

Numbers in this spreadsheet reference the captions under each of the photographs below.

	INDOCTRINATING LAWRENCE WELK TO THE 10min TIME SPAN BETWEEN COMMERCIALS	FILE	Resolution	PRINT	
#	CAPTION	TYPE	(Pixels/inch)	ASPECT	PHOTOGRAPHER
	AN INTERESTING DIRECTORAL EXPERIENCE				
01	KLAUS LANDSBERG, GENERAL MANAGER OF KTLA				
02	KTLA'S FIRST STUDIOS ON BRONSON ST. IN FRONT OF & OUTSIDE MAIN GATE TO PARAMOUNT STUDIOS				
03	PAGE 1 OF "INDOCTRINATING LAWRENCE WELK TO THE 10min TIME SPAN BETWEEN COMMERCIALS"				
04	MAESTRO LAWRENCE WELK				
05	JOHN SILVA SITTING WITH SPADE COOLEY & LAWRENCE WELK				
06	PAGE 2 OF "INDOCTRINATING LAWRENCE WELK TO THE 10min TIME SPAN BETWEEN COMMERCIALS"				
07	ROBERTA LYNN, LAWRENCE WELK'S 1st CHAMPAIGN LADY				
08	THIS PICTURE, THOUGH SHOWING KTLA'S 1st BREAKING NEWS EVENTS, SERVES TO SHOW A TK-30 CAMERA, 3 OF WHICH WERE USED ON THE WELK SHOW & SHOWS THE MOBLE UNIT USED TO HOUSE THE SHOW'S ELECTRONIC PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT				
09	INSIDE MOBILE UNIT COVERING THE LAWRENCE WELK SHOWS				
10	JOHN SILVA, DIRECTOR OF THE LAWRENCE WELK SHOW, FOR 3 YEARS				
11	PAGE 3 OF "INDOCTRINATING LAWRENCE WELK TO THE 10min TIME SPAN BETWEEN COMMERCIALS"				
12	PAGE 4 OF "INDOCTRINATING LAWRENCE WELK TO THE 10min TIME SPAN BETWEEN COMMERCIALS"				



01



**INDOCTRINATING LAWRENCE WELK TO THE 10 MINUTE TIME SPAN
BETWEEN COMMERCIALS**

In the early days of television at KTLA, Channel 5, I had the opportunity and pleasure of combining both, the directing of television shows, and serving as Chief Engineer for the station -- all at the same time.

This unusual combination came about because the Vice President and General Manager of the station, Klaus Landsberg, had come from an engineering background, but had an enormous flare for television production. He created and directed most of the early TV shows that started as far back as the 1940's.

Over the years, Klaus and I developed a great friendship. This happened as we worked closely together in the experimentation of television programming and engineering in the "early" days. I joined Klaus at KTLA in March, 1946.

As Klaus developed each show, he then proceeded to direct it for a year or so, until his creative juices directed him to other avenues, such as the search for new and interesting talent.

At that point, Klaus would turn the show over to me to direct. I knew each show fairly well because I was his Technical Director on all of these early productions.

In time, Klaus' search for talent led him to the discovery of none other than Lawrence Welk, himself. Lawrence had been in the music world for some time, but had never been involved with television.

With this discovery, Klaus created and directed what became the "Lawrence Welk Show", which was televised every Friday night at 9:00 P.M. from the Aragon Ballroom on Lick Pier in Santa Monica, California.

After about a year of doing the show, Klaus and Lawrence, who were both very definite-minded individuals - in themselves, began to have both business and creative differences.

This went on for a while. Finally, Klaus said to me, "enough of this -- John, you have just inherited the Lawrence Welk Show -- I'll show him!" -- He probably thought I would mess it up, and serve him right!

At that point, I started directing the production. As a matter of fact, I directed it for three years. During that time it developed into the number one rated TV show in the Los Angeles area.

The "Lawrence Welk Show" was both interesting and exciting to do. There was no rehearsal. It was a procedure of counting musical bars and switching and dissolving between three cameras, to the beat of the music, while referring to a special music cue sheet that Lawrence would provide each week.





The sheet had no music on it, but instead, a sequential listing of the band sections (musical instrument groups), along with the number of musical bars played by each, as each musical arrangement progressed, i.e. 16 bars of violins - followed by 16 bars of brass section - followed by 8 bars of organ, etc.

It was a matter of getting together with Lawrence before the show to go over this cue sheet and to discuss any production details, such as his dancing with his Champagne Lady (Roberta Lynn), or any other detail he thought needed special treatment. This was all the preparation the show ever got -- no camera or talent rehearsal. But the show went off beautifully, with *almost* no on-camera errors during the performance.

Once the show was over, and the dust had settled, Lawrence, his Champaign Lady, Roberta Lynn, and I would meet in the bar in the Aragon Lounge, occupy a booth, and spend an hour or so rehashing that night's performance. Lawrence always wanted me to tell him what I thought of the show, and I always used to tell him it was terrific - which it was!

At that point in time in the television world, commercials were always scheduled to run in sequences starting every 15 minutes during a production. Usually two or three commercials were involved in each break. This was standard in the industry.

However, as time developed, the networks began shifting over to commercial breaks starting every 10 minutes. After observing network programming, Klaus thought this was a good idea, and decided to try it on Channel 5.

All was well until he decided to inaugurate the new commercial break timing on the Lawrence Welk Show.

Lawrence was very unhappy about the whole thing, to put it mildly. He felt very strongly that his show would suffer greatly if it were broken up every 10 minutes with commercials. He told Klaus that in no way was he about to change his show format to accommodate a 10-minute commercial interval. Klaus, of course, had other ideas and was not about to be distracted.

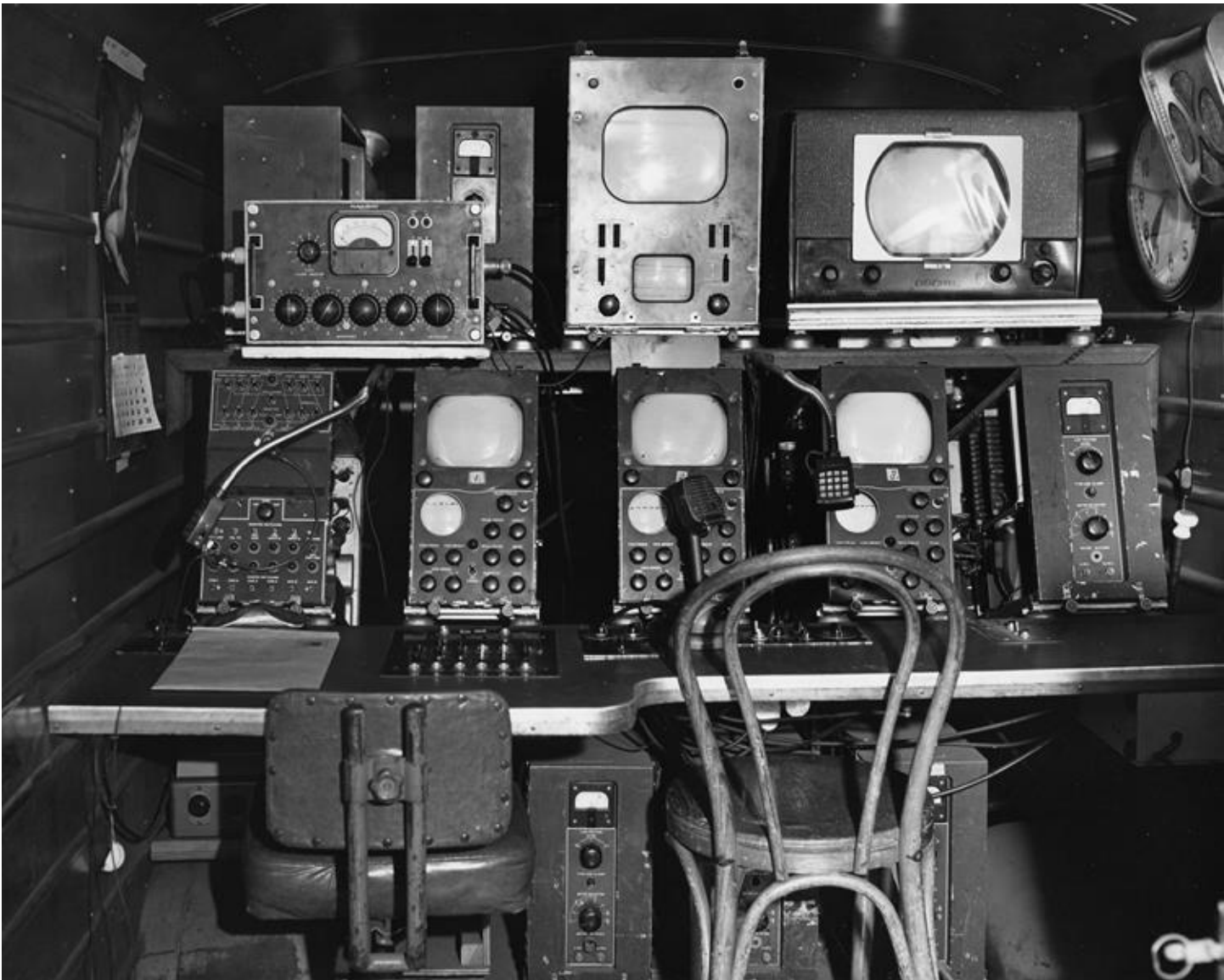
During the days preceding the next show, both of them argued their own cases, with neither giving in. Lawrence declared he was doing his show around the 15 minute commercial break timing. Klaus declared the 10-minute format was going to be implanted right on schedule, and that meant on the "Lawrence Welk Show".

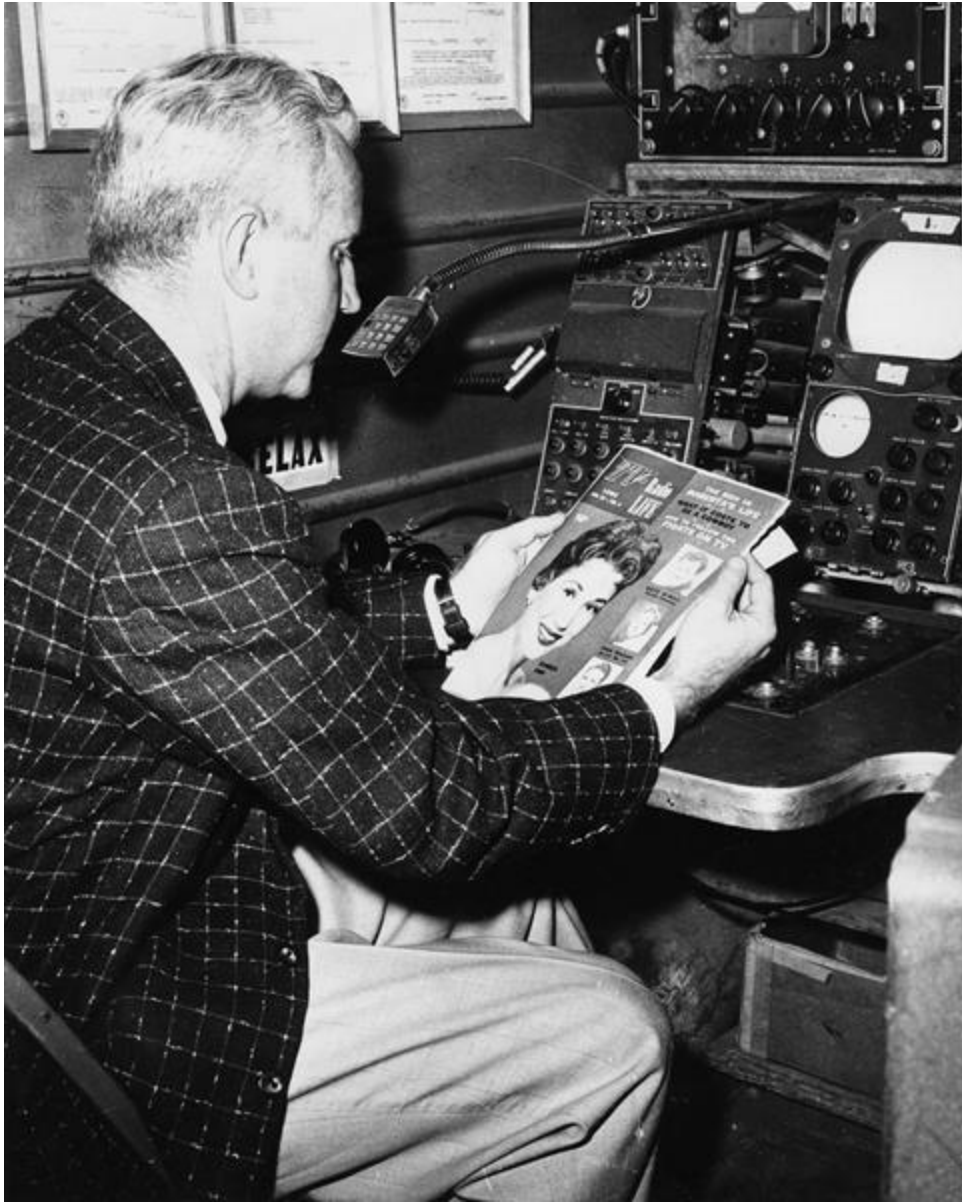
On Friday, the day of the impending show, I was confronted with both Klaus and Lawrence. First Klaus reminded me that I had to exit the show and return to the studio for commercials exactly on split second timing, regardless of what Lawrence was doing with his production at the time.



07







When I got to the Aragon Ballroom prior to the show, Lawrence, of course, pulled me aside to warn that his musical production was timed as always before – exactly for 15-minute commercial breaks. I told him that I had no choice but to follow Klaus' orders, as I worked for KTLA, and that I hoped he wouldn't take this personally.

He said that he was not going to hold me personally responsible, but that I had *better not* work against his format timing. We shook hands and went our own ways.

Finally show time came, and it went off like clockwork – the beginning, that is.

Nine minutes into the show the phone rang, and who's on the other end of the line but Klaus Landsberg, himself.

We've just started a fairly long musical number. I'm busy counting bars to the beat, and switching and dissolving between cameras – and Klaus is telling me to standby, as we are about to come back for the first commercial break.

As the 10-minute mark came up, and the band was right in the middle of this intricate number, we switched back to the studio. Of course, the band played on.

I cued my stage manager that we were in a break, and he, in turn, cued the camera crew to "cool it" for the break. In the meantime, Lawrence and the band were playing their hearts out.

As performers always play to the camera with the red tally light on, I directed the cameramen to pan their cameras on anything but the band while we were on the commercial break.

When this happened, I saw a strange look come over Lawrence Welk's face.

Anyway, the number concluded, and at that very instant, the studio switched back from the studio to the Aragon Ballroom, having completed the commercial break.

Immediately, as scheduled in his program, Lawrence did his commercial lead-in and "sent it back to the studio" – right in front of God – and everyone else watching the show!

Of course, we didn't switch back to the studio. Our cameras were focused on Lawrence and the musicians, who were doing absolutely nothing.

As we had about 3 minutes to look forward of observing absolutely nothing, I decided to pan the cameras on the huge audience that surrounded the bandstand.

When Lawrence saw this, he looked very grim, but he knew then that he was positively between a rock and hard place.

After about a minute, which seemed like an hour to me, he directed the band to start the next number, and did his normal verbal lead-in.

From that point on, Lawrence did his best, and I certainly did mine, to continue the show and follow our lead in getting in and out of commercials. Of course, the rest of the show was *very* rough around the edges

Anyway, after about an hour of this, the show finally struggled to a conclusion, and Lawrence managed to do his normal ending.

Needless to say, Lawrence, Roberta and I did not have our usual post show meeting that particular night. After the show, and a brief word with the production crew, I got into my car and headed back to the studio in Hollywood. There was no way I was going to post-mortem the show *this* particular night, and I was positive that Lawrence felt exactly the same way.

As a postscript to this episode, I would like to say that after that night, Lawrence Welk was a good sport about the experience, and became very cooperative in adapting to the 10-minute interval between commercials from that point on.

Lawrence and I never looked backwards after this episode. Each week after the show, which continued to be rated "number one" for some time, Lawrence, Roberta and I continued to meet in the Aragon Ballroom Lounge to have our post-mortem meeting after each show.

He never mentioned the incident of the preceding week, nor did I, which in my mind, proved that Lawrence Welk was not only a good sport, but was even a bigger person that I had ever previously imagined.

John Silva
Written on 10/21/93