PANORAMA

OF AMATEUR FILM & VIDEO   SUR LE FILM ET VIDEO AMATEUR

CONTENTS

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Swings!
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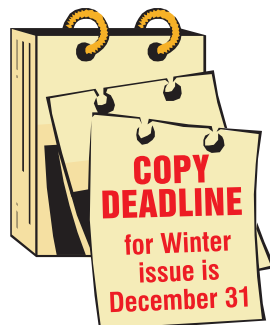
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Photo by Joseph Bochsler Jr.

Fred Briggs, FSCCA

First, I'm pleased to be able to report that I haven't heard of the passing of any of our members since the Spring PANORAMA. Of course, that doesn't mean that everyone is well, because there are several members from whom we should have heard by now, but haven't. But until we have bad news to report, let's rejoice in that! We'll return to those silent members later in this report.

We're a little late with this issue of PANORAMA, but not as late as we were with the previous issue, so that means that we're catching up! We have high hopes now of getting completely back on schedule for the Winter issue.

It's been pretty quiet since the last time I wrote to you! Our Convention was earlier this year than in recent years, and we weren't able to get the books audited in time for the AGM. However, that has been looked after now (without any nasty surprises) and the Annual Report to the Charities Division of Revenue Canada was submitted before the deadline. In fact, there was so little pressing business on our agenda that we cancelled the monthly Board Meeting in November!

We held off posting the Summer Issue of PANORAMA to our two SCCA web sites because we have had some complaints that our dues paying members should at least get to see PANORAMA some time before those who aren't members, who were able to see it as soon online as members got it in the mail. However, as this issue was being prepared for the printer, the Summer Issue went up on both web sites, s-c-c-a.ca and sccaonline.ca.

Strangely, there was a problem that was difficult to troubleshoot. The Summer Issue shows up on both sites using two browsers, Internet Explorer and Netscape, but on Mozilla Firefox the newly posted issue appeared on sccaonline.ca, but not on s-c-c-a.ca! HTML (Hyper-Text Markup Language), the computer language in which web pages are written, can be very complicated, and there are many variations. Some conventions are understood by one browser, but not another, and small errors in the code can be ignored or accommodated by one browser and fail to work on another browser. This makes it tricky to track down the problem, and I found many possible culprits, but as I fixed each one, I retested the code, and I just couldn't get the Summer Issue to present itself at the s-c-c-a.ca site on the Mozilla Browser!

I resigned myself to the need to warn you that if you can't get the Summer Issue at the s-c-c-a.ca site, look for it on the sccaonline.ca site, and I planned to make this explanation. But strangely, a few hours ago, my Mozilla browser announced that there was an important update available, and that I should immediately shut down and restart my computer, and the update would be installed automatically. I complied, and then when I rechecked s-c-c-a.ca for the Summer issue, it suddenly appeared! Go figure! However, your mileage may vary, and if you do have trouble, please let me know which browser you use, and look for it on our other site.

In the Summer issue I began a new series of articles entitled *Get The Shot*. There I explained what I thought was a remarkably easy procedure for reversing the direction of action without creating a problem with printing appearing backwards. I even confessed that one person to whom I had explained this idea had commented "You know you're crazy. don't you?" But I was so confident in my confusion that I suggested that you test it for yourself, without actually testing it for *myself!*

After the article appeared in print one of our members approached me at a club meeting and informed me that, while he hadn't tried it himself, he was sure it wouldn't work. He started to explain his theory with a lot of confusing analogies about mirror reflection and being on the other side of the mirror looking out. We both tried to discuss it intelligently, but with all the distractions at a club meeting, neither of us was really able to maintain our concentration to think it through with confidence. I understand that Albert Einstein figured out the Theory of Relativity with a "thought experiment" but I've never been able to focus that well! Besides, as I've often said, "The older I get, the better I was!"

So I took my own advice and tried it. I videotaped cars traveling from my right to my left in front of a department store. Then I turned the camera upside down and taped cars going from my left to my right at the same spot. I transferred the shots to my computer, using Magix, because Magix has the facility to easily flip a scene with what they call "Mirror vertically", and "Mirror horizontally" as well as Rotate the scene up to 360 degrees.

In the footage on the computer screen all the cars moved from the right to the left, but on those shots made with the cars going from left to right and the camera held upside down, the cars are upside down hanging from the top of the screen, and the name of the store appears at the bottom of the screen, and backwards. A vertical flip puts a car at the bottom of the screen, still moving from right to left, but the name of the store is backwards, while a horizontal flip only, reverses the cars' motion, but leaves them upside down, and the printing backwards. And if you make both flips the car is upright, the writing is the right way around, but the car is going from the left to right, as it was really, and as we are trying to reverse.

If, on the other hand, you use a rotation of 180 degrees, you get exactly the same result as the double flip!

Do you see how logical and easy this is to understand when it's explained clearly? What you don't appreciate is how long it took me to convince myself of what was going on because I kept getting confused about which shots were going left and which were going right, and which ones I had already rotated or flipped! I guess I can claim one point for humility and nothing else! As the man said to his chiropractor, "I stand corrected!"

I hope everyone noticed the announcement in the Summer issue that the Assigned Theme for the Intercities Competition for 2008 will be "A Bird In The Hand". It's becoming popular in the clubs to have an Assigned Theme Contest, and we thought that we were announcing the Theme early enough for clubs to adopt it for their own contest, which would augment the number of entries in that Competition next year. It appears that some clubs have announced a different theme for their own contest. Oh well, there's no reason why they can't have two different Assigned Theme Contests!

Please note that this issue carries a Roster of Members in Good Standing as of November 30th. Please check it carefully, as if your name isn't on the list, this will be your FINAL PANORAMA, as Membership Fees were due June 1st. This should also be evident by the sticker on your PANORAMA announcing that it is your Final Issue. To reinstate your Membership you can send in your fee along with the personalized Membership Renewal Form included in your copy of the Summer Issue, and mail it in the self-addressed envelope also enclosed in that issue. How much easier can we make it?

Lastly, I appeal again for your support, in soliciting new members for the SCCA, and in writing articles for PANORAMA. Thom Speechley and myself are finding it difficult to fill 24 pages every time. ∎

CLUB NEWS

By Thom Speechley

Back to work!

Those clubs which ended regular meetings for the summer appear to have been very busy shooting material in anticipation of their new club season. Opening meetings featured personal as well as club efforts made during the break.

BRANT VIDEOMAKERS

Brant Camcorder News,
editor Dan Kennaley

Joan Jacquemain's minutes of the June meeting reported that in anticipation of Canada day, an old copy (1927) of the complete version of *O Canada* was read. It was found in the antique family Bible brought in by Randy Hincks. Six members' videos were shown, all with subjects about the wealth of Canadian scenery.

Frank Birch showed a helpful video on the subject of lighting.

At the September 26 meeting, Terry Kittridge was unable to attend and show his video as previously announced. There were several announcements of interest to members. The first described the local website *Kijiji,* where various items can be bought and sold, as at eBay.

Keith Gloster advised that the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Museum has a set of films which they are offering for sale. One of the titles is "Cockshutt Way" a five disc set of old industrial films. Another is "First In the Field" about the Cockshutt plows.

Joan Jacquemain reported on the club's participation in the SCCA Convention held in August and showed her own videos of some of the activities at the Hamilton waterfront and a clip of Dan Kennaley and Frank Birch receiving their award for their production, *The Antiques Road Show*. First place winner in the advanced class, Richard Douglas, showed his video *Legacy of Stone*. Joe Blake and Joe Bochsler also showed videos.

BUFFALO MOVIE-VIDEO MAKERS

Camerama, editor John Weiksnar

The September meeting marked the beginning of the club's 74th year. Featured were guests Josephine M. Perini from the *Movies on a Shoestring* film festival in Rochester. Neal Tobochnik added his explanation of how they judge films entered each year. They screened 5-6 shorts from their DVD of contest entries, including movies and animation. Phil and Rebecca Utech showed a charming short on the Corning Glass factory followed by three shorts by Emil J. Novak from his Buffalo Nickel Productions company: *Banshee* opening credits, the *Banshee* trailer, and a brand new 11-minute video piece, designed as a looping video that will run during commercial events we attend. Sam Terranova then reminded everyone that entries for the annual "Shorty Contest" were due at the October meeting. "Another summer has come and gone, and that means it won't be long for you to show the world and all your movie club buddies how much cinematic goodness you can pack into a mere five minutes of time. The annual Shorty Contest is here."
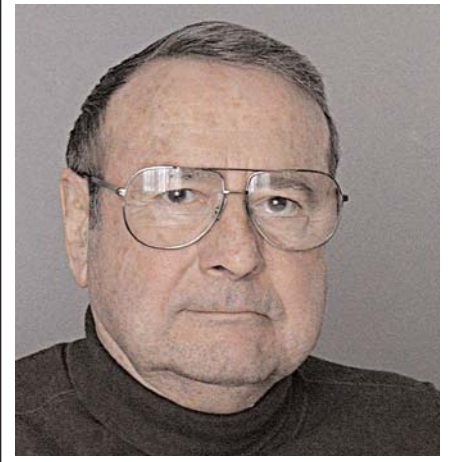
Those "Shorty" entries were shown for judging at the October meeting, to a very enthusiastic audience. The seven entries were:
1. "The Fall" by Fred Calendrelli
2. "Universal Monsters" by Emil J. Novak
3. "Heli-o-Rama" by John P. Weiksnar
4. "Something New" by Rebecca Utech
5. "Lens Filter Demo" by Phil Utech
6. "A Better Man" (Dir. Cut) by Jared Garlip and Chris Scioli
7. "Mr. Muzzy" by Lou Rera

Winners will receive their awards at the November meeting.

The October newsletter contains a helpful reminder about "shooting for the edit" by Fred Calendrelli. Here is part of the short article:

"Shooting for the edit is simply the process of imagining your shots already edited before you shoot them. In theatrical projects where action and continuity demand matched cuts or differing angle cutaway shots, knowing what shots will work in the edit before you actually make them ensures that your sequence will fit together. For example, a wide shot of a certain action sequence should not be cut directly to a similar wide shot. A transitional or "cutaway" shot is needed to bridge an otherwise jarring edit. This transitional could be a close-up or a wide shot from a substantially different camera angle.

"The simplest way to make it all work is to visualize your sequence first and then shoot each shot you imagined. If it worked in your head, it will most likely work in the editing room."

HAMILTON VIDEO/FILM MAKERS

Reel News, editor Dave Stewart

In the September issue, the editor had to report the interesting fact that the Hamilton club had lost its famous title.

"I have sad news to report this month. Due to the lack of movies submitted this year, the Ottawa club has assumed the Amateur Movie Making Capital of Canada title. We have held it since 1982 if the records are correct. Time to produce, people! If you did and decided not to submit them into the contests then next year get them ready so we can take the title back!!"

Dan Copeland has updated the club's website and invites everyone to visit.

"The new website is up and running. A few changes have been made. It now has a "For Sale" area for you to list your items. Club videos can be viewed, and comments can be left once you are registered." Current issues of "Reel News" can also be downloaded from the site. Go visit **http://hvfm.ca/**

The November issue of Reel News featured a report on the October annual "Open House", which included a well-

planned showing of SCCA and CIAFF videos and the usual excellent assortment of finger foods prepared by members. Joe Bochsler did the usual great job of recording the event in pictures.

Jon Soyka reminded members of Hamilton's unique geographical location and why members should take advantage of it.

"Within five hours drive of the Hamilton Video Club there are at least six other amateur video clubs. Have you taken the time to visit any of them? I will be introducing over the next few months videos from the various clubs with the intention of widening the scope of what you see as well as the hope that you will develop a desire to visit these clubs and meet other interesting amateurs."

LONDON VIDEOGRAPHY CLUB
It's A Wrap, editor Bob Thorn

September's meeting featured guest speaker Ryan Cane from Henrys. Ryan did an excellent job of explaining the not-so-subtle differences in the types of high definition camcorders now available. He also demystified the features of the CCD versus CMOS, which helps define the kind of "hi-def" quality we can expect.

Thom Speechley presented awards for club entries in the SCCA contest to those who were unable to attend the convention in August. Jim Town received the Calgary Club Trophy for most original entry for his *Autumn.* The awards for winning entries in the compulsory subject, *Your Call Is Important To Us,* were also displayed for the group.

On September 22, a group of members took advantage of our unusually summer-like weather, to visit the Hullett Conservation area east of the town of Clinton. Duck hunting season opened that day so it was a competition between us and the hunters to see who could "shoot" the most ducks. I think the hunters won!

The October meeting was devoted entirely to shooting a scenario script called *Crime For Passion* which we had borrowed from a "Creative Commons" website. Despite having to put the production back a week (due to the Provincial election! Our meeting place became a Returning Officer's location.) and having to replace two of the players, we managed to complete the shoot by 12:30 in the morning. Talk about devotion. We will see the results at our December meeting.

Please note, we are now uploading club videos to the CBC streaming website *Exposure.* Our first effort is the SCCA award winning "Please Hold….Your Call Is Important To Us". Here is the link: **http://exposure.cbc.ca/video/your-call-important-us**

THE VANCOUVER VIDEO PRODUCTION CLUB
Reel Talk, editor Cathy Caravan

The September issue contains pictures and a report of the club's well attended annual picnic, held this year on August 23. Pat Sheridan talks about how he is learning to take advantage of some of the current trends in technology and communications. He hopes to upload club videos to a streaming site in the near future since that would allow him to feature longer videos than are now possible on the club's website. He also talks about "Instant Messaging" by voice and video and speculates that that might become the most effective way in future, to conduct club board meetings.

Members' videos shown at the meeting were:

Ron Chappell: conversion of a 1979 film shot in Super 8 to DVD (skiing at Big White).

David Cooperstone: a 1986 local television news segment on the advent of amateur videography. This included clips from the VVPC Workshop production of *Homestretch* and interviews with club members and with David as the owner of The Studio Video Facilities. Loved those 80's hairstyles!

Craig MacDowall: a 1974 16mm film converted to DVD called *The Biz,* featuring the local band *Teen Angel.* Edited in Final Cut Pro. A great inside look at the local music scene in the 1970's.

Miles Walker: his submission included short comedies/commercials and a boating trip up the Sunshine Coast.

Sharon Connaughty: excerpt of her DVD produced from her recent trip to China, highlighting the town of Gu Yuan Tau near Shanghai. An enjoyable glimpse into life in a small town in central China."

In the October issue of *Reel Talk* Dave Hardy gives an upbeat message about the progress of the Workshop Group, which now has a new home.

"Fortunately this year we have a space in which we can get down to the business of building this unit. We now have room to move around & do our practice sessions. The purpose of the workshop is to develop the production skills of the members of the unit so that we can function in an efficient & productive manner when we get into production.

We will discuss the functions & techniques needed to be developed by the various members of the crew. At the October meeting we will be focusing mainly on the responsibilities of two of the key members of the director's team, the Script Supervisor & the AD. Brief instruction regarding the function of the camera assistant & the boom operator will be engaged in to the level that we can proceed with our practice shoot."

VICTORIA VIDEO CLUB
The Bulletin, editor James Hatch

The September club bulletin announced the change in Editor of their publication.

"With grateful thanks to Sheila Perkins for her long time service to the club as Bulletin Editor. It is hoped that Sheila will continue her support of the club in the future as when and where time will allow. James Hatch has been persuaded by your President and Executive to fill the vacant slot and to keep the cameras rolling and the continuity on track."

At the September meeting, Club President and outgoing Western Vice President of SCCA, Margaret Chamberlain, was presented with a certificate honoring her as a *Fellow* of SCCA. The new Western VP, David Fuller, made the presentation.

In an open letter of acceptance to SCCA President Fred Briggs, Margaret stated:

"I was thrilled to receive this award and feel it is a great honour. I thank you all for your generous and appreciative recognition for the energy and work I have given to the various groups to which I belong. I really appreciate the award and will hang it with pride in my office. A firm belief of mine is that if you want to know more about a club, offer to be on the executive and support the club in the best and most energetic way you can offer. There are always plenty of jobs just waiting to be taken on in any club or organization. Being an active and productive member in any group is by far the best way, in my opinion, to make new friends and be creative in more ways than one. I have done my best and enjoyed the fellowship and knowledge I have gleaned from all the groups with whom I am connected."

The program for the October meeting featured a News Presentation by Mila Werbik re: Impressions of UNICA Convention 2007, a Michael Veronneau movie demonstrating his discovered techniques, and members' movies entered in the 2007 Convention Contests

Members winning various awards were honoured at the November meeting.

Congratulations to Mila Werbik and her entry *Out of Antarctica* that won a

AMMA award, also in the *Ten Best*. Margaret Chamberlain won an Honourable Mention at the *Magic Lantern Festival* in New York for her video, *Trees*.

At the SCCA Annual 2007 meeting Eleanor Haire had two awards. *Through my Window* was second runner up, and her *A Journey to BC's Pacific Coast* won best Senior Entry. David Fuller won best scenario for his entry *Knock on Wood*.

WINNIPEG AMATEUR MOVIE AND VIDEO CLUB
Bulletin,
editors Jeanette and Wallace Robertson

Club president Al Ross reports in the October issue, a potentially embarrassing incident during a group outing to the Whiteshell Provincial Park. Here is part of his report.

"After I saw all the cars go through l pulled out and proceeded down the highway. Two minutes later (narrow highway), I heard a siren coming up behind us somewhere, so I pulled off the highway, hoping the others behind would do the same and let the emergency vehicle pass. They all pulled over and stopped. Good. So did the siren (stop)! Oh! Oh! Next thing I saw in my side mirror, was the lady in the car behind us get out - with her camera! Did she want to get us all shot? Then I noticed the "red-and-blue" flashing at the end of our convoy. Oh! Oh! A minute later, still looking into my side mirror, I noticed a lovely, tall, female Natural Resource officer walking up to our vehicle. [I think the same one who two years ago met us at the *Big Whiteshell Lake* dock at midnight after the RCMP rescued us from rough waters on our return trip from our *Lake Mantario* canoe trip. I remember her aptly plucking both my 35-pound backpack and that of my companion, out of the rescue boat, placing one on each shoulder, and marching us up the hill to our vehicle!]

"Are you Al Ross?" "Yes"- "Well Mr. Ross, I'll let it go this time, but the next time you bring a group into the Park, please ensure they have a Park Pass. The last vehicle in your convoy did not, and 'ran' the gate!!"

Al finishes the story by asking: "Can you guess what gets added to my computerized 'NEXT TIME' list?"

The October meeting consisted mainly of the showing of a series of interviews and skits performed at the annual club picnic in June. This seems like a very productive way to enjoy a get-together. A sort of "working picnic". The videos were shot by Fred Shlanda and Wallace Robertson. The interviews were mainly reminiscences of some humorous and other very nostalgic life events. Everyone, it seems has a story to tell and there was little reluctance to get involved in the project.

AMATEUR MOVIE MAKERS ASSOCIATION
AMMA Monitor, editor Gina Gullace

The September/October issue contains an entertaining report by Mark Levy on his recent experience of helping to establish a local Film Festival in Waverly, NY, pop. 4000. Despite the lack of time for planning, the festival did attract contestants from as far away as Switzerland and Hong Kong. Victoria, Canada Club President, Margaret Chamberlain won one of the awards, as reported elsewhere in this column.

Also in this issue, President Walt Gilmore summarizes the important points brought out in a panel discussion of the Los Angeles Cinema Club on "Narration" for an audio-video presentation. The article is illustrated and contains some excellent advice. For script preparation:

"Read aloud what you write to insure that the narrative flows. Remember what looks correct and understandable to the eye may not work for the ear. Check the timing of the words so that they fit the video and vice versa. (Editor's note: I tell my freshman comp students to read aloud into a tape recorder and play it back; don't rely on a live audience who may not always offer an honest opinion. Also, pay attention to how the words feel to you as you read them: if they come easily out of your mouth, chances are that the narrative has the flow you want; if you find yourself stumbling, the writing might be unintentionally wordy or awkward.)"

INSTITUTE OF AMATEUR CINEMATOGRAPHERS (IAC)
Film and Videomaker, editor Garth Hope

The October issue contains two reports of activities on the Continent which are of interest to English video makers. The first is *The Festival of Nations,* which this year took place at Ebensee, Austria. The writer, Alan Colegrave, who had two entries in the festival, comments on the high quality of the entries and adds that the level of judging is also very high. The second event is a unique opportunity to visit, and film, an ancient castle in the Czech Republic. The 17th century *Bouzov Castle* is a popular tourist site as well as serving as a set for historical or "fantasy" movies. Most of the visitors actually edited and exhibited their productions during their weekend stay.

Tom Hardwick's *Positive Image* column contains the usual bits of good advice for the experienced as well as the beginner. This month he takes what might be considered a controversial position regarding a traditional way of protecting you camera's precious lens.
Read on.

How Clean is Clean?

"Here's a little test that will check out the cleanliness or otherwise of your camcorder's lens. Connect your camera to a TV so you can get to see a decent-sized image. Use the camera in nice bright sunlight and, having removed the lens hood, arrange to have light falling on your 'spotless' super multi-coated UV filter. Zoom to the widest angle and if possible have a dark background (hedge, shadowed wall, etc). Now start to unscrew the filter and watch the flare spots 'turn' as you unscrew. Most folk are horrified at what this reveals, because adding the filter has effectively stopped you cleaning the front element properly as well as adding two more imperfectly clean surfaces. It's nothing against you or the lens cleaning methods you use, it's a side effect of the polluted world we live in and the tiny chips inside our camcorders. These tiny chips make the use of very short focal lengths imperative, and it's the huge depth of field that these focal lengths bring that shows up minute foreign particles so effectively. Still, if it gets one more person to abandon the 'protective' filter and to fit a lens hood, I'll feel all the better for it."

In another column, Howard Gregory explains why he cannot always offer advice on specific or unidentified microphones, and then lists a number of "clues" which might help the reader distinguish a poor mic from a possibly acceptable one. For instance, a cheap plastic body probably denotes a poor sound quality product. A mic purchased in a computer store is probably not intended for critical film making. Several other tips are offered.

Perhaps I have not mentioned the *IAC's* excellent website often enough. Case in point is a current tutorial by Arthur Bullock that covers a vast amount of detail, and while intended for the beginner, there are some good reminders even for the serious videographer.
Go visit:
www.theiac.org.uk/resources/bullock_intro.html ∎

Get the Shot!

by Fred Briggs

Sometimes "Getting the Shot" means doing whatever you can, or you have to, to get the shot you need, or even *may* need. Sometimes it means suddenly seeing an unexpected opportunity to get a shot that may be briefly available, and without which you can no longer live!

As I've mentioned repeatedly, by the time you read this, I'll have been working for eight years on a monumental project, the video history of the small community, known at the time as Burlington Beach, in which I spent my early years. I mention it again because I can't be so naive as to believe that everyone reads every word I write, and many of the lessons I have learned have been in researching and shooting that video.

A few abbreviated facts for those who don't know the place: over several years, a railway line was built by the Hamilton and North Western Railway (which included the former Hamilton and Lake Erie Railway) from Port Dover to Hamilton, and across Burlington Beach to Barrie and Collingwood, by 1878. The Hamilton and Northwestern and the Northern and Western Railways soon became closely interlinked, and both were swallowed up by the Grand Trunk Railway in 1888. The Grand Trunk had already absorbed Hamilton's first railway, the Great Western, in 1883, and the Grand Trunk then had routes from Buffalo and Detroit through to Toronto and Montreal, through Hamilton. In 1890 the GTR built a "short-cut" from Stoney Creek across a small marshy area (on trestles) to the tracks crossing Burlington Beach, so the fruit trains going to Toronto didn't have to go first into Hamilton and then back out again. (There's no need to remember any of this, or even understand it! Read on.)

In that small marsh today stands a group of four cement pillars and nearby another group of six, and I've been asked many times about "the bridge that used to cross on those pillars". No one seems to accept my reply that there was no bridge there, but two large "Hydro Towers". (For those who have

never lived in Ontario, I should explain that in Ontario, electricity is known as "hydro", after the Ontario Hydro-Electric Commission, the government agency which built transmission lines in the province starting in 1906 and bought out all the hydro-electric generating plants here in the early 1920's.)

Now that we've got through that, I had taken some excellent colour photographs of those concrete supports, from the vantage point of the old abandoned rail line running through the marsh, but then I came across an old photograph, shot in the winter, of a family with a sled on the ice, with the hydro towers behind and on either side of them. I thought it would be nice to get a shot from the same vantage point (on the shore across the water from the old railway embankment), and returned to the site.

The area, formerly a small community, was now part of a conservation area, and had been allowed to revert to the wild! I crashed through the heavy brush and undergrowth on several different expeditions, but each time, after

slashing my way through vines up to my chest, and bramble bushes up to my shoulders, I finally reached the water line and found it thick with impenetrable bulrushes.

It wasn't possible to get a shot that way, so I considered several alternatives, including carrying in a canoe, but the portage would be too far along that old railroad right-of-way at my age. I was resigned to the fact that I would have to wait until winter, and then go in along the old rail bed and cross the ice to get a position on the water side of the rushes. Then one day I saw a bulldozer on the embankment, and several workmen!

We were coming into the final days of construction of the parkway that was being built in the valley of the creek that fed that marsh! I couldn't imagine any ramp connection between the Queen Elizabeth Highway and the Red Hill Valley Parkway at that point, but I went in again to investigate.

I found three large, low pads, or cribs, built of timbers and filled with rock. They were right in the background of the area I was going to replicate in my shot! What was going in there? Maybe they were going to put up a big highway sign – "Welcome to Hamilton"!

For three weeks I telephoned and visited everyone in the city government, Ontario Highway department, and the Regional Conservation Authority. No one knew anything about it, what it was, or what it was going to be. Not even the Conservation Authority, even though it was right behind their headquarters building and less than a hundred yards away! Even after I went back and took photos to show them!

It was time for action! From experience, observations from the railway embankment, and by triangulation, I knew where I had to smash through the tangled willow forest to get to the only spot where there was a short break in the thick line of bulrushes. I dressed for the occasion, and carried my chest high waders and my camera in a canvas bag. About an

hour later I reached the water's edge, and changed into the waders. From there I was able to get out into the marsh and move laterally beyond the end of the growth to reach the approximate spot from which the original old photo was taken.

It wasn't easy, as each step required that I slowly pull one foot out of the muck while the other sank more deeply into it, but I got my shots (might as well take several while I'm there, because digital shots don't cost anything!). I got back onto terra firma eventually (difficult in itself as there was nothing to hold onto), and got out of the waders, back into shoes, and out of the woods. I was back to my car about two hours after I entered the bush, and I had my pictures. They weren't what I wanted, but I'll still go back this winter over the ice, as long as they haven't built a wall or billboard in my shot, but if I can't get the one I really want, with snow and ice, at least I have something on which to fall back.

It wouldn't have been possible without those waders I bought a year ago in case I needed them some day!

Several years ago I videotaped a railroad historian, Charles Cooper, who

has written two books on the Hamilton and North Western Railway, telling the entire story in an old restored railway carriage sitting at a siding in Tottenham, on the only remaining section of the track of that line. I blocked up several windows on one side, from the outside, with yellow Arborite (I didn't have green or blue, and the opportunity came up so suddenly that I didn't have time to get any!)

He sat near the window, and my

tripod was in the central aisle (there was nowhere else!) but I moved it back and forth between shots to provide some variation, and added wide angle shots (never showing any windows without the Arborite) and telephoto close-ups, so I could later edit down his narration without jump cuts.

The idea was to shoot traveling footage of the lake shore as it might have been seen from the interior of the car when the train ran. The train carried passengers along the entire length of Burlington Beach from 1876 until 1904, and continued as a freight train route until 1974. By then there was only one CNR customer remaining on Burlington Beach, until 1975 when the Beach Subdivision was abandoned. The tracks were removed and the road bed became a walking trail.

I planned to shoot the entire length of the four mile stretch from where the tracks entered the beach all the way to the Burlington Ship Canal. I arranged for help from the City of Hamilton, who had a John Deere Gator vehicle which they used to patrol the beach, picking up flotsam and jetsam thrown up by storms, dead fish and sea gulls, etc., and I was able to ride standing in the back (not quite a truck bed) with two tripods, one facing each of the two primary directions used in the car in Tottenham.

However, on viewing the footage, I was dissatisfied because the cinder rail trail was too rough, the Gator bounced, and the view didn't look at all like the view seen from a train window.

An extension of the rail trail continued into a lakeside park, and it was paved, so the following year I made arrangements with the park authority

to allow my friend to drive his hatchback along the paved trail while I sat in the back with my feet hanging out, shooting handheld to cushion the bumps a little, facing the lake at one angle on the first trip, and at another on the second run.

That was smoother, but the park, with its large trees, winding path, and huge rock groins, didn't look at all like the railroad-straight wind swept beach just a little further along the lake, so we tried Plan C.

They had paved a narrow strip along the edge of the cinder track for inline skate users, and my friend had a bicycle-built-for-two! We tried that too, with official permission. He pedaled and steered, and I pedaled a little, but mostly I just tried to stay on, while shooting the run parallel to the lake shore. It wasn't very long before I knew that this, too, was a failure. A bicycle sways from side to side with each push on the pedal, and the "tipping" motion was very evident through the view finder.

The third year they paved the cinder trail with nice, new, smooth asphalt, and I was back again very early in the season (in case I needed a fourth or fifth attempt!). They say three's the charm! One camera was shooting almost straight to the side, nearly at ninety degrees from our line of travel, and the other was shooting more to the rear, to duplicate the angles used in Tottenham. In order to monitor both cameras at the same time I had a large black cloth over my head and both cameras, with two holes cut in it for the lenses to peek out, so I was able to clearly see the two viewfinders. We must have been quite a sight – a bright green Gator, two tripods and cameras crowded into the back, a guy in a black cloth, yelling "Slower!" or "A Little Faster!", and warning people not to get to close to the lake side of the path behind me!

We shot all the way to the canal, and half way back (resetting the cameras first) and used an hour's tape in each camcorder. This looked so good that I was sure I had enough.

Then came the surprise opportunity!

There were a lot of people using the trail, walking, jogging, roller blading, and on bicycles traveling in both

PHOTOGRAPHY LAWS

by Tyler Hutcheon

Many of our members have raised questions about this topic recently, and we have found this information on the internet. While some of the information is specific to certain localities much of the advice is widely applicable. The author has generously permitted us to reprint this information, and asks that you visit his web site at http://ambientlight.ca as he updates the material when new information becomes available, and there you can follow the links easily for more information.

In an attempt to better understand the laws of photography, I endeavored to investigate the laws that apply to photographers. In my case, I am looking for the laws that apply to non-commercial photographers in or around Toronto, Ontario, Canada. However, with growing interest in the subject, a number of contributors (see revision history online for credits) have found laws that apply to other areas of Canada. The applicable laws may vary by city, province and country. Note that this is not legal advice, and I am not a lawyer, this is simply my interpretation of the laws surrounding photography. Not every law will apply to you, depending on your location and the type of photography you do.

Types of Laws

There are two different kinds of legal situations: There are laws, regulations, statutes, and bylaws, which society dictates are things that you are not allowed to do. The government (being municipal, provincial, or federal), on behalf of society, will enforce these, and punish you with fines, jail time, or community service. The other legal situation is between you and a private citizen or company, and is called Civil Law but may also be referred to as Private Law. Damages and restitution are awarded usually as financial compensation, to the victim.

Civil Law

Canadian Civil Law generally involves a dispute between you and another private citizen or company. Essentially, any private citizen or company can sue any other private citizen or company for almost any reason. Judges will look back to similar cases from the past, and use them as a guide in the ruling.

How Civil Law fits in

If you do damage to someone, then Civil Law will allow that person to get restitution for the damages. Although the previous sentence is a good guideline, this is not always the case. In some jurisdictions, for example, in Ontario, if you are charged and convicted of trespassing, the property owner can not sue you for the same reason.

Trespass to Property Act

If you break the law (federal, provincial, or municipal) and there is a private citizen or company that is a victim, you will be prosecuted by the government on behalf of society, and the private citizen or company may also choose to sue you for the damages you incurred. Another scenario is where no damage has occurred, and you can still be sued, this is much more rare.

Most common issues

With Civil Law, there are generally two main issues that you will run into: Slander/Libel/Defamation of Character and Privacy Law. These two are covered in depth below, however, Privacy Law is a provincial law in some provinces, and is mentioned in the provincial sections, however, invasion of privacy is also commonly sued for civilly.

Slander / Libel / Defamation of Character

Libel, simply put, is where you cause damage to another person by writing about them in public. Slander, which applies less here, is the verbal version of Libel. Both are Defamation of Character, usually a direct, "defamatory" attack on a person's reputation in public.

If a photograph you take is published, which you have a fundamental right to do, you must be careful not to misrepresent or injure the reputation of those who were photographed. This can be done by editing the photo to alter the situation, or adding an incorrect or misleading caption.

Privacy Law

The unwritten industry standard for commercial photography dictates that any identifiable person in a photograph should sign a model release. However, in Ontario, the Privacy Act does not protect it's citizens against unwanted commercial use of their image (see Ontario's Privacy Act below).

Other provinces, for example, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Quebec have provisions in their Privacy Acts (or similar regulations or statutes) for allowing a person to control their image, likeness, voice, and other attributes, which does apply to photography.

Regardless of province, you may photograph and publish a photo of anyone, with the exception of young offenders, who are newsworthy, doing newsworthy things, or are public figures or celebrities.

Federal Law

You are guaranteed the right to take photographs

You are guaranteed the right to express yourself through photography, and you have the freedom to publish the photos you take. Unless you are relieved of your rights (by being arrested), the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees your right to take photographs of anything you want. However, the Charter only dictates the government's role (i.e. the police can't stop you from taking photos, just because they feel like it). The charter does not relieve you of breaking other laws, nor civil law (you vs. another

private citizen). It also doesn't dictate what you are allowed to do on someone else's property.

Criminal Activities

There are way too many things that are just common sense to list here. If you are not aware of the contents of the Criminal Code of Canada, go and read it, it's well worth the time In summary, don't do things that are against the law, like Breaking & Entering, Fraud, Mischief, Cruelty to Animals, etc. I will go over some of the bits of the Criminal Code below that specifically apply to photography, but you should be aware of what the Criminal Code of Canada covers.

Prowl at night

In addition to trespassing, which is a provincial law, this federal law covers "prowling" at night on private property. Do not loiter on someone else's property, particularly near a house, at night.

Charter of Rights and Freedoms: "Reasonable Expectation of Privacy"

According to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, every Canadian is guaranteed a reasonable expectation of privacy. However, this charter applies only between the government and a private citizen, not between you and another private citizen or company. See Criminal Voyeurism below for the law that actually applies.

Criminal Voyeurism

You can not take photos of people who are in circumstances where they believe that they have a reasonable expectation of privacy, for example, a bathroom. This generally extends to include a person inside their own home, or anywhere where they have reason to believe is a private place.

Criminal Code of Canada

Security of Information Act

The Security of Information Act is to protect Canada. Stated simply, do not do anything, or possess any photos that could be considered national secrets, interfere with a large number of Canadian's lives, impair or threaten the

Canadian Forces, national security or intelligence.

Avoid taking a photograph of any of the following, specifically in relation to national secrets, unless you have permission (preferably written) from a ranking official:

- Arsenals
- Armed forces establishments or stations
- Factories
- Dockyards
- Mines
- Minefields
- Camps
- Ships
- Aircraft
- Telegraph, Telephone, Wireless or signal stations or offices
- Places used for the purpose of building, repairing, making or storing any munitions of war or any sketches, plans, models or documents, mining or refining metals, or oil in time of war
- Any non-government military contributor
- Any place where leaked information or damage to it would be useful to a foreign power

Now, this is not to say you can't take a photo of the things listed above, consider public events, like an Air Show, or parade, for example. These laws are to protect the Armed Forces and their supply. However, when the RCMP approaches you after you take a photo of a nondescript building, this may be what they're interested in. Note, that this is treason-level, and for anyone to be prosecuted for this, it requires the Attorney General's direct consent.

Realistically, the government will have to prove that you possessed the photo, with intent to (or proof that you did) communicate it to foreign country or "fail to comply with all directions in the disposal of the photo at the direction of a lawful authority". So, if the RCMP asks you to delete a photo with regards to this act, do it. This is the only time that you are required to delete a photo upon request.

However, in my personal opinion, if you

are being arrested for this offence, keeping the photo as evidence may be a good idea, in order to let the court decide whether that image contained anything worthwhile that you were planning to send that image to a foreign entity. By keeping the photo you are not properly disposing of the photo, which is against the law, however, you are also not tampering with or destroying evidence.

The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act

The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act only applies to the activities of organizations collecting personal information. This may apply to commercial photography (for example, how the information obtained through Model Releases is kept), but not to artistic or personal photography.

Youth Criminal Justice Act

Previously known as the Young Offenders Act, this act protects minors from public scorn. The name, and anything that would identify any youth (such as a photograph of them) is forbidden to be published for any youth who is convicted or charged with an offence under this act. This does not apply if the youth is given an adult sentence. This law won't apply to too many people, unless you happen to capture a photo of a charged or convicted youth.

Provincial Statutes and Regulations - Ontario

Privacy Act

The Privacy Act protects personal information that is submitted to the government from improper use or distribution, and does not apply to photography, with the possible exception of photography done for a Government body.

Trespassing

When you are on private property, what you are allowed to do may be limited by the owner of the property, or by someone acting on the owner's behalf, like their security guard. If the property owner puts up signs or tells you not to

do something (e.g. no trespassing, no photography, keep off grass, etc), then disobeying the signs or verbal instructions is trespassing. If you are asked by the owner to leave the property, you must leave immediately, otherwise you are trespassing. Without signage, the following should be assumed no-trespass:

- Garden
- Field
- Any other land under cultivation
- Lawn
- Orchard
- Vineyard
- Anywhere with trees planted that average less than 2 meters in height
- Any fenced-in area

Even on the above-listed properties, you can enter any property that provides notice (via a sign or verbal) that certain activities are permitted (for those allowed activities only), or any premises that implies permission to approach a door (for approaching the door only, of course).

This is the important one: For properties not listed above, when there are no signs, you may enter the premises, and perform any lawful activity you wish, unless told otherwise by the property owner (or someone acting on behalf of the land owner, like a security guard). This is why you are allowed in malls. However, you should always use common sense. For properties that have notice (signed, verbal, etc), you must abide by the notice, but you may still perform any lawful activity on the premises that is not prohibited.

However, if you are taking photographs in a mall, or some other privately-

owned-but-open-to-the-public property, and their security guards confront you, they can permit or deny you from doing any activity on the premises, just by telling you. Since they are acting on behalf of the owner, they can control what you are allowed to do, where you are allowed to go on the property, or whether you are allowed there at all. If they tell you that photography is not allowed, continuing

to take photographs is trespassing. They may also simply ask you to leave, and by not doing so in an orderly fashion, you are trespassing. They can also ban you from the property, in which case, if you come back, you're trespassing.

Note that this is a law (a provincial statute), so the owner can not "sue you

for trespassing", however, they can call the police and have you arrested and charged with trespassing, at which point the government can fine you. Unless you actually damage something, it is unlikely that property owner can sue you under Civil Law. If you are convicted of trespassing, the property owner can not sue you under Civil Law.

If you trespass on property and you were previously aware that you are not welcome on the property, through signs or other means (such as being previously banned from the property), the property owner, or security guard, can arrest you ("citizen's arrest" -- although this term is not used in Canada).

The police or property owner may use as much force as is reasonably necessary to arrest anyone who has committed a crime. Should you be arrested by someone other than the police, they must hand you over to the police as quickly as reasonably possible.

Provincial Statutes and Regulations - Quebec

Quebec Human Rights Code

In Quebec, the Quebec Human Rights Code grants all humans the right to their private life. For photography, this broadly-worded right allows each individual person in Quebec control over the use of their image (meaning, a photo of them).

This was recently upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in a case where a photographer published a photo of an individual in public,

without the subject's permission. The image was nothing special, it was taken from a public place of a person in public, and did not injure their reputation. However, the Supreme Court of Canada said that the photographer should not have published the photo without the permission of the person photographed, and ruled in the favor of the subject of the photo. They did note that there are exceptions for newsworthy events, people who are in the public eye, like politicians or celebrities, or if the person was incidental to the photo, and not the main subject(s).

Municipal By-Laws – Toronto TTC

Toronto has a TTC Bylaw that restricts photography for *commercial* use, without authorization. This mentions nothing of photography for private or artistic purposes. Remember that some TTC security staff are "special constables", who are actual police officers, and that a metro transit system can be considered as one of the items under the Security of Information Act above. They may also ask you to stop or leave, which would constitute Trespassing if you continued.

Ownership of Photos & Copyright

Copyright of Photos

When not under contract or employed to take photos, the photographer is the owner of every photo that they have taken. Even if 2 people take an identical photograph, each photographer will own their own photograph. This includes popular tourist attractions which have their pictures taken several thousand times per day, the photographs may not be terribly unique, but each photo taken is still the property of it's photographer. The term of the copyright is the remainder of the year you die, plus 50 years.

If you are employed, contracted, or are on an apprenticeship, and the photos were taken as part of the job, then the employer, unless agreed otherwise, is owner of the copyright. If a company owns the photo, the term of the copyright is the remainder of the calendar year, plus 50 years.

Photography of Buildings and Public Art

It is not against copyright law to take a photo of any architectural work, for example, a building, or a permanent piece of public art.

People Visible in Photographs

The industry standard for commercial photography dictates that any identifiable person in a photograph should sign a model release. However, in Ontario, the Privacy Act does not protect its residents against unwanted commercial use of their image. Other provinces, for example, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Quebec have provisions in their Privacy Acts (or similar regulations or statutes) for allowing a person to control their image or likeness, voice, and other attributes. Note that this does not disallow you from taking photos of them, only what you do with the photos (such as publishing them).

Regardless of province, you may photograph and publish a photo of anyone, with the exception of young offenders, as long as the subject is newsworthy, doing newsworthy things, or are public figures or celebrities. Additionally, photos including people who are not the principal subject(s) of the photo, but instead make up the background do not have any say in what you do with the photograph.

Recap / Myths dispelled

- You can not be fined or charged by a private citizen, property owner, or security guard, but they have every right to sue you if they believe you have done damage to them.
- Nobody can threaten to destroy your camera, lenses, film, other property, nor can they threaten you with physical harm. Nobody can actually destroy your property, forcibly delete photos, expose your film, or harm you. Police can not interfere with your lawful enjoyment of your property. If anyone does harm you or damage your property, you can sue them under civil law to recoup the damages.
- Nobody can force you to delete photos (with the exception above under the Security of Information Act.) According to the Canadian Copyright Act, even if they are unregistered, your photos are owned and copyrighted by you, for your lifetime, and 50 years after the end of the year you die. (Commercial photography differs). They are therefore your private property, and willful destruction of private property falls under the Criminal Mischief.
- Nobody can report that you broke a law to the police, when you have not, or make false statements to discredit you during an investigation.
- Nobody can search you, your bags, car, etc. However, being searched may be a condition of entrance to private property or an event. Another exception is if you are arrested by a police officer, or if a police officer has a reasonable reason to search you, for example, suspicion of concealing a weapon.
- Nobody can detain you or restrain you against your will (with the exception of citizen's arrest), otherwise they are kidnapping you. If a police officer is detaining you unreasonably and arbitrarily, they are violating your Charter Rights.
- Nobody can arrest you for being uncooperative, however, it is a good idea to be as co-operative as possible, as it helps show that you have nothing to hide. With police officers, being uncooperative may be considered cause enough for them to investigate further. Note that being uncooperative when asked to leave private property or to stop an activity on private property is trespassing.

What should I do when confronted?

If you are confronted by a security guard, a private citizen, or a police officer, there will be a conversation. Assuming you have done nothing wrong, most of these conversations will follow similar lines, either: you took a photo of someone or something and they don't appreciate it, or an authority

(police officer, security guard, or property owner) believes you are causing trouble, or could cause trouble and wants to assess the situation. Regardless of the situation, there are some things that you can do to help the situation:

- Smile and be jovial. Doesn't hurt, and eases the mood.
- If applicable, apologize for not knowing the policy. (See above Trespassing section: Unless there is a sign posted, the property is of a specific type, or you have been told previously, you have not broken any laws. If you are on private property and the land owner or their security guards are telling you not to take photos, or to leave, you must comply)
- Be clear-headed. Use common sense.
- Understand exactly what authority they have, and what rights you have. If they are owners of the property, they can limit your activities or presence on their property, just by telling you.
- Try to figure out why they singled you out. Chances are that they're picking on you because you have a huge SLR, which may be disruptive, and chances are that they leave everyone with point-&-shoot cameras, or camera phones alone. It is not uncommon for police or security guards to stop and ask you questions to gauge whether you are going to cause trouble.
- If you are being confronted, there is a problem... solve the problem. If it's something obvious, (Flash photography distracting others, or your photography interfering with the normal operations), then work with them to find a solution. Keep searching, a "no-photography" policy may not be the reason they are confronting you, but rather an easy reason to get you to stop without much trouble. Although you must stop taking photos if they ask you to, you can always talk to them and see if you can be granted an exception.
- Be specific in your wording. Taking a few more seconds to think up the right word is much better than eating your words later.

Do not:

- Make a scene. The worst thing you can do is to call attention to the confrontation that will force them to take more drastic measures, such as kicking you off the premises. If it's a busy area and the conversation is going to be lengthy, ask if you can talk in a 'less noisy environment', where there is less pressure to solve the confrontation quickly, and a better possibility of reasoning with them.
- Apologize for taking the photo. There's no reason you should, you did nothing wrong.
- Delete the photo. No reason you should. (This can defuse the situation, but implies to the other person that they have that authority over you, and they will expect the next photographer that comes along to delete their photo too.)
- Be defensive or offensive. Defensiveness implies that you think you have done something wrong and are trying to back out of it, Offensiveness will put them on the defensive, neither will help in reaching a positive solution.
- Tell them they can't do something (like a private citizen kicking you out of a public park)
- Blow things out of proportion, embellish, bend the truth or lie.
- Be hysterical. Even if everyone else has a camera, there is no reason they should apply this rule to everyone else, but there is a reason they're picking on you. Find out why. Property owners (and security guards working for them) can enforce rules on a per-person basis, as they please.
- Be accusing. There is no reason they should put up a "no photography" sign, this is not their fault. Telling you is just as effective as putting up a sign in the eyes of the law, however, prior to them telling you that photography is not allowed, it was implied that photography was allowed, so legally, you are on solid ground, as long as you don't take a photo after they tell you not to.
- Stay in a situation which could cause you or your equipment harm. It's assault, but it's assault that you can avoid. If they threaten you with

physical harm, call the police.

- Answer unnecessary questions or accusations. e.g. "Do you go around taking photos of children everywhere?" Answering this will do you no good. Refusing to answer this will do you no good. Change the line of questioning.
- Say "No". Try proposing alternatives, and steering the conversation into something that benefits you. Saying "No" will make you seem uncooperative and standoffish.
- Ignore them. This will just enrage them. If the situation develops into something more serious: (If you are asked to leave the property, leave, and ask the following information as you are leaving.)
- Get their full name, and if applicable, employee or badge number.
- Their manager's or supervisor's name, contact information, and hours
- Find out as much as possible about why: Is it a policy? What does the policy say? Who created it, why was it created, and when?
- The time and date
- From there, follow up and call the manager or property owner, and tell them what happened. If other people were there taking photos with point-&-shoot cameras, mention it, and say that you feel discriminated against. It is likely that they won't know the exact details about the event, however, most security guards are required to keep notes and file reports, so it can be looked up, if it matters. See if you can come to an understanding with the manager or property owner and arrange permission.

Work in Progress

This collected information is a work in progress. If you find something that I have missed, or misinterpreted, check the most current copy of this information online and submit updated information using the address listed there. ∎

Quotes of the actual laws and references are available online at: http://ambientlight.ca/laws.shtml

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE INTERNET

By Thom Speechley
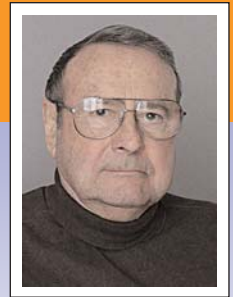
The honeymoon may be over!

I have noticed a trend lately which suggests that fewer software developers are willing to 'give away' any of their creations. This is not exactly new, but I see more and more programs upgraded and offered for sale under a shareware arrangement and the older free versions no longer supported. Some programs: e.g. "DVDshrink", "DVD Decryptor" are no longer supported for legal reasons. They make DVD copying too easy and the authors are trying to avoid lawsuits. Ironically, both programs, in their final version, may be downloaded from a variety of other sources.

Another annoying trend involves software sellers touting their products as "freeware" and when you prepare to download, discover there is a catch. Many of these products should be labeled "Free Download", which everyone knows, means the download may have a free trial period or, payment may be immediately required.

Here is the invitation to one of them.

Below is the download site. Note that the free version is no longer available due to "huge" traffic.

Often you will not find out you have a trial version until after you actually download and install the product.

This download site distinctly says "Freeware" but the following screen prompt shows up the first time you run the program.

These 'deceptions' are no different than some used by many national marketers so perhaps I shouldn't complain. However I do resent the wasted time and the occasional difficulty in removing all traces of some of the programs. And I'm not sure some of these products won't come with 'malware' or an adbot attached.

I ran into these offenders in my quest for a small program to convert the popular FLV ("Flash") files to AVI, so that I could make a compilation on DVD. There are more than one hundred such utilities on the net and I finally found a 'true' free program, which does an excellent job. It's called simply "Free FLV to AVI converter" and is available from: www.nbxsoft.com/
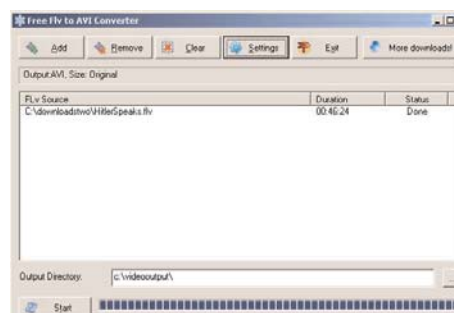
Free FLV to AVI converter

The program also converts FLV to MPG1, MPG2 and WMV.

And since we are on the subject of FLV files, you will notice a growing number of players, converters and other utilities related to FLV available on the Internet. This is due mainly to the extraordinary success of "YouTube" and other streaming video sites. To move in the other direction, that is, to create a FLV file, there are several utilities available for that purpose. One freeware program is the "Riva" FLV encoder from

www.rivax.de/?encoder.

AVI, MPEG, Quicktime and WMV files can be converted to FLV with this program. The download comes with the free Riva FLV player. Like FLV Player described in the following, the Riva player can also be added to a disk of files and run as a "stand-alone" player. The encoder offers a variety of settings for rendering the video.

Riva configuration menu

"Adobe" Corp. now owns the Flash technology and their player is available free at:
www.adobe.com/products/flashplayer/

There are dozens of alternative products on the net, many of them free. The player "FLVplayer.exe" is a standalone program so that it does not have to be installed. You can even make a compilation of FLV files, add this program and burn them to a disk. You can then give it to a friend and not be concerned about whether they have a player on their computer. It's available from www.martijndevisser.com/blog/flv-player/

Free FLV Player

You may also be downloading files in the original Macromedia format, SWF. These files will play on the Adobe player, but if you want a much smaller player, you can get "SWFPlayer" at: www.globfx.com/

SWF Player

This website offers another useful free program if you make presentations in "Powerpoint". It is called "SWIFF Point Player 2.0". This 'plugin' allows you to add animated swf files to your Powerpoint production.

Before you can start a collection of FLV files, you require a program to acquire them from the net. Downloading FLV files from most sites is not always easy. "YouTube" for instance, has forwarding facilities but no direct download method. There are several download utilities available as shareware but I can recommend a download accelerator called "Orbit". It is basically designed to speed up downloads of any kind of file but has a special feature for capturing FLV files. And, it's free! It can be a little tricky depending on how the actual URL to the FLV file is linked. You may have to run it twice in order to grab the file you want.

First, select a video to capture.

Place your cursor outside the picture area and right click.

Select and click on "Grab video by "Orbit"
The download window will appear.
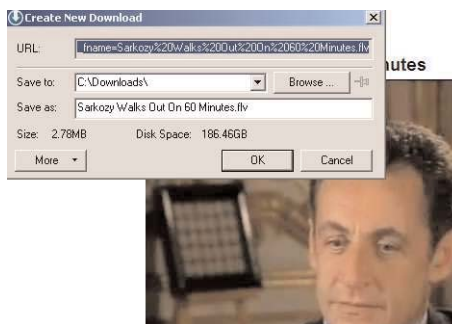
If necessary, change the directory destination and click "OK".
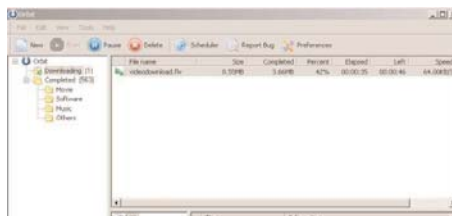
Orbit Download Progress

This procedure works well on both YouTube and "Google" video http://video.google.ca/ and videos from CBC "Exposure" website. http://exposure.cbc.ca/

But you don't have to install a program to either download or convert streaming videos. Several websites will "fetch" the video of your choice, convert it to your preferred format and either download it to you immediately or e-mail it to your address. The easiest is "FindYouTube". Their address is: http://findyoutube.com/ It downloads only as FLV but can get videos from eight sources, including YouTube, Google and BlipTV.
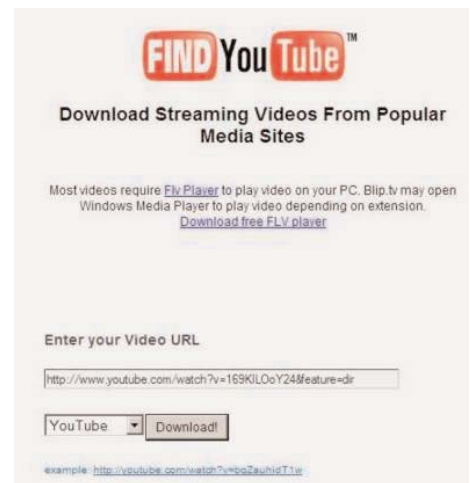
You enter the URL for the specific file and click "Download". Finding the URL is not always easy. For YouTube, the proper URL for the video you are watching is in the address box at the top of your browser screen.

Most other sites display the URL in the same manner. Highlighting the URL and 'cutting and pasting' is the simplest and most accurate way to enter the address.

For more conversion alternatives, websites like "Vixy", http://vixy.net/, allow you to select one of several video formats for the conversion.

Note that virtually all these online programs are intended to produce a file for uploading to an "iPod" © or similar portable video player. The quality might not let you use any of the material in a standard video production. Another limitation to free online downloads is that most of them will access only one or two sites, such as Google or YouTube. If you want real versatility, you might purchase "Tube-Hunter" from Neoretex Laboratories ($29.95USD) http://www.neoretix.com/weblist.htm.

Tube Hunter Main Screen

Tube Hunter currently downloads from 33 destinations and also has extra features for handling music and other audio files.

Codecs

All of these programs require that you have installed on your computer, the necessary "codecs", those program helpers, which perform the "compression" and "decompression" of any video (or audio file) you are working with. Elaborate programs such as Windows Media Player install the appropriate codecs when you download the program. Or, when you buy a new computer, all the necessary codecs are included. In some cases it may be necessary to obtain and install a new codec to allow a NEW program to capture or play a video file. This is because a particular type of file, AVI for instance, may be created with one of several different codecs. There can also be a great deal of confusion about codecs because a codec can have the same name as a video file format. I recommend that you visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Container_format_(digital) for a helpful explanation.

Additional information and free codec downloads are available from www.free-codecs.com/download/

To further illustrate this dilemma, here is an example from another converter which I highly recommend, "Super", from www.erightsoft.com/home.html
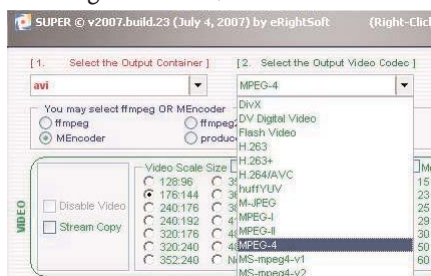

Super converter menu

To convert any kind of file to AVI, you are offered a choice of four Encoding methods and fourteen codecs! Obviously, this can be very daunting and a lot of homework is needed. However, you can use one of two programs to help determine if you have the appropriate codec installed. Both are free. First is "sherlock.exe" from http://www.updatexp.com/
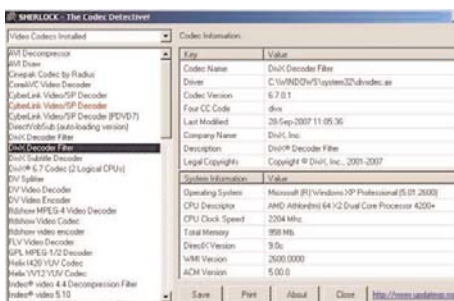
Sherlock.exe

This program gives you details of all the codecs installed on your computer. Note the highlight in red, warning me that that particular codec is defective. Since I no longer use that one, I will simply remove it.

Another favourite, mentioned in an earlier column, is "Gspot" from www.headbands.com/gspot/
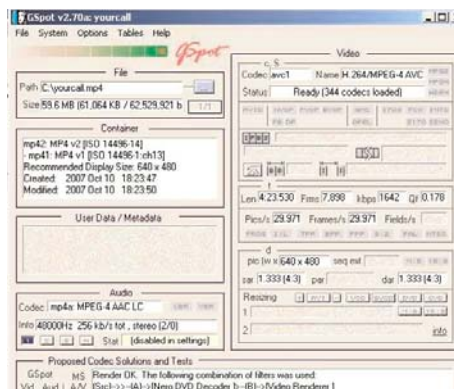
Gspot not only lists installed codecs, but also tests and reports on installed rendering software. It will warn about missing or damaged codec drivers. Browse for a file, enter it into Gspot and it will tell you the necessary codec and advise you if it is installed. If it's missing, you now have a name to search for with "Google".

To wrap up this edition, here are two little utilities we discovered to help manage your files. Many files contain "Meta data" which is textual information embedded in the file. This is particularly common in music and some video files and lists artist, date, bit rate and other data. To view the information, hover your cursor over the name of the file in Windows Explorer and a pop-up window will open and display the data. With Windows, the information is usually minimal. (If you see only the name and size of the file, no Meta data was added during creation of the file.) To supplement this information, several small utilities are available which provide more information than does Windows. "InfoTag Magic" is a free utility from www.contextmagic.com/downloads.htm

"Infotag" will also display several lines in a text file and data from a MPEG file, if present.

A similar program for viewing and editing data is "Abander MP3 Image Extractor" from www.softartstudio.com/index.html Their free products are listed at the bottom of the page.
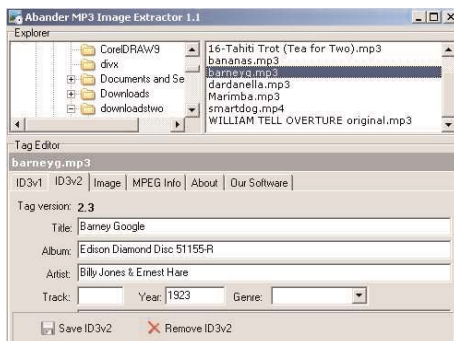
MP3 Image Extractor

This gives you basic information, which can be edited or added to. This utility also displays MPEG data, which might be present in a file. ∎

BLACK MAGIC™

COLOURING BLACK & WHITE PHOTOS

By Fred Briggs

I recently stumbled on an interesting piece of software that claims "Easily Convert Black and White Photos Into Real Life-Like Color In Just a Few Minutes". There are a great many programs that will easily convert colour photos into black and white, or more accurately, gray scale, but this was something I'd never seen claimed before. In my history documentary I'll be making heavy use of old photographs, as well as newer pictures – photos, artists' paintings, and video, and constantly snapping back and forth from one medium to another can be disconcerting to viewers, so I had planned to present a series of black and white shots, followed by the colour shots, and create transitions between the two sets by turning some of the colour shots to black and white and then dissolving from the black and white version to the colour version of the same shot, easing into the colour. But suddenly another possibility presented itself, so I had to investigate it.

The program, BlackMagic, is a product of NeuralTech, an Australian Company, and is sold as shareware as are their other programs. BlackMagic is available in three Editions. The Home Edition costs US$39, the Business Edition is US$99, and the Professional Edition is US$199, and they offer a Free Trial Download so you can test it before you buy.

There are no other programs with which to compare BlackMagic, because no other consumer graphics program can do what this one can. Oh, sure, there are programs out there (in the $750 range) that will let you paint on a digital photo, but they demand a great deal of savvy, skill and time to do what this one does in minutes. So instead of comparing BlackMagic with any other program, I'll just have to tell you what it will do, and what it won't, and mention some of its strengths and weaknesses.

First, all three editions will only open and use, and save, image files in BMP (bitmap) and JPEG format, so if your files are in another format, like tif or psd, you will first have to open the file(s) in another program and save it/them again in BMP or JPG format, then close that program and open BlackMagic to load the file. You can only load one file at a time in BlackMagic because once you load a file the Load Image Button becomes a Clear Image Button.

The Trial Version is the full Professional Edition, but will not allow you to save a file. Apparently you can print from the Trial Version, but the Print-out will carry a BlackMagic Logo, and be limited to half of the loaded image size. I didn't try that because I have little interest in printing out photographs, especially not my test images!

The biggest, and to me, most important difference between the three Editions is the maximum size with which you can work. This isn't the file size, but the total number of pixels in the image – 1 MegaPixel Processing Resolution for the Home Edition, 4 MegaPixels for the Business Edition, and Unlimited (user selectable) for the Professional Edition. I would guess the user might want to limit the size of his image depending on his computer power and memory. There are a few features that are not on the Home Edition, and some that are only on the Professional Edition. I suppose that when you purchase a licence and register the program, those you haven't paid for will be inoperative, or even disappear from the screen. This allows them to distribute just one version by download, instead of asking you to download another version if you pay more for it, or even if you upgrade later at the upgrade price. (Note that that's *Upgrade – Updates* for the version you paid for are free for one year from purchase.)

On the downside, you could be fooled into thinking that you will get all the features that worked when you were in the trial period, and you won't, so before paying for the program look very carefully at the Price-Feature Comparison Chart well down the page on the Home Page. They aren't hiding this: a Pop-up Window warns you about it every time you start the Trial Program, and you're warned about the size limitation and the inability to save a file every time you load a file!

In addition, the Trial Period is 10 days from the date it's first run, and the Image Size is limited to a Maximum Size with larger images automatically scaled down while maintaining the original aspect ratio.

This 1 MegaPixel Resolution is a little tough, when you scan at such high resolutions as I do. I never scan at less than 300 DPI, and sometimes go as high as 2400 DPI. My feeling is that when I finally come to use these pictures, when all the research and all the shooting is finished, I don't know which pictures I'll want to use, and whether I'll use the whole picture, just part of it, or zoom from a wide shot to a telephoto view and then pan across a picture, using Lumidium's DigiRostrum Pro (PANORAMA, Fall 2006, pg. 6). I have some old panoramic photographs that I'll use that way, and a lot of public school class pictures.

Nobody wants to pay $199 for a program when they can get the part they need for $39, and that especially includes me. For the testing I did on some of my pictures for this article, I had to open the tif file in another program anyway, so I looked into getting the pixel size down to less than 1 MegaPixel. As this was just a test, I cropped some of the pictures down arbitrarily, I changed the resolution on some, and I did both on a few, being careful to always maintain a minimum of 480 pixels vertically and 720 horizontally. Those dimensions, regardless of the picture dimensions and the resolution, produce 720 X 480 = 345,600 pixels, or just over 1/3 of a MegaPixel, so it usually isn't too difficult to keep the processing size below the 1 MegaPixel Limit. I could see that there might occasionally be a problem meeting that restriction, but the Business Edition would cost $99 and other than 4 times the Maximum MegaPixel restriction (which in reality is merely twice the number of pixels in each direction!), there is very little in the way of extra features for that higher price. (See the Price-Comparison Chart!)

If, sometime in the future, I felt that I just had to have that higher limit (or win a big lottery), I could upgrade at that time. Meanwhile, if necessary, I could get around the problem with a little extra

work. An oversize picture could be first cut in half, or even into quarters, or more, as long as there was sufficient overlap of the two adjoining sides of each cut, so that after the colorization, I could stitch the parts back together again in other software!

There are 69 Neural Net pre-configured palettes. Basically, they are colours or tints, but they seem to have another dimension in that Sky Colours act differently than do Wood Colours, or Earth Colours. (I may be wrong about this!) Each can be made to go on the picture at any of 6 different shades of light or dark.

There are fill modes, a Smart Brush mode whose selectivity can be adjusted, a Magic Touch paint tool that colours all similar grey scales the same colour, with a variable Tolerance, and a very, very handy eraser!

The Business Edition adds a Free Colour Picker and the ability to Load and Use Custom Derivative Palettes. The Professional Edition includes both of those, plus some colour tuning controls and the capacity to create those Custom Derivative Palettes. However, these added facilities seem to give an additional ability to fine tune colours, but I suspect that most of us would be well satisfied with the colour features available in even the Home Edition, in which colours can be set to Overwrite previously applied colours, blend with them, or get darker with each superimposed brush stroke, and the shades can be mixed by layering. However, these are not separate layers as in Photoshop and like programs.

There are a few more features in the Professional Edition (in addition to the unlimited Maximum pixel limit) that might be useful, but like the pixel limitation problem, I can see ways around those needs.

If the gray scale picture needed modification of the gray scale level in parts of the picture, that could be performed before taking the picture into BlackMagic. And to modify the dominant hue level in the final picture, that, too, could be done with another piece of software!

So how does BlackMagic perform? Pretty well, really! I've made a lot of mistakes along the learning curve, and I'm no master yet, but I'm getting better and better results as I go, and it's getting easier and easier. I haven't even tried all the facilities yet, because I'll lose some of them when I get the Home licence, and if I haven't learned to depend on them, I won't miss them!

One of my problems seems to have been that I was using far too high a screen resolution (1680 X 1050) but I brought it down to 1280 X 768, and now I can see a larger image, making finer work easier.

One surprise was the options for LoadASGray and for Invert. The latter would appear to be for negatives, or for treating a positive as a negative, though I'm not sure why I would need that last one. However, the LoadAsGray encouraged me to load a colour photo, *without* the Gray Conversion, and lo and behold, I was able to apply false colour to an original colour photograph which had given me much trouble in the past. Try as I might, I hadn't been able to get correct colours from that picture using Photoshop. The best I was able to do was a compromise between bluish trees and a strange pallour on the girls' faces. Now I was able to paint over the trees and get green, and fair skin over the girl's faces, and get something that looked healthy and right, or at least better than I could get before!

With so many programs modeling themselves after Photoshop, or at least trying to look like Photoshop, we get used to certain actions, and certain keystrokes as being universal, but not here!

Every time I made an error (and that was quite frequently) I instinctively held down the CTL button and pressed Z, but nothing happened. You have to actually click on a little button that says "Un-do"! Unfortunately, there is only one level of undo, but the eraser will erase all layers, letting you start again on that bit.

However, with such a scarcity of common, expected commands, it was a pleasure to see that in addition to the Load Image Button, there, right beside it, is a Scan Image Button, which immediately opened my scanning software,

As mentioned earlier, there is a Print Button, and a Help/Info Button. The Help file is on your computer: it's a series of html files and opens in your browser. I personally prefer a PDF File so I can print out the whole booklet, but the whole Help File is only 19 html files, so I printed it all. I think that illustrates that the program is relatively easy to learn. I would think that most of the software development went into the prime purpose – easily performed natural looking colour for black and white photos, rather than trying to make another Swiss arm knife graphics program! ∎


I've made a screen capture of the program with a photograph about half coloured to show you how it looks. Unfortunately, I expect it will just look like any other black and white image on this page of PANORAMA, but when we get this issue up on the SCCA Web Site, you'll be able to see the portrait half coloured!

Meanwhile, you can go to the BlackMagic web page at http://www.blackmagic-color.com, and right there at the top of the page you can see a series of pairs, each a black and white photo and the colorized version. Scrolling down the page you can read the Product Description, the Editions, the Price-Feature Comparison Chart, System Requirements, FAQ, etc., as well as download your own Trial Copy. Then you have 10 days to try it for yourself, so if you have any interest at all in a product like this, what are you waiting for?
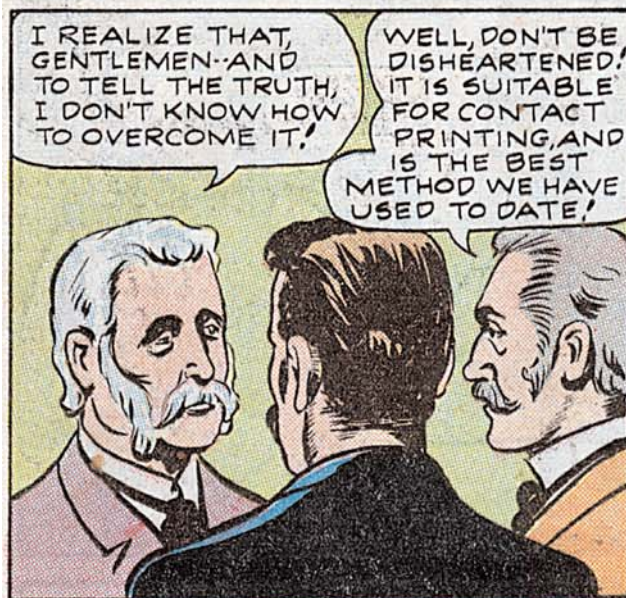
Richard Leach Maddox

Provided by Campbell McCubbin
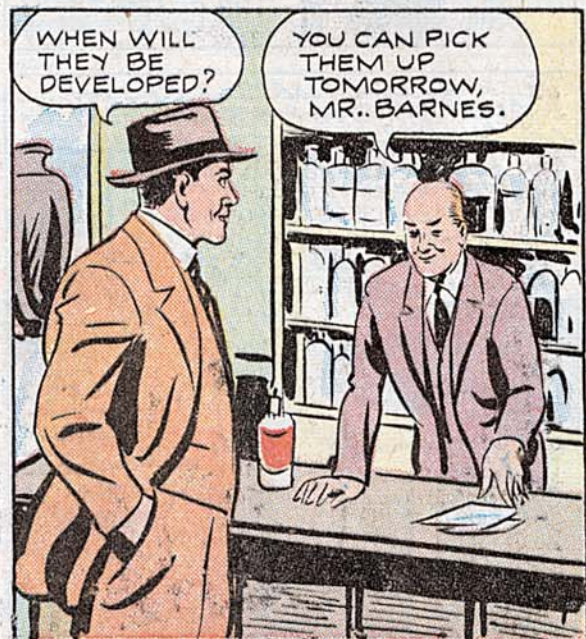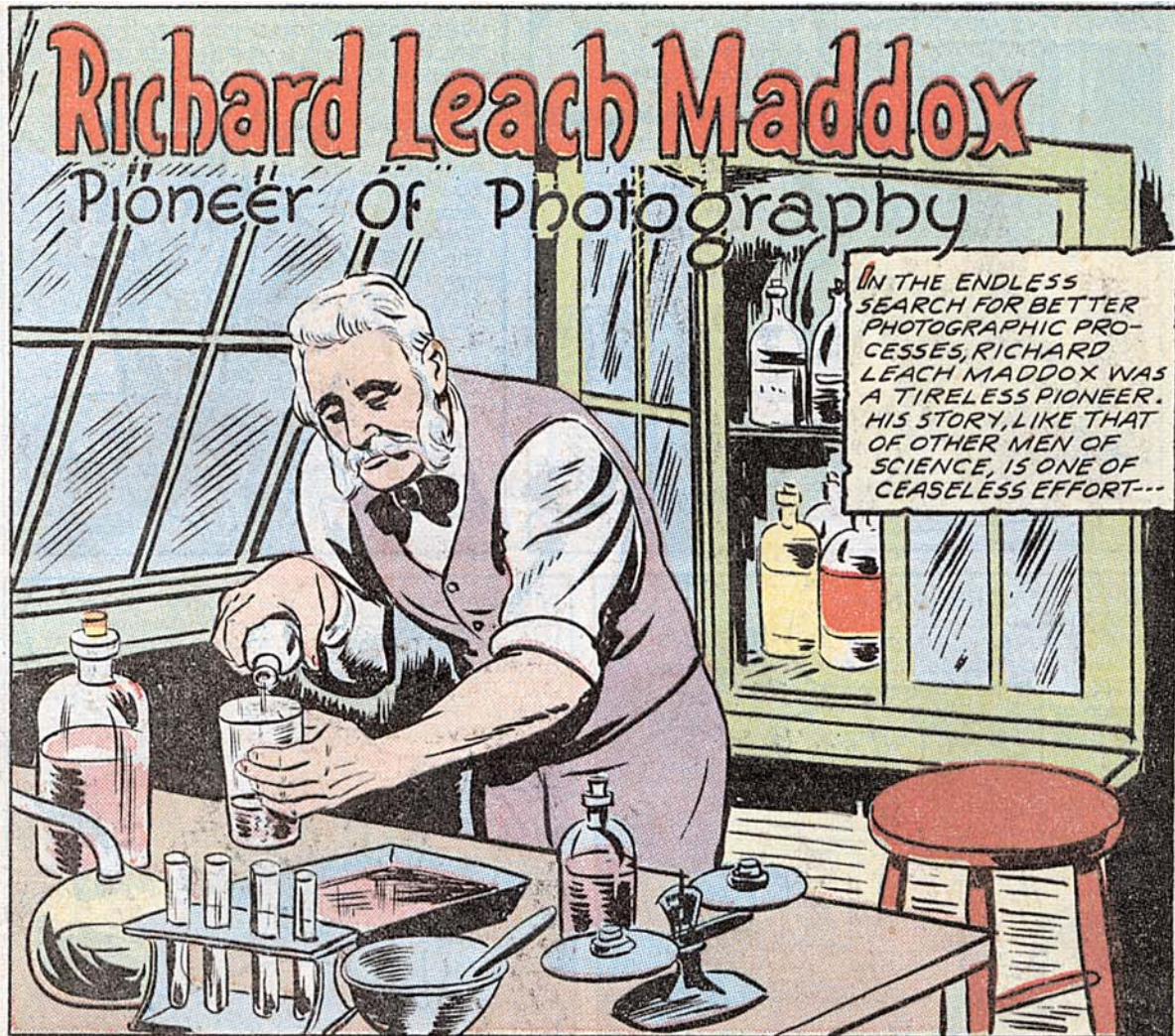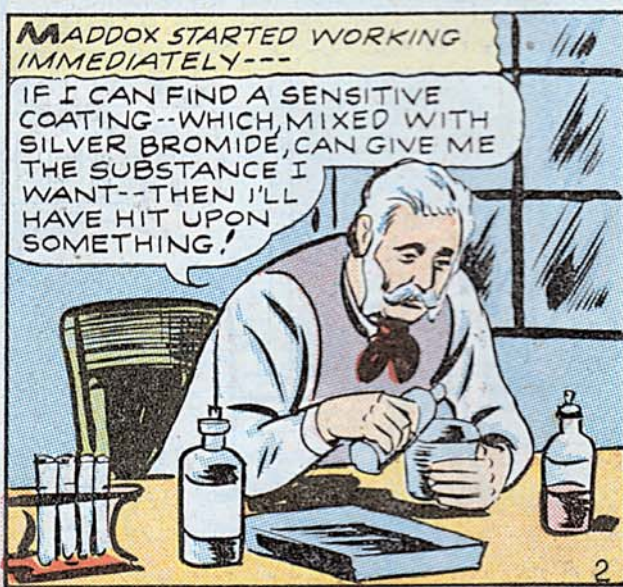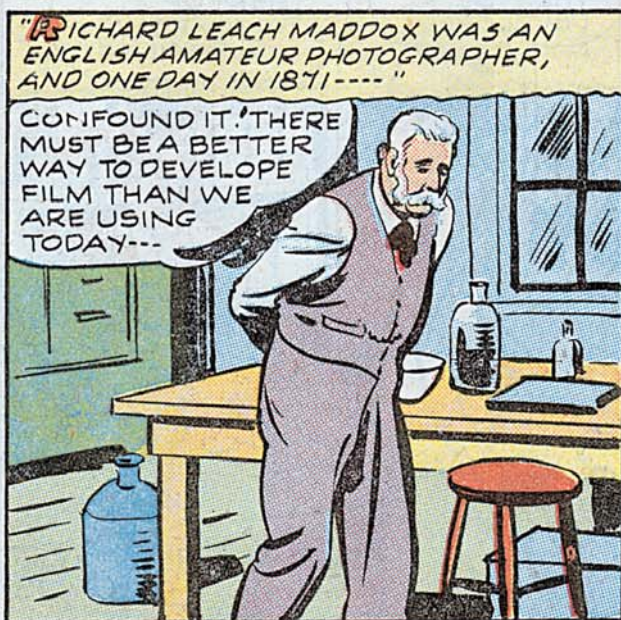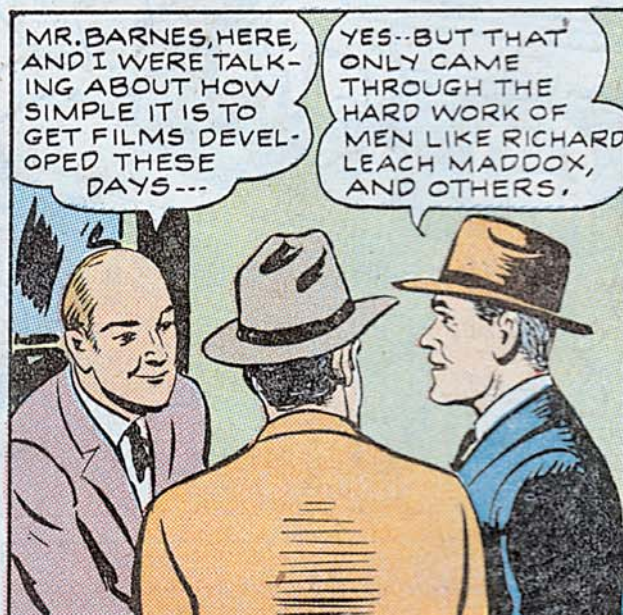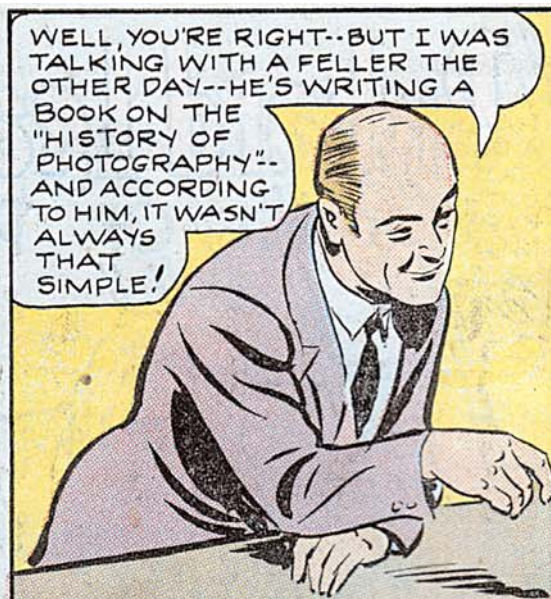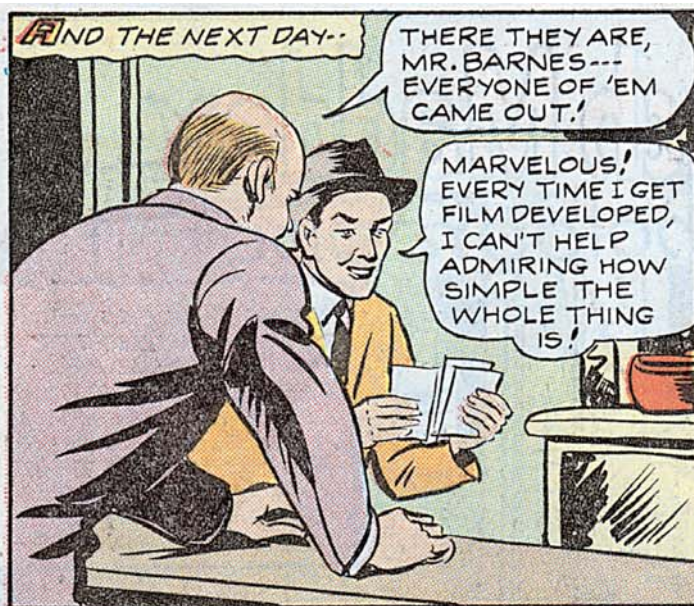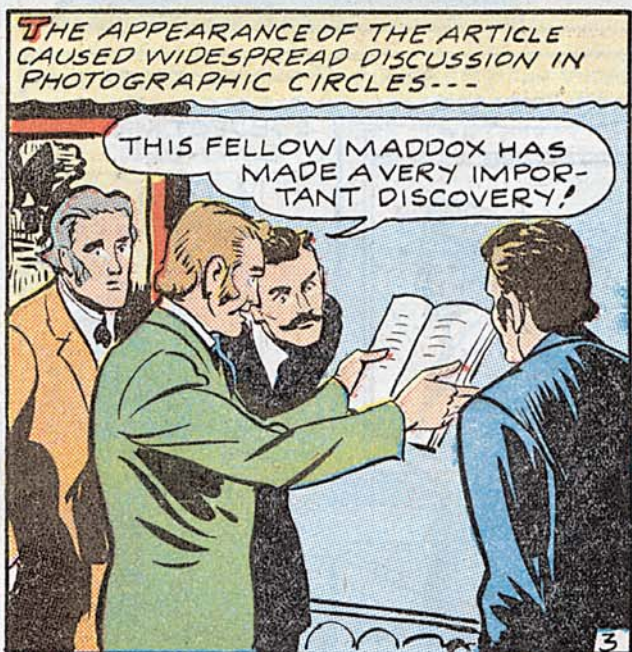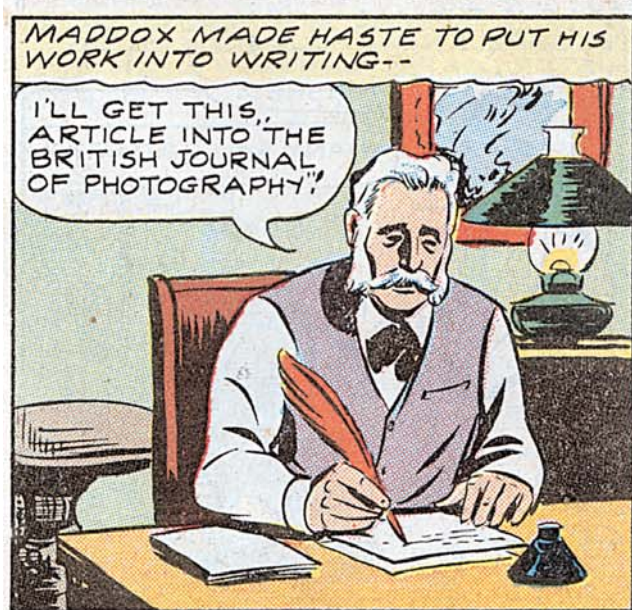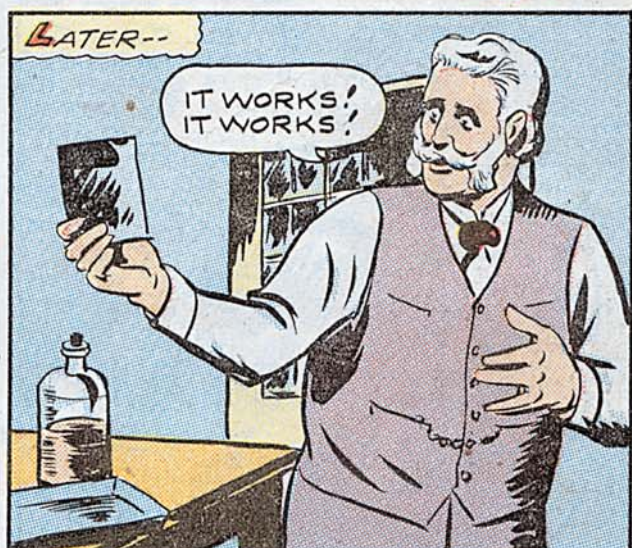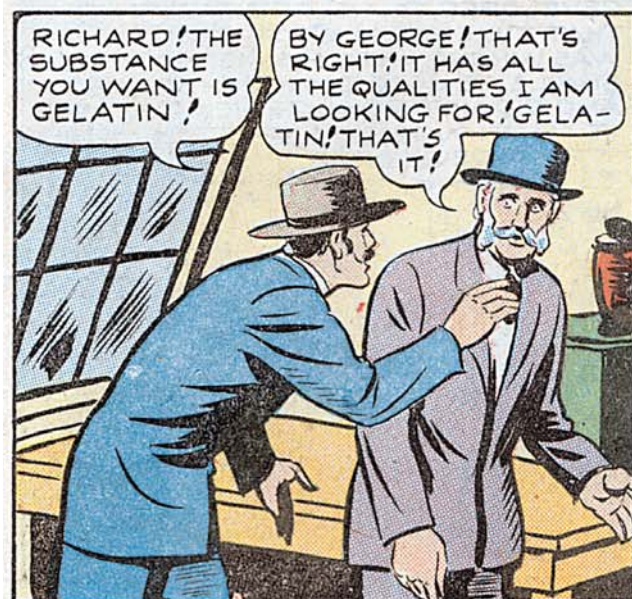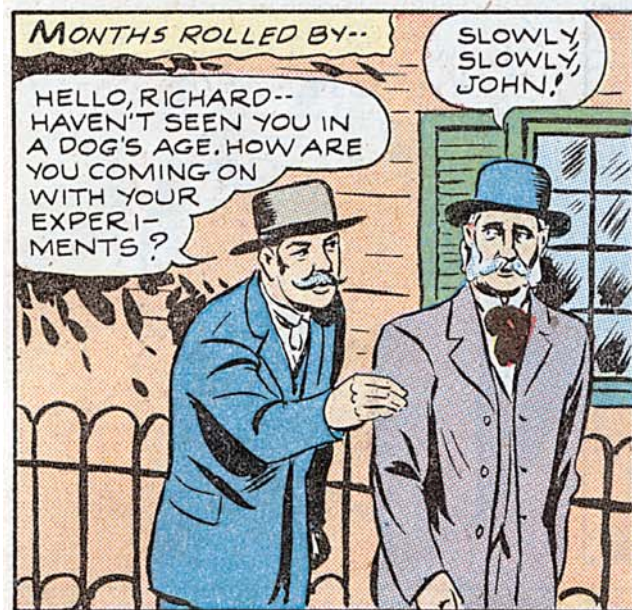
A Rant

By Fred Briggs

This article was originally written last May for the Spring Issue, but we ran out of space.

There's something I'd like to get off my chest!

Last weekend we had some friends over to the house for supper, and one of them mentioned that apparently the critics had panned Spiderman III. I hadn't read any reviews, and had only heard one on television, but that one had complained that it was too long, and had too many special effects. After they left I turned on the television and immediately heard on the news that Spiderman III has just set a new record for Opening Weekend Gross Earnings! That immediately roused in me many of my negative feelings about critics that I had felt for many years.

I'm not talking about all critics, or even just many critics. This isn't along the lines of "Those that can, do. Those that can't, teach, Those that can't teach, critique."! No, I'm talking about *movie* critics specifically, and generally.

More than fifty years ago, in high school, I remember noting that the film critic in Time Magazine didn't like anything he saw, and I decided it was because it was much easier to be "clever" or "witty" if you were panning a film rather than praising one. More recently I've often remarked that film critics are the only critics who don't apparently need any qualifying knowledge of their subject.

Oh, sure, they usually have a degree in journalism, or English, but that wouldn't be enough to let them get a job as a dance critic, an opera critic or even an art critic. "I know what I like" isn't enough. Maybe film critics have taken courses in *The Art of Film* in the English Department, but I don't think any of them has much expertise regarding "How To Make A Film".

As I see it, each art form has its own characteristic, its strength, and weaknesses. And each of them should just be judged on how well they do the things they do best, and not on the things they traditionally do poorly. A symphony concert is very different from a rock concert, and an opera isn't an operetta, or a Broadway musical.

An opera is judged on the singing, and to a much lesser degree on the spectacle of the sets and costumes. The musical compositions are the same in every performance of that opera, so you don't need to even consider that, and I'm sure you wouldn't get into criticizing the "acting".

If you were a "City Editor" would you send a rocker out to critique a symphony, or a classical music critic out to review the rock concert? I don't think so, but it seems that they just send out any new recruit, fresh from journalism school, to review movies!

Back to each art form having a special strength: the novel's strength is the story. The stage play's is drama, and in performance, acting. The symphony concert's is the conducting and the orchestra. The ballet's is the choreography and the performers' dancing. The strength of the rock concert is its energy, (and volume). The Broadway musical is the melodies first and the singers' performances second (or maybe the opposite order - let's not quibble). And the magician's performance is almost the whole show, and it doesn't matter if he doesn't say a word, and overacts like crazy. Would you fault *Swan Lake* because the story is weak, or silly?

The motion picture is the only art form that tries so hard to get everything right, but its special strengths are cinematography, editing, and special effects, and to a lesser degree, sound mixing. How often do you hear a critic speak about any of these unique components of moving pictures? Sometimes they get a mention, but just in passing, as the critic praises or pans the story, the script, the acting, believability, etc.

In short, these so called film critics are really just "entertainment critics" trying to tell you whether Joe and Joan Blow will enjoy their evening's entertainment, and most of them do a very poor job of that, as illustrated by Spiderman III last week!

I'm a big fan of cinematography, editing, and special effects, and by that I don't mean blowing things up and setting fire to people. I mean showing things to the audience that they couldn't see in a stage play, an opera, or any other medium, and I like to see it on a huge screen in a darkened theatre.

Many will agree that *Citizen Cane* was one of the greatest films ever made, and it wasn't because of the story, the script, or the actors. It was the fantastic cinematography, editing, and special effects. (Orson Welles used his background in Magic to conjure up many of them.) I've seen it many times, and I don't remember anything blowing up.

On the other hand, the best *story* I can remember seeing on film was *The Sting*. The best story, and a very good film, with seven Academy Awards, but not a great film, at least, in *my* opinion.

The best script I remember seeing, and probably three or four of the very best acting performances, was *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Edward Albee was a great playwright, Elizabeth Taylor won the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role, and Sandy Dennis won Best Actress in a Supporting Role. Richard Burton was nominated for Best Actor in a Leading Role, and George Segal was nominated for Best Actor in a Supporting Role.

Haskell Wexler won an Oscar for Best Cinematography Black & White, and the film was nominated for Best Direction, Best Film Editing, Best Script Based On Material From Another Medium, Best Sound, Best Music, and Best Picture!

The film was so intense I left the air conditioned theatre soaking wet from perspiration. It was basically a stage play, and as tense as other Edward Albee plays, but I didn't enjoy it for a minute. To each his own! It might be your favourite picture!

I've recently seen *Night At The Museum,* and *Meet The Robinsons.*

Night At The Museum is a preposterous story, with hammy acting (what do you expect with Ben Stiller, Dick Van Dyke, and Mickey Rooney), but it's a fun movie with unbelievable special effects (and I mean that in a good way - Oh, I think something did blow up, but it was incidental!) I recommend the movie highly to people who aren't too stuffy to have a little fun.

Meet the Robinsons is an Animated

Feature with barely any story at all, and no actors except the voices. (You may recognize the voices of Tom Selleck and Adam West.) So you might argue that it's ALL Special Effects. I enjoyed it. You might too. And if you get a chance to see it with the 3D glasses, jump at it!

Oh, by the way, *Citizen Cane* was roundly panned by the critics when it was released, and shunned by the paying audiences! So who knows?

PS: You all know Pulitzer Prize-Winning Roger Ebert, the first film critic to get a Star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame, don't you? Did you know he co-wrote *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970), *Up!* (1976) and *Beneath the Valley of the Ultra-Vixens* (1979), all with Russ Meyer, that Great Director?!

Get The Shot

directions, and the fellow driving the Gator preferred to get off the road and onto the shoreline. The sand was very soft and the going was slow, so he's used to traveling right along the water's edge, where the sand is well packed and wet from the lapping waves. I'd pay for that ride!

When I saw what was happening I asked him to stop while I reloaded my camera, and we were off! Up and down the lake shore at great speed, sometimes out of the water, sometimes with two wheels in it, and sometimes all four! I got all degrees of splash, speed, and angles, some showing the hood of the gator, or the driver and the hood, and much of it shooting out over the hood so the Gator doesn't even show. I stood all the way (at least, that's the way I remember it!) and got tremendous footage that looks like a plane coming in to land, or rather, to crash, into the water! What do they say? Wa-Hee?

I don't know how I'll use any of this, but I'll sure work a bit of it in somewhere, somehow!

And I got it because of unplanned good fortune, a surprise opportunity that arose, after four tries over three years, to Get The Shot I wanted. ■

WHO LET THE DOGS OUT?

This News story appeared just before the Toronto Film Festival, and was planned for inclusion in the Summer PANORAMA, but was dropped for lack of space.

Two dogs trained to sniff out DVDs received medals from the Malaysian government on Monday for a five-month campaign that crippled movie pirates.

Lucky and Flo, black Labradors trained to detect the chemicals used in making DVDs, were the first animals to receive the outstanding service awards for finding discs stockpiled by pirates, the Motion Picture Association said in a statement.

The canine campaign led to 26 arrests and seizures of illegal discs worth more than $6 million.

"The dogs have proven to be a major asset in our fight against the pirates, and we intend to continue what Lucky and Flo have set in motion," S Veerasingam, Malaysia's deputy minister for domestic trade and consumer affairs, said in the statement.

Malaysia, which figures on a U.S. watchlist on piracy, has dramatically stepped up efforts to rein in copyright pirates as it negotiates a free-trade pact with Washington.

The success of Lucky and Flo has prompted the ministry to set up its own canine unit to fight the pirates, and the MPA, which arranged for their trial by Malaysian officials, plans to donate two new dogs to the unit by the end of the year.

Movie pirates even put a bounty of 100,000 ringgit ($28,560) on Lucky and Flo after they busted a fake DVD ring in the southern Johor state in March, the MPA said. Since then, the dogs have been closely guarded.

Lucky and Flo's next stop on their crime-fighting tour is a visit to New York, followed by a trip to Toronto for an appearance at a film festival, said the MPA, which groups six major Hollywood film companies.

The MPA groups Walt Disney's Buena Vista; Paramount Pictures, a unit of Viacom; Sony Pictures, a unit of Sony; Twentieth Century Fox, a unit of News Corp.; Universal Pictures, a unit of General Electric's NBC Universal; and Warner Bros., a unit of Time Warner.

The group estimates that copyright theft cost its members about $1.2 billion in lost revenue in the Asia-Pacific region last year, with annual worldwide losses of $6 billion.

The Last Word...

You have to give Fred Briggs an A for Encourage-ment to would-be contributors to the magazine. The only difficulty is that Fred writes so convincingly it's hard to consider competing with him. Now he would respond that there wasn't any intention of competition in his spiel - just infor-mation and encouragement!

So, everyone who reads this and Fred's words, consider joining us (if you haven't already) We'd all love to have you as a member of our great Club!

Husband Joe is going through videos made when his children, now adult, were very young. He is planning to make new copies and give them to the family members. I think the grandchildren will be delighted as well.

One Christmas, at the Family Gathering he had a video of the family showing. Nearby there was a hidden microphone. People responded to the video and provided a remarkable commentary. I just hope they don't read this account in case he tries it again!

As we get older I notice that health becomes even more important. I suspect that if the sidewalk becomes slippery I will face the decision of going out or staying home. Thankfully our neighbour is younger and has picked up our mail at the mail box a block away on inclement days. If you, like us, are "getting on" in years, I hope you have younger active neighbours to help you. They are the new Saints of this century.

Joan Bochsler, Editor.