to negotiate safely? What made this different was not that the Corvair was that much less safe than the Volkswagen, which was, if anything, less safe, a number of engineers thought. But there was less of a tendency on the part of its owners to drive the Beetle at high speed.

In addition, General Motors was about to come under a new and different kind of political and social scrutiny than in the past. By the time the stabilizing bar was added, in 1963, the number of lawsuits against Chevy on the Corvair was mounting and within a year would reach a hundred. Once the stabilizing bar was added and the tendency to swing out was eliminated, *Car and Driver* wrote a harsh epiphany for the early cost-conscious Corvair. It was, said the magazine, a bible of auto enthusiasts, "one of the nastiest-handling cars ever built. The tail gave little warning that it was about to let go, and when it did, it let go with a vengeance few drivers could deal with. The rear wheels would lose traction, tuck under and with the tail end jacked up in the air, the car would swing around like a 3-pound hammer on a 30-foot string. This is not to say that the car was unstable within the limits of everyday fair-weather driving—just that those limits were none too clearly posted, and once transgressed, you were in pretty hairy territory, indeed."

Among those following the flaws of the Corvair and the crippling accidents left in its wake was a young man named Ralph Nader. He had already set out on a lonely path as a kind of one-man consumer critic of Detroit and what he considered its lack of concern for the greater good of its consumers, including on the issue of safety. GM, in turn, would lash out at Nader and would be caught in the act. Humiliating Senate hearings would follow in which General Motors was forced to apologize for its arrogance. For the first time, the government began to pay attention to the auto industry and the impact of its decisions on the people of the nation. The legacy of the Corvair was that it connected the fifties to the sixties. At the same time, top executives at General Motors were convinced that their great mistake had not been in trying to do the car too cheaply, thereby making it a dangerous vehicle, but in bothering to produce a small car in the first place.

## F O R T Y - T H R E E

**T**he radio quiz shows had been, in retrospect, small potatoes, with prizes to match. On *Take It Or Leave It*, the ultimate challenge was the "\$64 question"—a phrase that even worked itself into the American vernacular by 1945. In the new age of television, though, everything had to be bigger and better. Americans were not going to sit home, glued to their television sets, wondering whether some electronic stranger, who had briefly entered their living rooms, was going to be able to double his winnings from \$32 to \$64. In the postwar era that was pocket money.

Such was the dilemma facing Lou Cowan in early 1955. Cowan, one of the most inventive figures in the early days of television, needed a gimmick for a game show worthy of television, one so compelling that millions of Americans would faithfully tune in. He needed high drama, and what better way to achieve that than a very

large prize? Six hundred and forty dollars? Not so terribly exciting. Not, for that matter, was \$6,400. "But \$64,000 gets into the realm of the almost impossible," he thought. Cowan liked the double-or-nothing format—so he envisioned a contestant who had answered a series of questions correctly and won the dizzying sum of \$32,000. At that point it would be time to play double or nothing, for \$64,000. With one answer to one question, an ordinary American could be wealthy beyond his or her wildest dreams.

The concept depended on the belief that seemingly unexceptional Americans did indeed have secret talents and secret knowledge. That appealed greatly to Cowan, who, with his Eastern European Jewish background, had a highly idealized view of his fellow citizens' potential to reach beyond the apparent limits life had dealt them. His was an idealistic, almost innocent belief in the ordinary people of the country. Cowan's wife, Polly, daughter of a successful Chicago businessman and a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, most decidedly did not like the idea for the show. She thought it essentially a corruption of the real uses of learning—glorifying trivial memorization rather than true thought and analysis. She believed that the rewards for knowledge should not be huge amounts of cash, doled out in front of millions of cheering strangers, ultimately to benefit commercial hucksters; instead, it should be the joy of knowledge itself. She did not hesitate to make her feelings known to her husband and in a way the debate in the Cowan household reflected the schizophrenic nature of the program itself—a compelling mix of achievement, purity and, of course, avarice.

Polly's doubts did not deter her husband. With his generous and optimistic nature, he saw the show as emblematic of the American dream: it offered everyone not only a chance to become rich overnight but to win the esteem of his fellow citizens. It proved every American had the potential to be extraordinary. It reflected, one of his sons said years later, a "White Christmas" vision of America, in which the immediate descendants of the immigrants, caught up in their optimism about the new world and the nobility of the American experiment, romanticized America and saw it as they wanted it to be. Cowan was an independent television packager, a familiar figure in the early days of television; he and others like him came up with ideas, found sponsors, and then sold the entire package to the then rather passive networks. He sold this idea to Revlon, which was so enthusiastic that Walter Craig, an executive of the advertising agency that worked for Revlon, locked the door at Cowan's initial presentation and said, "Nobody leaves this room until we have a signed contract."

The name of the program was *The \$64,000 Question*. It aired for the first time from 10:00 to 10:30 p.m. in June 1955, on CBS. It was an immediate hit. Millions of people identified with the contestants—who were very much like neighbors. The program showed a CBS psychologist named Gerhart Wiebe who said, "We're all pretty much alike, and we're all smart." The show contained all kinds of dramatic touches attesting to its integrity. The questions sat all week in a locked vault at a bank, and when they finally arrived on the set, they were transported by an executive from Manufacturers Trust, who was accompanied by two armed guards. An IBM machine shuffled the questions on the set. Ed Murrow, the most distinguished American broadcaster of two generations, a man who had pioneered the socially conscious documentary and who was becoming increasingly skeptical about the future of prime-time television, watched the first broadcast and turned to his partner, Fred Friendly. "Any bets on how long we'll keep this time period now?" he asked. He was prophetic in his wariness.

Eight thousand dollars was the maximum a contestant could win on one show; then he or she had to come back next week. Suspense would start building. At the eight thousand-dollar level, the contestant had to enter an isolation booth, presumably so no one in the studio audience could whisper an answer. The speed with which the program enthralled the entire country was breathtaking. Its success surprised even Lou Cowan. The show offered hope of an overnight fortune, and it proved that ordinary people were not in fact necessarily ordinary. As such there was a powerful chord of populism to it. But more than anything else, it appealed to the viewers' sense of greed. Five weeks after its premiere, *The \$64,000 Question* was the top-rated show on television. Studies showed that approximately 47.5 million people were watching. The sales of Revlon ("the greatest name in cosmetics") skyrocketed. Some Revlon products sold out overnight, and the show's master of ceremonies had to beg the public to be more patient until more Revlon Living Lipstick was available. The head of Hazel Bishop, a rival cosmetics company, subsequently blamed his company's disappointing year on the fact that "a new television program sponsored by your company's principal competitor captured the imagination of the public." It was the most primal lesson yet on the commercial power of television.

The contestants became the forerunners of Andy Warhol's idea of instant fame: people plucked out of total anonymity and beamed into the homes of millions of their fellow Americans. Between ten and twenty thousand people a week wrote letters, volunteering themselves or their friends to be contestants. After only a few appearances

on the show, audiences began to regard the contestants as old and familiar friends. Perhaps, in retrospect, the most important thing illuminated by the show was how easily television conferred fame and established an image. Virtual strangers could become familiar to millions of their fellow citizens.

One of the first contestants, Redmond O'Hanlon, a New York City policeman, whose category was Shakespeare, reached the \$16,000 plateau. At that point he decided to stop and, in his words, put "the conservatism of a father of five children" over "the egotism of the scholar." Soon Catherine Kreitzer, a fifty-four-year-old grandmother whose category was the Bible, reached \$32,000. She was confident, Mrs. Kreitzer said, that she could win the full amount, but she stopped, quoting from the Bible: "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Perhaps the most engaging of all the early contestants was Gino Prato, a New York shoe repairman, whose category was opera. He easily reached the \$32,000 plateau, whereupon his ninety-two-year-old father in Italy cabled him to stop at once. Prato, in time, became roving ambassador for a rubber-heel company, was given season tickets to the Metropolitan Opera, and went on to other television shows as well. If the producers faced a dilemma in the beginning, it was the hesitance of the top contestants to go for the ultimate question. Some of it was the fear of losing everything and some was the nation's then extremely harsh income tax schedules. As Kent Anderson pointed out in his book *Television Fraud*, a contestant who went for the whole thing was risking almost \$20,000 in order to win only \$12,000 more.

A Marine captain named Richard McCutcheon became the first contestant to go all the way. Bookies kept odds on whether or not he could get the right answer. His field was cooking, not military history. With an audience estimated at 55 million watching, on September 13, 1955, he became the first contestant to climb the television Mt. Everest. For \$64,000 he was asked to name the five dishes and two wines from the menu served by King George VI of England for French president Albert Lebrun in 1939. He did: consommé quenelles, filet de truite saumonée, petits pois à la française, sauce maitaise, and corbeille. The wines were Château d'Yquem and Mad-era Sercial. The nation was ecstatic—it had a winner. "If you're symbolic of the Marine Corps, Dick," said Hal March, the emcee, "I don't see how we'll ever lose any battles."

Everyone involved seemed to profit from the show. Lou Cowan soon became president of CBS, the bank official who was in charge of the questions became a vice-president at Manufacturers Trust.

But no one profited more than Revlon. The impact of the show upon its revenues was a startling reflection of changes that were taking place every day in more subtle ways because of the ferocious commercial drive of television and its effect upon both consumers and industry.

Revlon, at the time, was the leading cosmetic company in the nation, but Coty, Max Factor, and Helena Rubinstein were relatively close behind in net sales. In 1953, for example Revlon had net sales of \$28.4 million; Helena Rubinstein had \$20.4 million; Coty had \$19.6; Max Factor, \$19 million; and Hazel Bishop, \$9.9. All in all, it was a fairly evenly divided pie, and Revlon's sales increased on average about 15 percent annually in the years just before 1955. But sponsoring the quiz show changed all that. In the first six-month season, Revlon increased its sale from \$33.6 million to \$51.6—a stunning 54 percent increase. The stock jumped from 12 to 20. The following year saw sales increase to \$85.7 million. By 1958 Revlon completely dominated its field. (Asked later by a staff member of a House subcommittee whether sponsoring *The \$64,000 Question* had had anything to do with Revlon's amazing surge to the top, a somewhat disingenuous Martin Revson answered, "It helped. It helped.")

Not surprisingly, *The \$64,000 Question* produced a Pavlovian response to its success. Suddenly the networks were flooded with imitations, all of them for big prize money. The people in Cowan's old organization came up with *The \$64,000 Challenge*. Others produced *The Tac Dough*, *Twenty-One*, *The Big Moment*, *Beat the Jackpot*, and *The Big Board*. There was even talk of *Twenty Steps to a Million*.

By 1956, the appeal of these shows appeared to be limitless; then subtly, and soon not so subtly, there was the inevitable pressure that television especially seemed to inspire: to improve the show by manipulation, to *cut* it that is, to ensure each contestant would find some special resonance with the millions of people watching at home. The process began naturally enough at first, with the preference to choose a contestant possessed of considerable charm over a contestant without it. Soon the producers, by pretesting, were able to tell where a candidate's strengths lay and what his weaknesses were, without the contestants themselves even knowing what was happening: Prato knew Italian opera but little about the German opera; McCutcheon knew French cuisine rather than Italian or British. "We wrote the questions into the matrices of their existence," Merv Koplin, one of the men who worked on *The \$64,000 Question*, later said. As the pressure built for ratings, the manipulations grew more

serious. Some guests would be put through dry runs only to find that when they appeared on the live shows, the questions were remarkably similar to the ones they had answered correctly in the rehearsal. (McCutcheon, it turned out, was deeply bothered by this and thought seriously of getting out; he was encouraged to remain a contestant by his family. Later he told Joe Stone, the prosecutor from the New York District Attorney's office, that he thought the shows were fraudulent and immoral, and he disagreed violently with the claim of the various producers that the rigging had hurt no one.)

The Revlon executives from the start were extremely outspoken about the guests on the two shows they sponsored, *The \$64,000 Question* and *The \$64,000 Challenge*. Starting in the fall of 1955, there was a weekly meeting in Martin Revson's (Charles Revson's brother) office, where he and his top advertising people critiqued the previous week's shows and contestants. Revson was not shy about telling what he wanted to happen and who he wanted to win. He posted a chart in the meeting room with the ratings on it; if the ratings were down, it was the fault of the contestants. Were the contestants too old? Too young? Were they attractive enough? The criticism was often brutal. (The Revsons apparently did not like a young psychologist named Joyce Brothers, who appeared as an expert on boxing. Thus the questions given her were exceptionally hard—they even asked her the names of referees—in the desire to get her off the show; their strategy had no effect. She became the second person to win \$64,000.)

More and more, with so many different shows vying for public approval, the producers found it was the quality of the contestants themselves—and the degree to which the nation identified with them—that made the difference. When the Barry and Enright company, one of the big hitters in the world of game shows, introduced its new game in March 1956, called *Twenty-One*, loosely based on the card game of the same name, Dan Enright was confident it would be an immediate success. Two contestants would answer questions for points, without knowing how many points their opponent had. Enright thought it was a sure bet for unbearable dramatic excitement, especially since the audience would know more about the competition than the contestants themselves. He was dead wrong. The premiere was, he said later, a dismal failure, "just plain dull." The day after, Marty Rosenhouse, the sponsor, made an irate call to say he did not intend to own a turkey. "Do whatever you have to do," he told Enright, "and you know what I'm talking about." Those were the marching orders for Enright and his staff.

Fixing the show did not particularly bother Enright; the quiz shows had never been about intelligence or integrity as far as he was concerned; they were about drama and entertainment. "You cannot ask random questions of people and have a show," one game-show producer later said. "You simply have failure, failure, failure, and that does not make entertainment." That made it a predatory world, and Enright excelled in it. He was not, Dan Enright reflected years later, a very nice man in those days. He was totally compelled by work, wildly ambitious, and utterly self-involved. "I was determined to be successful no matter what it cost," he said, "and I was greedy, greedy, not for money, but for authority, power, prestige and respect." The end, he believed at the time, always justified the means. People were to be used; if you did not use them, he believed, they in turn would use you. Soon—with considerable fixing—*Twenty-One* became a huge success; at a relatively young age, Enright had already exceeded his own expectations, and he was wealthy and powerful. People coveted his attention and gave him respect. Thus he was able to rationalize everything he was doing.

From then on, *Twenty-One* became the prototype of the completely crooked show. Enright cast it as he might a musical comedy. He wanted not just winners and losers but heroes and villains. He tried for his first hero with a young writer named Richard Jackman, who appeared on the show on October 3, 1956. Before Jackman's appearance, Enright went over a vast number of questions with Jackman. At the end of the session, Enright told him, "You are in a position to destroy my career." Jackman had no idea what he was talking about, although he figured it out the next day, when the questions put before him were the very same questions used in the dry run. Jackman easily won \$24,500, but then told Enright he wanted no part of being on a fixed program and withdrew. A worried Enright pleaded with him to continue, offering up all kinds of rationales. Finally, he got Jackman to accept a \$15,000 check for his first appearance and convinced him to appear on one additional program, in order to bow out gracefully rather than just disappear mysteriously.

That left Enright with all that money to give out and no cast of characters. His first break had come a little earlier, when a young man named Herb Stempel wrote asking for a chance to be a candidate. Stempel had seen the debut of *Twenty-One* and had thought the questions rather simple. He had, he had always been told, a photographic memory. "The walking encyclopedia," one uncle called him. He had watched all the other shows and invariably got the right answers. "I have thousands of odd and obscure facts and many

facets of general information at my fingertips," he wrote the producers. At the time, Stempel was an impoverished graduate student at City University, and his wife's moderately wealthy parents felt that their daughter had married beneath herself. Stempel was immediately invited to the offices of Barry and Enright, where he was given an exam consisting of 363 questions, of which he got 251 correct—the highest score anyone had gotten so far on the entrance exam. He was perfect for the show, except for one thing—he was short, stocky, and not particularly appealing on television.

He was, Enright decided, unlikeable. Because of that, Enright decided to exploit that and emphasize his unattractive side: Stempel had grown up in a poor section of the Bronx. His father, who had been a postal clerk, died when he was seven, and his mother suffered from high blood pressure and was on welfare from the time of her husband's death to when she died. There had seemed to Stempel an unfairness about his childhood from the start—other kids had fathers, he did not; other kids had some money, he did not. But his photographic memory was remarkable. For all the knowledge stored in his head, Enright thought, he was socially limited, and almost unable to sustain a conversation. To talk with him you had to ask a very specific question, and when you did, you got a specific answer and nothing more. "If you saw him," Enright said years later, "you had no choice but to root for him to lose."

A few days after the first meeting, Enright came by to see Stempel at the latter's home in Queens. Enright opened an attaché case and pulled out a bunch of cards similar to the ones used on *Twenty-One*. With that he began going over the questions in a dry run with Herb Stempel. Stempel got most of the answers right, and for the ones he didn't get, Enright supplied the answer. It was, Stempel began to realize, a rehearsal for *Twenty-One*. "How would you like to win \$25,000?" Enright asked Stempel. "Who wouldn't," he answered. With that Enright had made him a co-conspirator, demolishing any leverage he might have if qualms arose in the future.

While he was at Stempel's Queens apartment Enright checked out his new contestant's wardrobe. Since he was to be portrayed as a penniless ex-GI working his way through school, he was to wear his worst clothes: an ill-fitting double-breasted blue suit that had belonged to Stempel's father-in-law. He also selected a blue shirt with a frayed collar to go with it. Enright made Stempel get a marine-style haircut, which made him look somewhat like a Nazi soldier, Enright thought, and thereby increased the audience's antipathy. Stempel was even told to wear a cheap watch, which, in Stem-

pel's words, ticked like an alarm clock, the better to make a loud sound during the tense moments in the isolation booth. He was never to answer too quickly. He had to pause, to show some doubt and conflict, perhaps even stumble on an answer. Questions should look like cliffhangers. He was to carry a handkerchief and pat, not wipe, his brow. He was not to call Barry, the emcee, Jack on the air as everyone else did, rather he was to refer to him obsequiously as *Mr. Barry*.

Nor was he to deviate from his instructions. At one point, when he changed suits and wore a single-breasted one and got a better haircut, Enright warned him, "You're not paying attention to your lessons—you are not cooperating." Stempel realized the role he was to play was the nerd, the square, the human computer. It was a cruel thing to do, Enright reflected years later, to make a man who obviously had considerable emotional problems go before the American people in as unattractive an incarnation as possible.

If Stempel resented such treatment, it was still his one moment of glory. Suddenly, he was a hero on the CCNY campus. He could sense, as he walked across the campus, that other students were pointing him out and talking about him. Sitting one day in the cafeteria, he heard another student boast to a colleague, "Herb Stempel's in one of my classes." Another student, whom he had never met before, came up and told him that he and all his friends were all proud that Herb Stempel went to CCNY. There were covertly admiring glances from girls. It was heady stuff.

Good soldier that he was, Stempel was not a satisfactory winner for *Twenty-One*. His only real value was as a loser. The show needed a hero in a white hat—a handsome young gladiator to defeat him. In October the producers found him in the person of a young English instructor at Columbia University named Charles Van Doren. Al Freedman, Enright's deputy, met him at a cocktail party and was impressed by his intelligence and manner. "I think I've got the right person to beat Stempel with," Freedman told Enright, "someone very smart, who I think is going to come over very well on the show." Will he do it? Enright asked. "Yes," Freedman answered. "I think he'll do it, because his appearance will make erudition and education more popular."

Of all the people associated with the quiz-show scandals, the one who remains most indelibly burned on most people's memory is Charles Van Doren. He was the bearer of one of the most illustrious names in American intellectual life and he captivated the audience as no one else ever did. His manner—shy, gentle, somewhat self-depre-

cating, like a young, more intellectual Jimmy Stewart—was immensely attractive, for he was smart enough to win yet modest enough to seem just a little uneasy with his success. His father was the celebrated Columbia professor Mark Van Doren. His uncle Carl was just as famous a man of letters. He seemed to Freedman almost perfect for this particular show. He had a rare intellectual curiosity—apparently he was a speed reader and he read two or three books a day—and was informed on a broad range of subjects. Then, in addition to all else, there was the charm: Van Doren was someone whom the audience would see as an aristocrat, and yet there was nothing snobbish about him. He would appeal to ordinary people in every region of the country. Since it was a time when Stempel was in the view of the producers, destroying the show, swallowing up more likable contestants, Van Doren's appeal was all the more attractive, and Freedman set out to get him on board.

That was not an easy process, though. A series of lunches followed, to seduce Van Doren, who remained largely unresponsive. Van Doren pointed out that he liked teaching very much, thank you; there was nothing else he coveted, and he was not interested in a career in television, not even as a lark. "It's not my world," he answered. "My world is academe and I like it very much." But the more he resisted, the more Freedman was impressed; his very reserve was tantalizing, and so Freedman continued to see him. One thing that both Enright and Freedman had mastered by this time was the art of discovering a potential contestant's vulnerability. Every man, they thought, had, if not his price, his special vanity, which was the weakness they could exploit. So Freedman, sensing that Van Doren's love of teaching was critical to turning him, began to emphasize how much he might help the world of education and the teachers of America by coming on board. Teachers all over the country would get a boost from his appearances; he would be able to show that teachers were role models, worthy of the respect of their fellow citizens. "You can be erudite and learned but show that you don't have to be an intellectual snob," Freedman said. At first Van Doren seemed rather amused by this transparent ploy.

Then it began to change. Van Doren asked Freedman what made him so sure that he, Van Doren, would actually win on the show. At that point Freedman gave him a brief but somewhat sanitized history of radio and television game shows, explaining that they were all controlled in some way, because the producers had to hold the interest of the audience as well as educate it. It was not a question of truth, or documentaries; rather, it was show business. Why, look

at Eisenhower, he said. A book came out under his name, but it was most likely produced by a ghostwriter. Or a movie might show Gregory Peck parachuting behind the lines in Nazi Germany, but the person in the parachute was not Peck, but a double.

They kept in touch, and the seduction continued. "How much do you make as an instructor?" Freedman asked at one point. "About four thousand dollars a year," Van Doren answered. Freedman wondered aloud whether a young man could support a family on that salary. For the first time Van Doren asked how much money he might make as a contestant. Freedman explained that he might make as much as \$50,000, or even \$100,000. Van Doren asked Freedman how much the most recent contestant had won. Sixty thousand dollars. Freedman answered. Van Doren walked down some steps to leave, got to the bottom, and thought to himself, *Sixty thousand dollars! Sixty thousand dollars!* It took his breath away.

The next time they talked, Van Doren asked, "Who would have to know about it?" Freedman sensed that he had him. Just Enright and me, he answered. Freedman pledged to Van Doren that he would never turn him in. There were more talks; the seduction went on for several weeks. Finally, he agreed to go on; at first he asked to play it straight, but then it was explained to him that no one on *Twenty-One* played it straight.

It was a masterful stroke of casting: Van Doren turned out to be a superb performer. In contrast to the unattractive Stempel, he was, in Enright's phrase, the kind of young man "you'd love to have your daughter marry." He never seemed to lose his boyish innocence, which in fact he had lost from the start. At the height of his success, Van Doren seemed oddly immune to all the fuss. "Charlie," Freedman would say. "Do you know that somewhere between 25 and 30 million people watched you last night? Isn't that amazing?" Van Doren would simply shake his head. "It's hard for me to picture." Even more amazed than Charles was his father. Mark Van Doren wrote to his friend and former student Thomas Merton, the poet and Trappist monk, "About fifteen million people have fallen in love with him—and I don't use the word lightly."

Perhaps it was the contrast between Charles Van Doren's innate modesty and the hyped-up atmosphere of the quiz show, but there was no doubt about it—Charles Van Doren, not yet a Columbia Ph.D., merely a \$4,000-a-year instructor, was one of television's first stars, and arguably its first intellectual star. Ironically, even his inner doubts worked for the show: The longer he stayed on the show, the more he hated what he was doing and the more he wanted to get off;

and some of that conflict must have shown through and made him an even more winning contestant.

The Van Dorens were an old American family, dating back to the eighteenth century. Because their name was Dutch and had the prefix Van, many assumed they were aristocrats; instead the family was one of hardworking salt-of-the-earth Midwesterners. Mark Van Doren's grandfather, William Henry Van Doren, had been a farmer, blacksmith, and preacher (and, noted Mark in his autobiography, "not much of a businessman"). But he stressed education and his son became a doctor and two of his grandsons, Carl and Mark, got Ph.D.s. As a young graduate student Carl wrote his mother of the hardships of student life: "Some days I grow a despicable coward and am nearly tempted to turn my back upon all the bright ideal to which I have been true now for nearly a third of my life, and drop my energies to a slighter task where there is a chance of wealth and ease after a time. I know I could be rich—but I don't care to be . . ."

Mark Van Doren was not only a professor—he had won a Pulitzer Prize in poetry and had written a distinguished biography of Hawthorne. His wife, Dorothy (and Charles's mother), was a former editor of *The Nation* and a novelist; his brother, Carl, won a Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1939, and Carl's wife, Irita, was book editor of *The Herald Tribune*, a position of considerable influence in those days. It was her affair with Wendell Willkie, during which she encouraged him to run for the Presidency, that inspired Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse to write their hit musical *State of the Union*.

The Van Dorens were, in sum, a family that seemed to reflect the best of the liberal, humanist values of the era; Mark and Dorothy Van Doren had a town house in the Village and country house in northwestern Connecticut. If anything, Mark was the most blessed of them all, a successful and gifted poet and a truly beloved teacher, absolutely in command of his work, gentle, generous to, and tolerant of his students, even if their work was different from his (as in the case of Allen Ginsburg even before he emerged as an early Beat poet). One student later wrote that he had the gift of making "the difficult attainable through lightness." Another of his students, Alfred Kazin, later one of America's most distinguished critics, remembered the pleasure of Van Doren's lectures in a course on "the long poem." The sun would go down just as Van Doren was finishing the lecture, Kazin remembered, and then he would leave the campus and take the Seventh Avenue subway to his house in the Village, often accompanied by students, who used the subway ride to expand the classroom hour and who were often invited in for a drink or for tea.

Family friends included James Thurber (the Van Doren family cat was named Walter, after Thurber's character Walter Mitty), John Berryman ("Charlie, by the way," Mark Van Doren had written Berryman when his son was young, "values your letters if only for their stamps"), Joseph Wood Krutch, Franklin P. Adams, Jacques Barzun, Thomas Merton, Lionel Trilling, and Rex Stout.

The Van Dorens were not wealthy; money was always secondary to teaching and writing. As Mark Van Doren wrote Charles in the fall of 1952, in a letter filled with a father's pride that his son would soon be asked to teach English at Columbia at a salary of \$3,600 a year: "Really Cha, I'm not advising you to say Yes. You would have to love it to do it at all, and the rewards, I don't need to tell you, are scandalously slight; they have always been for teachers, and they always will be. I have enjoyed it, even though I am quitting soon; but the enjoyment was the greater part of my pay . . ." (Indeed, one of the first things that Charles Van Doren did when he became successful on *Twenty-One* was to buy his parents a television set.)

Charles Van Doren reflected both the strengths and the weaknesses of so privileged and protected a background. He developed into an erudite classicist and gifted musician. But it was always there, the fact that he was a *Van Doren*. When he first went on the show, Jack Barry coyly asked him, "Just out of curiosity, Mr. Van Doren, are you in any way related to Mark Van Doren, up at Columbia University, the famous writer?" Van Doren: "Yes, I am. He is my father." Barry: "He is your father?" Van Doren: "Yes." Barry: "The name Van Doren is a very well known name. Are you related to any of the other well-known Van Dorens?" Van Doren: "Well, Dorothy Van Doren, the novelist and author of the recent 'The Country Wife' is my mother, and Carl Van Doren, the biographer of Benjamin Franklin, was my uncle." Barry: "Well, you have every reason in the world to be might proud of your name and your family, Van Doren . . ."

Coached by Freedman on how to answer, Charles Van Doren became very good at the theatrics of the show. He learned to stutter, to seem to grope toward answers he had already been given. He was good at the game, but not too good; the questions were answerable, his struggling implied, but they were not easy. (When Jack Barry, talking about the cast of *On The Waterfront*, asked him, among other things, for the name of the Best Supporting Actress, Van Doren had answered, "Uh well, the only woman I can remember in that picture was the one who played opposite Brando, but I would have thought that she would have got the Best Actress award. But if she's the only one I remember—let's see—she was that lovely frail

girl—Eva Saint—uh, Eva Marie Saint.” Later, he noted, on the occasions when he had been given an answer, a curious pride made him go and look it up.

What Stempel, who hated him, and millions of others who were rooting for him could not understand about Van Doren was that coming from a family that accomplished was not without its burdens. What in life really belonged to Charles Van Doren independent of his family? Van Doren’s life was not as enviable as it seemed. He was dealing with an age-old dilemma, made no easier by its familiarity—being the son of a famous and successful father and/or mother in the same profession. Charles had reluctantly decided to seek a career as an English professor. As a young man he had gone to Paris and tried to write a novel about patricide, although as he told Dick Goodwin, a House investigator, he had also asked for his father’s help in editing it. There was a quality about his life that was oddly airless. As Van Doren himself said a few weeks after he finally came forward to admit that he had been part of the scam, “I’ve been acting a part, a role, not just the last few years—I’ve been acting a role for ten or fifteen years, maybe all my life. It’s a role of thinking that I’ve done far more than I’ve done, accomplished more than I’ve accomplished, produced more than I’ve produced. It has in a way something to do with my family, I suppose. I don’t mean just my father, there are other people in my family. But I’ve been running.” Burdened and conflicted, uncertain about what was his and what was his family’s, desperately needing successes and an identity of his own, Van Doren had been a perfect catch for someone like Enright. By going on the quiz shows, perhaps Charles Van Doren was seeking fame of his own; and for a brief time he became far more famous than his illustrious relatives; they were known only to a small elite; he was known to millions—his face was even on the cover of *Time*.

To Stempel, Van Doren was the enemy and the epitome of all the injustices he had suffered in terms of privilege and looks. “I felt here was a guy, Van Doren, that had a fancy name, Ivy League education, parents all his life, and I had just the opposite, the hard way up,” he once told Enright. That Stempel, because of the deal he had made with the devil, would now have to give up his television celebrity, pretend that he was dumber than he was, and lose to someone he was sure he could beat was the unkindest cut of all.

When Enright first told Stempel it was his turn to lose, he angrily balked. The fame had proved to be addictive; he was in no hurry to give up his appearances on television. No, he said, he wouldn’t do it. But Enright knew he was a street kid, and street kids

kept their word. “Herbie, when this started, you gave me your word,” Enright said. So Stempel agreed to take the fall, but he was bitter about it. He begged Enright to revoke the deal, to let him play Van Doren fair and square.

All of this was done under the sponsorship (but without the direct knowledge of) Pharmaceuticals Inc., a maker of patent medicines. So there was the bizarre spectacle of Jack Barry challenging these two intelligent young men with extremely serious questions and then switching back to his pitches for Geritol: “I guess I’ve asked thousands of questions at one time or another here on television. I haven’t got enough used to it yet, but there is one simple question that I think almost everybody asks everybody else. I think you know the question—what’s the weather gonna be like. . . . So, remember, if tired blood is your problem, especially in this rough weather after those colds or flu or sore throats or a virus, take either the good-tasting liquid Geritol or the handy Geritol tablets. . . .” Pharmaceuticals Inc., like Revlon, reaped huge benefits from sponsoring the quiz shows; in the first year, its sales went from \$10.4 million to \$13.9.

The denouement for Herb Stempel came on the night of December 5, 1956. According to Enright’s script, he was to lose by answering incorrectly a question the answer to which he knew perfectly well: which movie had won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1955. The answer was *Marty*, and Stempel had seen the movie three times. He loved it because he could identify with its principal character, an unattractive but sensitive man who has as many feelings as someone who is handsome. That it was a movie he cared about made it all the harder. On the day just before he was to lose, he became so frustrated that he told a few of his friends that he was going to take a dive on the show. On the day of the program, NBC hyped the confrontation all day long: “Is Herb Stempel going to win over \$111,000 on *Twenty-One* tonight?” an announcer would say over and over again as the day wore on. Stempel would talk back to the television set in his room: “No, he’s not going to win over \$111,000, he’s going to take a dive.”

Once the program began, he came periously close to answering the *Marty* question correctly, breaking Enright’s rules and just going for it. Years later he pondered how history might have been different: He would have won, he would not have proceeded to help blow the whistle on Enright, and Charles Van Doren would have lost and been able to go back gracefully to Columbia and to his real love, teaching. But he played by the rules, and Van Doren ended up riding

a tiger. Van Doren, in time, became a national hero, with a record fifteen appearances on the show. He had greatly underestimated the power of television. Something that had begun as a lark turned into the young academic's nightmare. Hundreds of letters came in each day telling him how he represented America's hope for a more serious, cerebral future, particularly after the dark years of McCarthy had poisoned the minds of the American public about the value of education. Other universities offered him tenured professorships. There were offers to star in movies. NBC signed him to a three-year contract that included regular stints on the *Today* show, where he was to be the resident intellectual. His salary from the network was a staggering \$50,000 a year. "I felt like a bullfighter in a bull ring with thousands and thousands of people cheering me on and all I wanted to do was get out of there," he later told Dick Goodwin. In the end his total winnings came to \$129,000; but given the draconian taxes of the period, he actually took home only about \$28,000. Stempel asked to challenge Van Doren one more time but was told that Van Doren would not take him on. Perhaps Vivienne Nearing, Van Doren's then opponent, might; when Stempel heard this, he understood immediately that in the forthcoming contest between Ms. Nearing and Van Doren, Van Doren was scripted to lose, so Stempel, nothing if not shrewd, took \$5,000 of his savings and bet it two-to-one on Nearing.

Stempel won \$10,000 but quickly squandered that and his prize money in a series of bad investments. His bitterness festered. He began to bug Enright, demanding a chance to play Van Doren ("That son of a bitch") in a clean, unfixd game. Enright became increasingly aware that Stempel was a live hand grenade. There was some talk about a place on another show. Stempel pledged to lose weight, " 'cause when I go on I want to look like a gentleman, not a little short, squat guy, like I looked on *Twenty-One*." At one point, Enright even secretly taped Stempel to show that the latter was blackmailing him and then skillfully cajoled him into signing a piece of paper that said there had been no fixing on *Twenty-One*. But none of this could stem Stempel's growing rage.

The one thing that neither Enright nor Freedman had counted on was the impact of all this on Stempel's psyche. It had all been traumatic, and they were now about to pay the price for what they had done. The key for fixing the show had been the ability to co-opt all the players; common sense decreed that those who had been part of the scam would keep quiet rather than hurt themselves. But Stempel was beyond the point of caring. What he wanted was revenge.

Stempel began to look for reporters who might write about the scandal. At first the press was wary of picking up the story because there was no way of corroborating it. Later Enright realized he had done an unspeakable thing: He had exploited a man who was emotionally vulnerable. Of all the things he had done during the quiz-show rigging, that was the thing that, many years later, Enright was most ashamed of. He was not nearly as bothered by what he had done to Van Doren, who, he decided, was an intelligent adult with a fully workable moral compass and who knew exactly what he was doing.

In the district attorney's office there was a strong belief that the program had been rigged. But it was a hard case to break, for Enright and his deputy, Albert Freedman, had been careful fixers. The fixing had been done one-on-one, with no witnesses. Deniability was critical. In case a contestant changed his mind and wanted to talk, it was to be his word against that of a program executive; thus, charges of fraud against the program could be neutralized. There was to be as little overlapping as possible: Enright had fixed Stempel; Freedman had fixed Van Doren. They liked to co-opt the contestants even before they set foot on the show. That way they were less likely to turn on the men who had fixed them.

When the story of Stempel's charges finally broke in a New York newspaper, Enright received a call from an uncle. "Dan," his uncle said. "I hope this teaches you one thing." "What's that?" Enright asked. "Never bet on any animal that can talk," his uncle said. Enright soon discovered he had seriously underestimated the sheer power of the show. In his own mind he had done nothing that violated the moral code of the world of entertainment as he knew it. But the show had transcended mere entertainment: It had become the property of an entire nation. Enright had crossed over, without knowing it, into another sphere, with another set of ethics and standards. He was playing with this new instrument of television without knowing its true power.

Their phenomenal success, Freedman realized, had also stirred powerful resentment in other segments of the media. As evidence of the fixing began to surface, the ferocity with which the newspapers picked up the story stunned him. It was not covered as a minor scandal in the minor world of entertainment but as a threat to the republic—something on the order of the press coverage of Watergate, he later thought. He had greatly underestimated the dimensions of celebrity that the game shows conferred. The press, especially the city's more vulnerable newspapers, particularly those already suffer-

ing financially from television's ever more powerful reach—the *World Telegram*, the *Journal American*, and even the *Post*—feasted on the story as a means of showing that their prime competitor was not to be trusted.

It was a phenomenon of the fifties, Freedman thought. They were playing with this new instrument without knowing its real power. They had toyed with it as if it were merely an extension of radio, and they did not know that, in those days at least, it overwhelmed the people sitting at home watching and consumed those who went on the programs. A decade later, Freedman believed, the show might have been a success, but a much smaller one as the nation would have become far more immunized to the immediacy of television.

In 1957, Barry and Enright had sold the rights to the show to an eager NBC for \$2 million. As the deal was being completed, Enright wondered whether they should tell the network that it was buying a rigged show. He called his agent, Sonny Werblin, an astute New York wheeler-dealer, and asked his advice. "Dan, have I ever asked you whether the show was rigged?" Werblin responded. No, Enright said. "And has NBC ever asked you whether the show was rigged?" Again Enright said no. "Well, the reason that none of us has asked," Werblin continued, summing up the morality of the networks on the issue in those days, "is because we don't want to know."

Bul Stempel refused to go away, and was becoming increasingly obsessive. In his own mind, he had carried the show, had made it what it was, and would get no long-term benefit. Enright had promised him a job when he'd agreed to take the fall, but—and it seemed typical to Stempel—he was now hedging on it. By contrast, Van Doren was being given a steady job at \$50,000 a year from NBC. There was simply no justice, he felt. He kept calling reporters, trying to give his story to them, but libel laws were tougher then and there was no corroborating evidence.

Inevitably, the whole scam unraveled. A young woman who had been coached left her notebook in the outer office of one show. Another contestant saw the notebook, which contained many of the answers the woman was asked to give as a contestant, and complained. Others came forward. One contestant mailed a registered letter to himself in which he placed an exact description of the process and including the answers themselves—powerful evidence for the courts. Finally, the district attorney's office launched a broad investigation of the quiz shows. The evidence of rigging was over-

whelming, but for reasons never quite clear, the judge in the case impounded all the evidence. With that, the quiz show scandal was passed to a congressional committee.

Gradually, the congressional investigation kept coming back to focus on Charles Van Doren, the young man who had charmed the entire nation. Van Doren steadfastly maintained his innocence and claimed that he had received no help. That meant he continued to lie to the prosecutors, to the New York grand jury investigating the quiz shows, to the media, to his employers, to his family, and to his own lawyer. In 1959 Richard N. Goodwin, a young investigator for the congressional committee looking into the quiz-show scandals, had to deal with Stempel, Van Doren, and the others. Goodwin's roots were not that different from Stempel's, but he empathized with Van Doren; if he, like Stempel, was Jewish and came from a rather simple background, then his innate talent as a member of the new generation of the meritocracy was already manifesting itself. He had gone to Tufts and then to Harvard Law School, where he had been first in his class and gained the ultimate accolade: He had been chosen as a Felix Frankfurter law clerk. Goodwin found Stempel's hatred of Van Doren distasteful; by contrast, Goodwin was charmed by Van Doren. Soon they became not hunter and hunted but almost pals, Dick and Charlie. Clearly, Van Doren was intrigued by Goodwin's exceptional intelligence, by the fact that in addition to being a brilliant young lawyer, he loved American literature; Goodwin in turn had never met anyone like Van Doren, so intelligent, so graceful, from an old family, utterly devoid of snobishness. The evidence, Goodwin thought, overwhelmingly showed that Van Doren had to be part of a fix, but he wanted to believe Van Doren, and for a time Goodwin lacked the final piece of evidence to implicate him: Freedman. Van Doren's handler, had conveniently left the country for Mexico. Finally, under threat of the loss of his citizenship, he reluctantly returned.

When Goodwin had Freedman's testimony, he called Van Doren to let him know where the case stood, that the committee now had a lock on it. For the first time, Van Doren seemed to pause. The next time they met, there was a lawyer at Van Doren's side. Still, Van Doren protested his innocence. "Dick, someday I hope I'll be able to tell you why he [Freedman] is lying," Van Doren said. "Charlie, isn't it interesting that the only people not telling the truth are from the best families?" Goodwin answered, mentioning one other quiz contestant with an exceptional background. At this point Goodwin felt himself in a bind. He was absolutely sure Van Doren was lying, but

he also saw no purpose in having the committee destroy him in public. It was, after all, not long after the McCarthy hearings and Goodwin still had vivid images of people whose lives had been ruined by their appearances before investigating committees. As far as Goodwin was concerned, the principal villains were the networks, which had averted their eyes from what was happening despite a number of warnings, the sponsors, who were the real beneficiaries, and the producers. Goodwin's lack of zeal in going after Van Doren did not please Stempel. There were endless phone calls from him: "Are you calling Van Doren [to go before the committee]? Are you calling Van Doren?" Stempel would ask. Finally, Goodwin asked, "Herb, why do you hate him so much?" "I don't hate him," Stempel protested. "Come on," Goodwin said. "You've been on my case since the beginning for one thing and one thing alone—to get him." At that point Stempel told of an incident in which he had gone over to shake Van Doren's hand at a charity benefit but Van Doren, according to Stempel, had turned away from him. That, thought Goodwin, sounded unlikely, because there was not a trace of snobishness to Van Doren. But in some way he understood that even if it hadn't happened in reality, it had happened in Herb Stempel's mind.

Goodwin went to the committee members in closed session, said that he had more than enough information to show that the programs were rigged, but that he saw no need to destroy Van Doren in public before the committee. The committee members agreed, and the decision was made not to call him. With that, Goodwin told Van Doren, "Charlie, I know you're lying to me," he said. "Dick, I'm sorry you feel that way," Van Doren answered. The committee, Goodwin continued, had decided not to call him. But don't, he warned Van Doren, say anything publicly or do anything the committee might view as a challenge and which might force it to change its mind. With that, it seemed that Van Doren was home free. But then NBC told Van Doren that he had to send a telegram to the committee declaring his innocence or lose his job on the *Today* show. The obvious decision, Goodwin thought, was for Van Doren to tell NBC to stuff it and quit. Instead, pushed by his own pride, Van Doren took a fateful step and sent the telegram. It was a wildly self-destructive thing to do, Goodwin thought. Inevitably, he was subpoenaed. Goodwin, bothered by the coming confrontation, went to see his mentor, Justice Felix Frankfurter. Frankfurter had no personal connection with Van Doren and took a more objective view of what was happening: "A quiz-show investigation without Van

Doren," he said, "is like *Hamlet* without anyone playing *Hamlet*." Besides, Frankfurter added, Van Doren was not exactly innocent. He had been a willing participant. The fact that others in the scandal had done things worse did not exactly exonerate him.

On November 1, 1959, the night before Van Doren's appearance before the committee, Dick Goodwin invited him and his father to dinner. Goodwin remembered being touched by the mutual affection between the two and Mark Van Doren's self-evident relief that his son was going to be able to free himself of his terrible weight. The irony of all this—that the father and son who were so graceful and charming and who could, even in this most terrible hour, come to dinner and make a simple evening so rich with literate yet unpretentious conversation—did not escape Goodwin, who found himself torn by the entire experience.

The next day, a crush of journalists and photographers recorded Van Doren on the witness stand, beginning, "I would give almost anything I have to reverse the course of my life in the last three years. I cannot take back one word or action. The past does not charge for anyone. But at least I can learn from the past. I have learned a lot in the last three weeks. I've learned a lot about life. I've learned a lot about myself, and about the responsibilities any man has to his fellow men. I've learned a lot about good and evil. They are not always what they appear to be. I was involved, deeply involved, in a deception. The fact that I, too, was very much deceived cannot keep me from being the principal victim of that deception, because I was its principal symbol. There may be a kind of justice in that. . . ." Aware of Van Doren's great popularity, the committee members handled him gently and repeatedly praised him for his candor. Only Congressman Steve Derouman announced that he saw no particular point in praising someone of Van Doren's exceptional talents and intelligence for simply telling the truth. With that, the room suddenly exploded with applause, and Goodwin knew at that moment ordinary people would not so easily forgive Van Doren.

Stempel had taken a train to Washington, paying for the trip with his own money, to see Van Doren's appearance. In the crowded congressional hearing room, he wanted some kind of vindication. And although in the beginning his seat was far in the back, he had steadily edged forward so he could look in Van Doren's face: He wanted to see and hear the members of the Congress of the United States scolding this privileged young man for breaking faith with the

American people, but he was bitterly disappointed by what happened. "I felt terribly hurt by the way they praised him," he said years later. Afterward, Stempel grabbed Joseph Stone, the New York assistant DA who had done much of the early work on the case, and started to complain about the professors at CCNY who had turned down his proposal for a Ph.D. thesis. Even at what might have been a moment of triumph, it still seemed that he regarded himself a victim.

When it was over, a reporter asked Mark Van Doren if he was proud of his son and the old man said yes, he was. Are you proud of what he did on the quiz shows? another reporter asked, and Mark wavered for a moment and said no, he was not, but at least Charles could get back to what he ought to be doing—teaching. That was something, he added, that he was very good at. At that point one of the reporters told Mark Van Doren what he did not yet know: that the board of trustees at Columbia had voted that day to fire Charles Van Doren as an instructor. A friend noted that the decision must have been like an arrow through the heart of the old man.

Charles Van Doren wrote Dick Goodwin a poignant note the next day, thanking him for his kindnesses during the preceding few weeks. "The dinner was superb, the accommodations splendid, and the conversation even at times unchanged with passion and danger. What an extraordinary evening it was. I will of course never forget it. . . . Hunters," he continued, "used to say that the stag loved the hunter who killed it. . . . thus the tears, which were the tears of gratitude and affection. Something like that *does* happen, I know. And Raskolnikov felt the same. Thus Gerry [his wife] and I do extend an invitation to you to come and wish you would come. There are a number of things I'd like to talk to you about—none of them having to do with quiz shows. I made the mistake of reading the papers. I should have taken your advice. I wish the next six months were already over. There have been many hard things. But I am trying to tell you that we will live and thrive. I think—I mean I know we will live and I think we will thrive—and that you must never, in any way, feel any regret for your part in this. Perhaps it is nonsense to say that, but I thought it might just be possible that you would, Charlie."

It was a traumatic moment for the country as well. Charles Van Doren had become the symbol of the best America had to offer. Some commentators wrote of the quiz shows as the end of American innocence. Starting with World War Two, they said, America had been on the right side. Its politicians and generals did not lie, and the

Americans had trusted what was written in their newspapers and, later, broadcast over the airwaves. That it all ended abruptly because one unusually attractive young man was caught up in something seedy and outside his control was dubious. But some saw the beginning of the disintegration of the moral tissue of America, in all of this. Certainly, many Americans who would have rejected a role in being part of a rigged quiz show if the price was \$64 would have had to think a long time if the price was \$125,000. John Steinbeck was so outraged that he wrote an angry letter to Adlai Stevenson that was reprinted in *The New Republic* and caused a considerable stir at the time. Under the title "Have We Gone Soft?" he raged, "If I wanted to destroy a nation I would give it too much and I would have it on its knees, miserable, greedy, and sick. . . . on all levels, American society is rigged. . . . I am troubled by the cynical immorality of my country. It cannot survive on this basis."

The scandal illuminated some things about television in addition to its growing, addictive power: The first was the capacity of a virtual stranger, with the right manner, to project a kind of pseudo-intimacy and to become an old and trusted friend in a stunningly short time. That would have profound ramifications, as television increasingly became the prime instrument of politics. The other thing it showed, and this was to be perhaps its most powerful lesson, was that television *cares* everything it touched: politics, news shows, and sitcoms. The demands of entertainment and theater were at least as powerful as substance. Among the first to benefit from that new casting requirement was a young junior senator from Massachusetts, who, like Charles Van Doren, was young, attractive, upper-class, and diffident because he was cool on a medium that was hot. If Charles Van Doren was the major new star of television in the late fifties, then he was to be replaced by John Kennedy as the new decade started.

As for Charles Van Doren, he quickly dropped out of the public arena. He moved to Chicago with his young family and, drawing on a family connection with Mortimer Adler, the editor of the Great Books series, he worked for the Encyclopedia Britannica as an editor. His life in Chicago was largely private, and he was not often seen in that city's journalistic and literary circles. He and his wife, Geraldine Bernstein Van Doren, whom he had first met when she had a job answering the mail prompted by his early success on *Twenty-One*, reared two children there. He never wrote or spoke about the quiz-show events. When, on different occasions, journalists telephoned, suggesting that they were working on an article about that period

and asked to speak with him, they were told that Mr. Van Doren was living a very happy life and did not need or want to get involved in their project. He was the editor of a number of important collections, including *The Great Treasury of Western Thought*, and *The Joy of Reading*, but his ability to promote the books, and thereby enhance both their sales and his own reputation, was limited by his wariness of going on television. He was aware that if he made a book tour, he was not likely to be asked about the history of Western thought, or about the relative influence of Plato, Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas on our lives, but rather about Freedman, Emright, and Revson.

In the late 1980s, a distinguished television documentary maker named Julian Krainan was looking for a narrator-editor for a thirteen-part public television series on the history of philosophy. Krainan had read Van Doren's work, had loved *The Joy of Reading*, and was impressed by the powerful sweep of his intellect. Krainan, some fifteen years younger than Van Doren, had only the vaguest memory of the quiz-show scandals some thirty years after they had taken place. He contacted Van Doren, and gradually they began to agree on the outline of a public television series. They seemed to like each other and liked dealing with each other. Then Krainan's project hit a wall. The top people at PBS were wary about dealing with Van Doren until he himself dealt publicly with the quiz-show issue. At that point Krainan suggested doing a documentary on the quiz-show scandals. It would clear the air, lance the boil, and prepare the way for the multipart show on philosophy. Krainan also pointed out that Van Doren himself, on a number of occasions when the subject came up, always said that he had nothing to hide and nothing to apologize for.

Van Doren and Krainan went back and forth about doing a quiz-show documentary matter a number of times until one day Van Doren suddenly announced, "I'm going to do it. I should have done this a long time ago." But a few days later he called to say that he'd reconsidered. Krainan went ahead with his documentary, which was exceptionally well received and much praised for its fairness and sensitivity. Of the important players still living, only Charles Van Doren refused to participate.

## F O R T Y - F O U R

**T**he most indelible images of America that fall came from Little Rock, scenes captured by still photographers and, far more significantly, by movie cameramen working for network television news shows. The first and most jarring of these images was of angry mobs of white rednecks, pure hatred contorting their faces, as they assaulted the nine young black students who dared to integrate Little Rock Central High. The second and almost equally chilling image came a few weeks later, showing the same black children entering the same school under the protection of elite U.S. Army paratroopers. The anger and hatred that had been smoldering just beneath the surface in the South since the enactment of *Brown v. Board of Education* had finally exploded, and now because of television, the whole nation and soon the whole world could watch America at war with itself.