

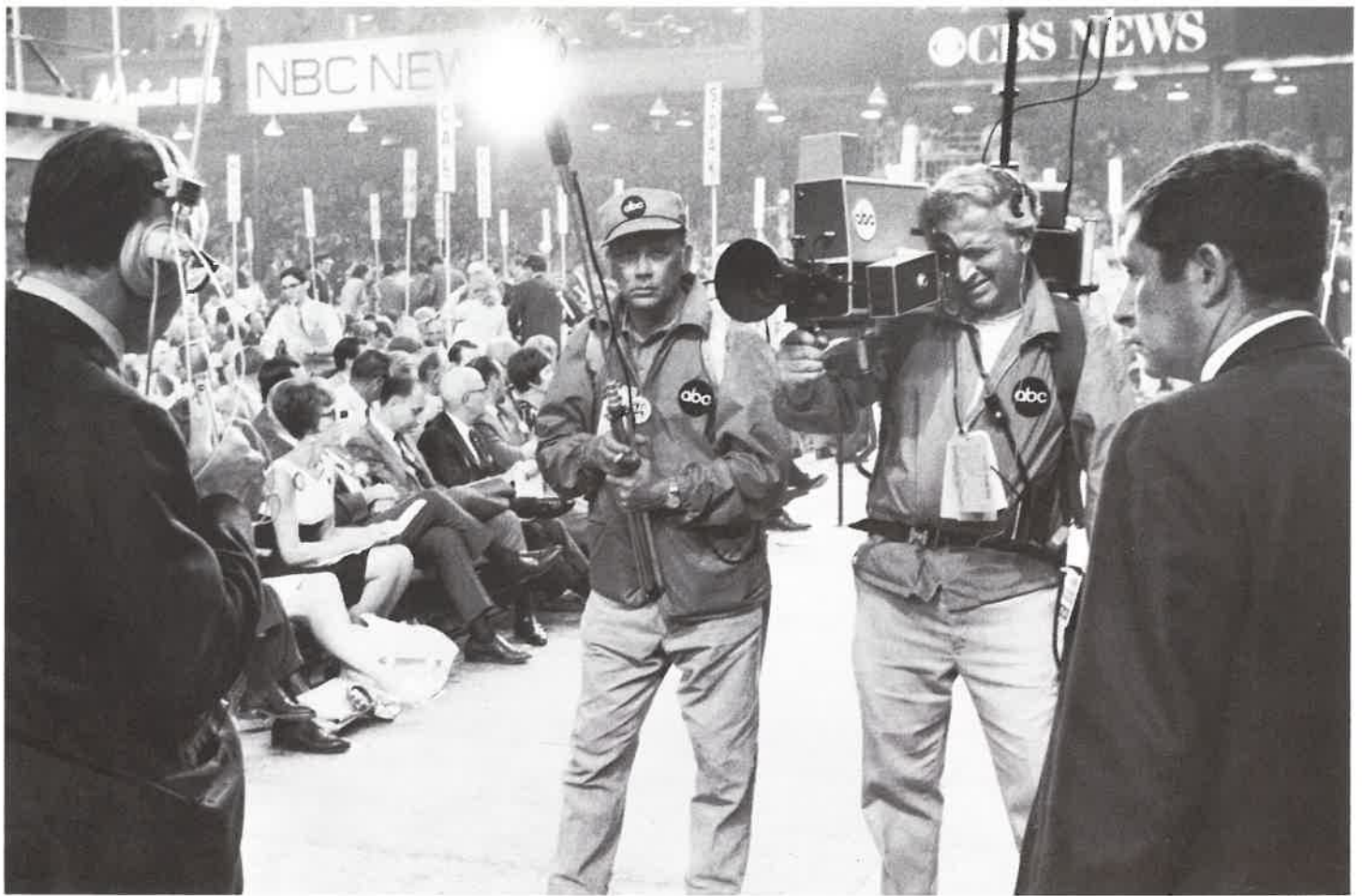
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TELEVISION GOES

Entrance to convention floor as delegates begin to file in for evening session. At upper left, microwave dishes connected wireless cameras and microphones, like the Ampex BC-110 color cameras, to control rooms, VR-2000 and VR-1200 recorders.



To get the picture that couldn't be gotten any other way, ABC cameramen used Ampex BC-110 wireless color cameras to capture interviews from the convention floor, hotel suites, and similar locations.

TO THE CONVENTIONS *A Year End Report*

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SO PERSUASIVE and compelling are our modern communications technologies and so ubiquitous their coverage of current events, it is difficult for us to realize that some political activities, conventions among them, haven't existed forever. As a matter of fact, the first three presidential elections in the United States had no nominating procedure at all, convention, caucus, or otherwise. The members of the electoral college simply agreed among themselves that it would be Washington twice, and Adams once. By 1800, political parties had emerged and needed some mechanism to choose their candidates.

At first, this was done simply and conveniently, but not always satisfactorily, by a congressional caucus in Washington. Then in 1832, the Anti-Masonic Party, in what was apparently their sole claim to mention in the history books, set up the first political convention. The example of this innovative but short lived group was quickly followed by the National Republicans and Jeffersonian Democrats, so that by tradition and usage, conventions have been in use since that time.

Interestingly enough it is by tradition alone that conventions continue to operate to this

day. This is another way of saying that conventions have no basis in our constitution and are not regulated in any way by the federal government. Many state governments, though, exercise control over the selection of convention delegates. Lately, conventions have come under considerable fire as being undemocratic, too confusing, and certainly too long. However, despite suggestions to improve them, to abolish them completely, or to substitute for them a nationwide presidential primary, they seem destined in one form or another to be with us for quite a while to come.

Conventions blend together into a crazy quilt colorful patches from a Barnum & Bailey circus, a Chautauqua debate, and an extraordinary session of congress. They are noisy, exciting, as peculiarly American as the Fourth of July, and just possibly obsolete in the second half of the 20th Century.

Both the Republican and Democratic conventions follow the same basic procedure and order of business. Before the actual balloting begins, a couple of days are spent on party rituals, such as seating the delegates, rules,

speech making, and party business. Even before this, a week or so is spent hammering out a platform acceptable to all factions. Nominating candidates for president and vice-president comes on the third day, usually followed by noisy floor demonstrations. These demonstrations used to have more political significance in previous years and sometimes helped sway conventions. (The gallery's chant of "We want Wilkie" is the classic case in point.) More recently, however, hired demonstrators, some of whom cheerfully whoop it up amidst balloons and marching bands for more than one candidate, have made demonstrations lose some of their significance. For this reason, future conventions may permit only delegates to participate. Finally, the voting for presidential nominee takes place. On the fourth day, nominations and voting for the vice presidential choice are the order of business, which with the acceptance speeches of both nominees pretty much wrap up the proceedings.

The job of the communications media is to bring this quadrennial political show to the viewing and listening public as part of its responsibility of informing the electorate.

MOUNTING A CONVENTION REMOTE:

Mountains of Work, Millions of Dollars. What does it take to put on television's largest remote? In a few words, mountains of work and millions of dollars. To provide their gavel-to-gavel coverage, CBS and NBC each brought 750 to 800 news people, technicians, and administrators to the convention cities. ABC, with its unconventional convention coverage, used more than 400. Among the radio nets and European correspondents, another 300 souls were present, not to mention the print and magazine people. Network costs were widely publicized as \$23 million total for all networks. This doesn't count loss of advertising revenue since the networks can only sell part of the available commercial time to sponsors.

The only practical way to cover remotes of this magnitude (unless they're in New York or Los Angeles) is by pre-wired vans and trailers, even if both conventions are in the same city. While it would seem ideal to put in cabling, studios and booths ahead of time in a convention hall when it is built or remodeled, it simply is too much to expect that it will be suitable for the particular coverage required. The number and location of cameras, the number of recorders, the RF links needed, and the switching involved works out to be different nearly every time. So, when the networks are asked to advise architects and planners on new convention halls, they invariably are reduced to pleading for enough electric power, adequate air conditioning for the stepped up lighting needs of color, and plenty of room to park vans and trucks inside or adjacent to the hall.

1968 CONVENTIONS: Full Color, Wireless Color Cameras, Back-Pack VTRs, Slo-Mo Disc.

In keeping with long standing tradition the Republicans held their convention first in early August, followed a couple of weeks later by the Democrats. This year the two conventions were held in separate cities, Miami Beach and Chicago, which presented many problems for communications media.

In terms of television technology, 1968 was set apart by several marked distinctions from earlier conventions. In the first place, all coverage was in color this time. More importantly, a great deal of floor coverage was done with the portable hand-held color cameras, most of them with microwave to eliminate the problem of connecting cables. Similarly, wireless microphones of a new breed came into wide use. Away from the convention floor, back-pack videotape recorders were used for the first time by two nets which added a new dimension to behind the scenes and fast breaking news, particularly in Chicago where tape sped by couriers had to take the place of microwave links. Finally, real on-site production flexibility in high band color

was possible this time by the use of still frame ("Slo-Mo") disc recorders and electronic videotape editing so that splice free segments from many different sources could be assembled into programs for replay within the shortest time after the event.

Two of the three networks offered complete coverage, the so-called gavel-to-gavel reporting of CBS and NBC. ABC on the other hand, through a mixture of strict budgets and experimentation put on a 90-minute summary from 9:30 to 11:00 pm, in what they termed their unconventional convention coverage. Besides the three television networks, the European Broadcasting Union, many European radio networks as well as American radio networks (Mutual, Group W, Metro-media) were fully represented.

gether were continuous platforms running among the vehicles. ABC used 13 trailers and only two vans, building the remainder of their required space on site at both the Miami and Chicago convention halls.

In terms of cameras used, the figures represent a big increase over 1964. Both CBS and NBC used about 60 cameras each. ABC with its more limited coverage had about 20. In the case of the pool coverage of the podium and floor, which all of the networks and independents subscribed to, these cameras were supplied and manned in Miami by NBC and similarly by CBS in Chicago. Mutual broadcasting provided pooled audio from each state position on the floor and from the speakers platform. ABC coordinated and integrated RF communications.



View of convention floor from ABC's booth.

A MULTIMILLION DOLLAR MOVING JOB: From Miami to Chicago.

Because the conventions were split between cities some two thousand miles distant, the networks from the beginning planned to install as much equipment as possible in trailers and vans which in theory could be plugged in at each end. Needless to say, the thousands of miles of cable and installation of fixed cameras around the halls made this idealized theory quite a bit more difficult in practice. CBS had over 60 trailers, vans and mobile units. Several of the trailers were put side by side with connecting doorways for office and administrative use. Most of the equipment and the vans were brought in from CBS New York and CBS Hollywood. Connecting the vans to

HAND HELD COLOR CAMERAS: Linked by RF. Really unique to the camera coverage in the '68 conventions was the first extensive use of wireless color cameras. The ABC units, the Ampex BC-100 "Scrambler," which saw extensive service at football games and the winter Olympics in Grenoble were also used in Mexico City to cover the summer Olympics. This unit uses two Philips Plumbicon* tubes and an RF back-pack module supplied by Microwave Associates. Sharp, brilliant color is obtained at light levels as low as 100 foot candles. It operates on a video transmission frequency of 13 GHz. Similarly, the CBS labs Minicam Mark VI and the RCA Man-pack portable operated at 13 GHz. Complementing the freedom of use and flexibility of

*REG. TM, N.V. PHILIPS' GLOEILAMPENFABRIEKEN



Frank Reynolds, ABC News.

CBS anchorman at the conventions, news correspondent Walter Cronkite.



CBS correspondent Eric Sevareid.

CBS correspondent Mike Wallace.



ABC control booth.



One of three dual VR-2000 equipped recorder stations set up by ABC in Chicago. Girl in foreground is logging a tape during recording to provide a fast access index and archival record. One station had an Ampex HS-100 Slo-Mo recorder for stills and slow motion.

the wireless cameras was a new breed of interference free wireless microphones supplied primarily by Microwave Associates as used by CBS, and Airborne Instruments Laboratory as used by ABC and NBC.

VIDEOTAPE RECORDERS: Studios, Remote Vans, and Back Pack. The increased quantities of equipment applied not only to cameras but to videotape recorders as well. CBS had a total of 21 recorders, topped off by two VR-2000's in Miami and six VR-2000's in Chicago, accompanied by three VR-3000 back-pack recorders. The VR-3000's were used with CBS's new color camera to move outside of the arena and pick up important events as they happened. For example, in Chicago five



William F. Buckley and Gore Vidal presented opposing views during ABC's unconventional convention coverage.

CBS mobile units with a typical complement of one VR-1200 and one of their three VR-3000's shuttled between the hotels, the sites where demonstrations might be held, and in nearby environs of the Amphitheatre. CBS converted all commercials to high band tape for replay on two of their VR-2000's from the convention hall. CBS's recorders were in almost constant use recording every minute of the floor coverage, the pool cameras, and pickups from other points in the hall.

ABC had ten videotape recorders, six VR-2000's (three with Editec) and a VR-1200 at the Amphitheatre. In addition, they had three vans, each with VR-1200's which moved between the hotels and other areas to cover fast breaking news. ABC handled its commercials from the network center in New York or by the local outlet, WBKB.

Because of a communications strike and other delays in setting up in Chicago, the networks were not able to have a microwave link between the downtown areas and the convention hall, as they had in Miami Beach. For this reason the versatility, immediate replay, and color fidelity of videotape recording again proved its value. Fast breaking events were covered by the recorder equipped vans and VR-3000 back-pack units as they happened. The tapes were sped by special motorcycle courier to the Amphitheatre for immediate replay. To handle expected activities at the headquarters hotel without microwave link, CBS put in four extra VR-2000's to work with some 16 cameras at the hotel.

UNCONVENTIONAL ABC NEWS: 90-Minute Coverage. The most interesting and discussed experiment at the convention was the unconventional convention coverage carried by ABC television. The executive producer Wally Pfister divided his 90-minute prime time package into five distinct sections. His idea was to edit the coverage in the same way that a good newspaper would. Pfister said, "Instead of just putting on all cameras and showing viewers endless hours of ceremonials, we are going to spend our time giving them an in-depth view of the behind the scenes process of choosing presidential candidates."

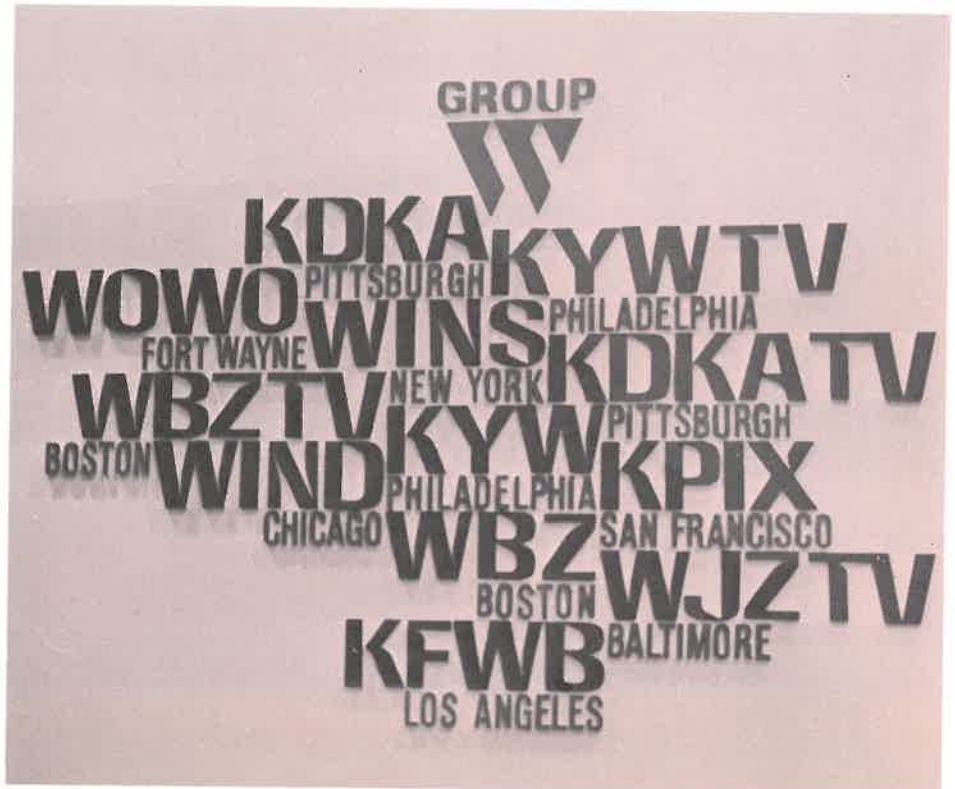
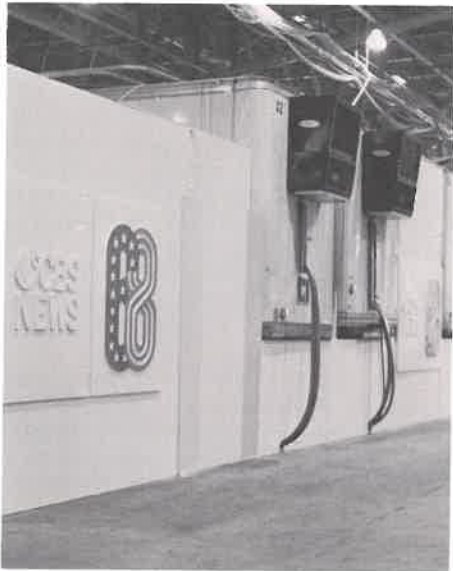
The first segment of the 90-minute program was a 25 to 30-minute instant documentary highlighting a particular theme as anchored by Howard K. Smith. Following the documentary a 20-minute round-table discussion was held by the correspondents who actually covered the floor activities and other behind the scenes action. This section was moderated by ABC News political editor William Lawrence.

The third segment was Insider's Report: a five to six-minute hard news in-depth feature led by Frank Reynolds to focus on some important aspect of the convention that otherwise might get lost in the crush. These reports for example, included studies of the delegates communications set-ups, and the security measures. The fourth segment, running 15 to 20 minutes, featured the incisive and often controversial viewpoints of Guest Commentators William F. Buckley, Jr., and Gore Vidal. Moderating was Howard K. Smith. The final element in the unconventional format was an eight or ten-minute segment called "Update" to bring the viewer right up to the moment on what had been taking place while ABC's convention program was on the air. Closing off the Update section was a short segment called "Lawrence on the Spot" in which the veteran political editor made a prediction on what would be happening the next day. The entire format was kept quite flexible so that any segment could be made longer or shorter to handle each day's events.



ABC floor reporters.

Rear of CBS trailers, part of the 60-odd trailers, vans and mobile units brought to Chicago by CBS.

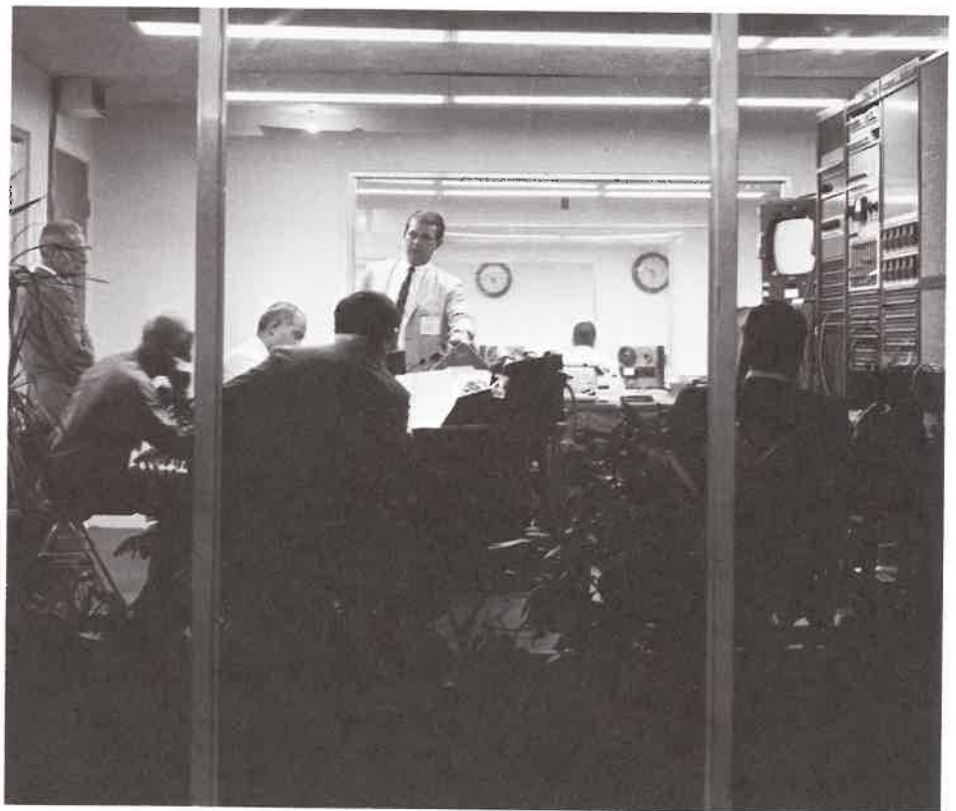


Group W sent out detailed coverage to eight radio stations in key markets with the help of three Ampex 602 recorders.

Putting together this 90-minute segment was basically an all-day job monitoring and recording significant events. But actual assembly with the aid of electronic editing on the VR-2000 recorders was compressed into the hour and a half or so before the show went on the air. Since it was a mixture of live coverage by anchorman and commentators, plus many news segments recorded during the day, the activity around the three videotape rooms was pretty much of a white flash in the final moments before air time.

All seven of the ABC videotape recorders were in use to produce a typical 90-minute session. Basically, the three rooms, two with two VR-2000 recorders each, the third with two VR-2000's and a VR-1200, were assigned as follows. One room previewed material recorded during the day. A second room recorded the proceedings from the pool camera. A third room either recorded selected material from the first two rooms or it reviewed tapes just brought in from the mobile units.

Stationed at each of the machines as material was being recorded or replayed were logging typists who put down keywords at each minute interval or between minutes if a change of scene or quotable comment had occurred. These logging records are kept with each tape for semi-permanent storage in the ABC library.



Mutual Radio's control room and announce booths showing two Ampex 600 series recorders in use.



ABC's pre-convention coverage also proved the value of the Ampex BC-110 wireless color camera.

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Metromedia radio provided coverage to nine stations around the country. Equipment used included Ampex 601 recorder and SA-10 speaker amplifier units.



European Broadcasting Union leased this VR-1200 equipped van from CFTO to record pool coverage and its own floor camera. CBS managed EBU technical arrangements in Chicago. NBC in Miami.

STILL FRAME VIDEO: The "Slo-Mo" High Band Color Recorder. Especially interesting during the airing and pre-preparation of the 90-minute segment was the selection of short segments for still frame recording on the Ampex HS-100 "Slo-Mo" high-band color recorder. On the fourth evening of the Chicago convention, the vice-presidential nominations were taking place. It was also known that the presidential nominee would be arriving and his entry into the hall would be recorded from a pool camera. Many tapes from that day and earlier in the week were quickly scanned, using one, two, or even three recorders at a time to select a wave of the hand, a smile, or a closeup of a candidate and his wife, to record onto the HS-100 disc recorder. This recorder can repeat up to 30 seconds of action over and over again. Transferring back from the HS-100 onto another VR-2000 that is equipped with Editec allows a still frame of a hand wave or particular expression to be stretched out for as long a time as the director wants, to establish a theme idea or mood. In each of the recorder stations, one of the VR-2000's was equipped with electronic editor, so that these inserts from the HS-100 as well as inserts from the other recorders and film chains could be inserted quickly and easily without breakup of the picture.

For the closing sequence on this session, six individual still frame shots were selected showing Vice-President Humphrey waving, Humphrey with his wife, Senator Muskie at the podium, Senator Muskie's wife and the two candidates together, all in still-frame images. Similarly, the HS-100 machine was used at the Republican convention and at earlier sessions of the Democratic convention in the opening and closing sequences to show still frames of significant moments.

FUTURE CONVENTIONS: Unconventional Coverage to Become Conventional? Television certainly plans to be there in force again at the 1972 national conventions. Whether the ABC unconventional summary format will be adopted by the other nets remains to be seen. The best guess is that it might be, but with modifications to tailor it for their own style. In the realm of equipment, hand-held wireless color cameras, back pack videotape machines, and slow-motion recorders have unquestionably proved their value and reliability under fire. These will become, along with newer developments in miniaturization, a permanent feature in covering television's biggest remote. ■



Special Report:
Ampex at the Olympics



Fifteen-story Communications Tower rushed to completion by Mexican Ministry of Communications housed recording, switching, monitoring and microwave transmission gear. Antenna dishes on the roof linked the tower with cameras at the various venues around the city and relay stations to the U.S. and overseas satellites.

More Than 50 Networks Captured Olympic Color and Spectacle for 800 Million World Viewers

MEXICO 68, a graphic symbol splashed in bright colors throughout Mexico City, signified the place and date of the XIX modern Olympiad. Records of all kinds were set here, athletic and otherwise, including a new record of television coverage by more than 50 broadcasting networks from every corner of the earth. It was television's biggest effort by far (requiring for example, 60 videotape recorders), and proved among other things that nations can work together equally as well in the tele-communications arena, as on the athletic field.