



JIM DAVIES

*The bare facts
of the matter*

Being on CBC's Hourglass doesn't mean never having to say you're sorry.

Just ask Larry Branter.

It's now a little more than a month since seven naked ladies showed their stuff on CBXT's nightly news program, and about two weeks since Hourglass host Branter told viewers that the show's producers were sorry about the whole darn thing.

The air has cleared, the complaining phone calls and letters have stopped flooding the station, the buff buffs have had their jollies, and Mr. Branter has had his home phone number changed to an unlisted one.

But, although the matter is now about as topical as the latest beach movie epic by Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello, the effects of the Miss Nude Edmonton story and subsequent apology are bound to be felt by Hourglass for some time.

The most noteworthy effect will likely be an upsurge in the ratings — and therefore the commercial revenues — of the already popular news show.

The controversial Miss Nude Edmonton "news" story was conveniently aired during a time when television ratings were being compiled. As was a second program which showed segments of the peek-a-boo performance.

Although the show's ratings are already extremely high, and despite the complaints by something more than a couple of hundred offended viewers, there will likely now be a significant number of Edmontonians who will switch on Hourglass in the hopes that they will be titillated by some future exposure on the program.

The apology, according to Mr. Branter and Hourglass executive producer Tom Kavanagh, was basically the program's acknowledgement that the show had offended many viewers.

Both said the apology would not mean that Hourglass would be afraid to tackle touchy subjects in the future, although Mr. Branter did admit that the show's producers "will probably have second thoughts before they run another skin show."

The apology was viewed somewhat differently by Peter Reynolds, Hourglass' former executive producer, who described it as "a frightened surrender to a howling mob of bigots and prudes by CBC managers and producers who are more interested in saving their jobs than in protecting the independence that won Hourglass so many loyal followers."

The real motivation behind the apology probably rests somewhere in between these two views. However, judging from some comments by Hourglass staffers, the matter has caused some dissension among their ranks.

But, controversy aside, one good thing to come out of the whole episode was the public statement that the Hourglass on-air staff were not responsible for the offending footage.

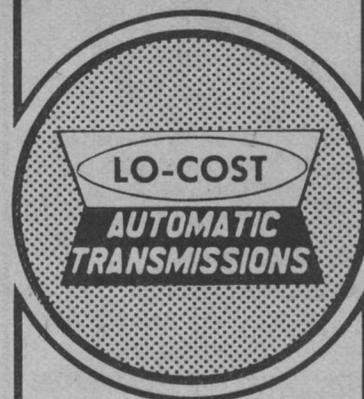
In publicly apologizing to the on-air staff, the producers pointed out how unfair it is that those visible on the tube should always have to bear the brunt of public criticism.

Mr. Branter himself estimates that he and his family received about two dozen critical and sometimes abusive phone calls at their home because of the Miss Nude Edmonton footage. As well, he received several harsh letters blaming him for the entire incident.

This, in spite of the fact that he's only one of 15 Hourglass staffers and ironically was only a last-minute replacement to interview the Miss Nude Edmonton contestants.

That, insists Mr. Branter, is the naked truth.

THE AUTOMATIC ANSWER



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9901-72 Avenue 433-4441

SOUTH SIDE
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