

Wake-Up Call for Channel 2

JOHN CARMAN TELEVISION

Now that "Mornings on 2" is a firm Bay Area institution — time flies and today is already its second day on the air — it's time to start thinking about fixing it.

The new KTVU (Channel 2) show for early birds was a can of diced worms in its debut yesterday. It was a choppy affair that seemed to skid to a halt before it ever began.

Viewers accustomed to the rival network programming — "Today," "Good Morning America" and whatever CBS is up to — have an idea of how morning shows flow.

First you get news for your morning skin bracer, then weather, then newsmaker interviews through the first hour and finally cuddly features and chatter between 8 and 9.

News and More News

It's not holy scripture, mind you, but it works. "Mornings on 2," on the other hand, came across as news bits for people whose memory spans expire at commercial breaks.

The newly hired host, Steve McPartlin, immediately handed the show over to news anchor Terry Lowry for the morning headlines. Fine. But then at 7:15, it was back to Lowry for more "News of the World." Then we had another Lowry newscast at 7:23, and again at 7:35.

By the time 7:47 rolled around, McPartlin was telling us, "Here's Terry with this morning's news." At 7:55, it was, "And now Terry's here with some more news of the day."

Breaks at 8, 8:12, 8:27 . . .

Naturally there was a news break at 8 a.m., and before you knew it, "It is 8:12, and Terry is here once again with today's news." Not to be confused with the news reports at 8:27, 8:35, 8:42 and 8:53.

And what were all these news reports? Mostly repeated footage of Saddam Hussein watching chow being cooked for Iraqi troops, and Washington officials scurrying around yesterday in limousines.

Yet Channel 2's stated rationale for the program is that the network morning shows are stale. Three hours old by the time they're rewound and played out here on the West Coast! Ancient history! "Mornings on 2" would fill that all-important three-hour gap.

Packaged Filler

Channel 2's prefab report yesterday on the new session of Congress hardly seems to fill the mandate. The show's only jump on the networks was that two banks followed the Bank of America's lead early yester-



The 'Mornings on 2' crew: host Steve McPartlin, news anchor Terry Lowry and reporter Eric Greene

day and lowered their prime interest rates. I could have waited.

To be fair, yesterday was the first day after a holiday, no doubt contributing to the dearth of fresh information, and "Mornings on 2" could prove more useful on busier days.

McPartlin, a former "Inside Edition" reporter, avowed that he was nervous yes-

'Mornings on 2' debuts with frequent news breaks using repeated film footage of Saddam Hussein

terday. But his screen presence and frequent quips went down easily enough. I'm still waiting for vital signs of intellectual prowess, though.

Interviewing the new San Jose mayor, Susan Hammer, McPartlin led off by asking how San Jose could possibly control growth

during an economic recession. Hmmm. The station's ace business reporter, Brian Banmiller, must have been squirming off-camera over that one.

"Mornings on 2" was by no means a disaster, but it needs to give viewers more compelling reasons to watch it.

Bring On the Guests

More studio guests would help — or would this be a deadly drawback for a local show competing with New York broadcasts? — and time to accommodate them. That means cutting back on recycled news breaks. "Mornings on 2" begs for an actual TV show somewhere in there between the disjointed news snippets.

Also, Lowry looks like a precinct desk sergeant sitting up there at that anchor desk all through the show. Lowry is an agreeable TV personality and Channel 2 might well soften her role, integrating her into co-hosting duties with McPartlin.

Meantime, I'll pull up the covers and catch more z's. I still see no reason to start the day before I lurch groggily out of bed at the reasonable hour of 9 a.m.