

Viewfinders

*Next Club Meeting: Wednesday February 7th, 2007, 7:30 - 9:30 pm
Cupertino Room, Quinlan Center, 10185 N. Stelling Rd., Cupertino, CA*

In this issue: February 2007

January Wrap-Up

Screening of AMMA and NCCAMC award winning movies. **Page 1 and 2**



President's and Vice President's Messages

Bob takes a look at technical advances for videographers. **Page 2**
Brian says the videographers creed is "Be prepared." **Page 6**

Feb Club Meeting

Fred Pfof on the history of video tape recording. **Page 3**



Fast Forward

A new regular column offering tidbits of video know-how and news. **Page 4**

Tech Tips

Frank Swanson's recap of his January workshop. **Page 5**



Club Calendar

Keep an eye on what the club plans ahead.

Quarterly Themed Video Contest

It's all about "Water" **Page 6**

January Meeting Highlights

Last month we were treated to a selection of award winning short movies and Frank Swanson's new series of "Video Workshop" tips and tricks.

From the NCCAMC video competition we saw:

From Sacramento: "The Basic Needs of Life..." 1st Place Award.

This well crafted movie covers the adventure of a homeless man's one day and night of



luxury. Forced to flee a gang of street toughs, he escapes through the back door of a quality hotel. Unnoticed, he hides in one of the unlocked empty rooms and makes himself at home. Taking advantage of his good luck, he makes use of the room's facilities. A hot shower, washed clothes, ample refreshments from the room's bar, TV entertainment and a soft comfortable bed are all experiences he had not enjoyed for a long time. It can't last,

however. The following morning he is discovered and ejected, but not without taking a small treasure with him; a fresh bar of the hotel's soap.

From San Jose: "The Way it Was"

Possibly, as we get older, we tend to color our past.



In this movie, granddad, with the aid of a family photo album, tells his grandson of the checkered careers of some of the boys older relatives. In a series of vignettes, we meet an eccentric sea captain (commanding the high seas in a small dingy on a bay creek) and a possibly mad inventor who concocts an unpleasant tasting elixir of life on the kitchen stove, using his unwilling family as guinea pigs. A small gem of a comedy.

From San Francisco: "We're in the Dough"

Three days to make a french loaf? That's one of

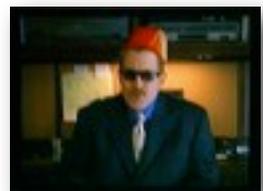


the things we learn on a visit to a famous San Francisco bakery. This documentary follows a family on a guided tour of the bread making plant where a head baker explains the process, from mixing dough in huge kneading machines, adding the yeast, shaping, scoring and loading the baking ovens. Yes, it's a three day odyssey. Included is a demonstration of one of the bakeries specialties; cute turtle shaped loaves.

From the AMMA competition we saw:

"The International Mensch of Mystery." Winner of the Oscar H. Horovitz Award

A teenage boy, addicted to computer games, is the despair of his family; he should be



doing his homework instead of clicking. However, his obsession comes to good use when his family is menaced by a dastardly international criminal. Using his game playing skills and imagination (and a few video effects) he overcomes the badguy using a

Continued on page 2

January Highlights, continued

home made bomb constructed of emergency road flares and his child's alarm clock. Triumphant, he is worshipped by his grateful and adoring family.

"Into the Blue"

Arizona is the setting for this annual meeting of hot air balloon enthusiasts and their colorful craft. The movie follows the event from the cool of early morning, when balloons are prepared to take to the air, through their flights and landings. Dozens of balloons fill the sky and some of them are not typical of how we think a balloon should look. Many are imaginatively shaped as whimsical creatures and objects, such as a bunch of red peppers, a bull dog, Tony the Tiger and



Porgy Pig. The event allows the videographer an opportunity to fill the screen with color as these graceful craft drift slowly over the countryside.

"Harry and Al"

What do old geezers in a residential home talk about?



Well, for Harry and Al it is all about old conquests. In this movie, two ex-studs boast of their prowess and past amours. Unfortunately, this armchair quarterbacking causes discomfort when a mutually known female is discussed. Some surprising revelations by each of these two former Lotharios do not fit the memories nor self-images the two have built for themselves. They get angry with each other, but will it last? Probably not. What will they talk about tomorrow?

"In Paradisum"

You know when you come across a magnificent waterfall



and are awed by the beauty of nature? You sit and gaze at the cascading torrent and marvel as it foams over the falls and crashes down on the rocks below. You listen to it's roar. You note the feather-like vapor drifting across the face. You watch the flying spray strike the surrounding fauna and drip steadily on soil and rock. Up high, the clouds drift over the mist. All of that wonder is captured *"In Paradisum"*.

Tips and Tricks

Frank Swanson conducted the first of his workshop series to help us make better movies. See his recap on page 5.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As anyone will tell you, these are exciting times to be involved in video. With more people moving to high speed internet access, clip-type video, streaming video and full length film video across the web is raising the interest in all things video. As amateur videographers and producers we each have the opportunity to take advantage of this in our hobby. It is

now easier to produce for and share our material with a wider audience.

The basic aspect of our videos is unchanged. It still requires proper camera work, pre-planning and editing. But with this new aspect, the video you edit today can be uploaded and viewed in places around the world or right next door to allow for immediate feedback and sharing with family and friends. You could send almost instant edited video of kids or grandkids to anyone. You could collaborate on a video edit by sharing edited clips with an associate in places Arizona or Palo Alto. It removes another barrier and makes video more interesting.

I know some of our members are reading this saying, "Well, that is never something I would ever be doing" but I have learned to "never say never". Look at what has happened

to video in just the past five years. With the advent of digital video more of us are learning more about computers than we ever thought we would want to know. With the advent of HD video you will have the opportunity to make short videos that rival the image quality of anything made by today's professionals. It is all a matter of using the same basic skill set the club has been teaching for years and applying it to the new format and sharing it worldwide overnight.

So, how do you learn these new aspects as they come along? By jumping in and learning it one piece at a time. By trying and doing. By learning and sharing the knowledge you acquire with others. By being a part of a club and participating. Don't wait for someone to bring it to you, get active and have fun at it!

Bob Meach

February Meeting Main Feature

Recollections: History of Video Tape Recording

By Fred Pfost



Viewfinders Camcorder Club member Fred Pfost spent ten years at The Ampex Corporation in Redwood City directly after graduating from UC Berkeley in January of 1952. He was instrumental in the development of many of the audio, instrumentation, and video products that Ampex produced, including:

- A semiprofessional portable audio recorder: Model 600
- The VR 1000 video recorder
- Glass bonded ferrite heads for video recording

Fred was one of the original Ampex Corporation team members that developed the World's first practical, economically successful video tape recorder in 1956.

Several companies were involved in the race for low speed, short tape length recording, including RCA who first tried 360 inches per second on 2 track recording. Crosby ran 100 ips using a 10 track multiplexed signal. England developed VERA which ran at 840 ips for 15 minutes of recording time on a 21 inch diameter reel. Ampex used a rotating head approach to run the

tape at 15 ips at a high head to tape speed. This gave a video bandwidth that the industry wanted and needed, allowing 1 hour recording time on a 10.5 inch reel of 2 inch wide tape. All of these developments were done in the early '50s.

The original rotary head orientation wrote arcuate traces across the tape but in playback a scalloped output emerged as the head crossed the tape. It took some time to deduce the cause. (The tape was longitudinally oriented with both longitudinal and transverse motion in the passage of the head across the tape. This caused higher output near the tape edge and lower output near the middle of the head pass.) Engineers decided to change the head orientation to produce transverse paths across the tape, which eliminated the variations in the output signal and became the configuration used by the entire industry until the advent of the helical scan configuration some 20 years later.

Fred was put in charge of transducer design and video head assembly design. Over the next 20 years, 15,000 "Quad" machines were produced by Ampex with little change in design.

Following his term at Ampex and for the next thirty years, Fred consulted

Clockwise from top: Ampex founder Alexander M. Poniatoff at left ; Ampex fans Bing Crosby and Judy Garland; Model 600 portable audio recorder; VR 1000 video recorder



with both national and international companies. During that period he founded three companies that developed the following breakthrough technologies that set standards of achievement for various industries:

- The computer industry's first hard disc data recorder (which later became known as the Winchester Disc) (1963)
- A Stop Action-Instant Replay hard disc video recorder (1965) (Ampex came out with their version of this device a year later.)
 - A Video Cartridge Recorder developed (1970)
 - A High Speed, High Tension tape cartridge (1975)
 - An automated Robotic Work Station (1985)

Fred has 50 U.S. Patents and hundreds of foreign patents. He was awarded three EMMYs over the years for his achievements, one of which was the first time that the Television Academy had ever given a "Lifetime Achievement" award in the technical EMMY category.



This month we introduce a new column featuring a medley of useful information for our members. It is intended to include video techniques, news of interest, or random bits of relevant information. Members are encouraged to submit items.

FLASHES

One of the hottest new transitions between scenes or clips you see today is the “white flash”. It is sometimes accompanied by a flash bulb type sound or impact type sound (foomp) as well. If your editing software does not have this as a selectable transition you can create it on your own. What you need is a white clip (shoot a piece of white paper), or create a white matte strip. Then, insert it between the two clips and apply an “Additive Dissolve” transition from the end of the leading clip to the white clip and another from the white clip to the trailing clip. What will happen is the

video clip will wash from standard colors to the white and then back again to the colors in the trailing clip. Play with the length of the white clip and the transition times to get it to look like a flash. This also works with any color. I have seen it used with gold, amber and reddish colors on some programs. Two channels on television that use interesting transitions like this are the Golf Channel (cable 82) and the Discovery Channel (cable 29) with some of their programming.

STAND UP FOR YOUR AUDIO

If you find your narration or voiceovers are lacking in depth of range and spark, stand up! One of the

simplest ways to improve your voiceovers is to do them while standing. When we sit it compresses our diaphragm, limiting our range and changes our voices. Standing allows for full use of our vocal range and inspires greater enthusiasm making the narration more interesting to the viewer. Have you ever noticed that professional people doing voiceovers for cartoons and movies are always standing? Even the “Big Voiced Guy” in that insurance commercial is standing. It allows them to animate their reading and adds life to the narration. You will hear the difference immediately. And, so will your viewers.

Submitted by Bob Meacham, President

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR JANUARY 2007

Bank Account Beginning 1/1/07	\$508.15
Income Total	\$255.00
Dues (8)	\$240.00
DVD sales (3)	\$ 15.00
Expenses Total	\$ 0.00
Bank Account Ending 1/18/07	\$763.15



Frank Swanson, Treasurer for 2007

VIEWFINDERS VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

Club Commercial

All shooting of the commercial has been completed. The production team is satisfied that enough footage was shot to provide the director, Fred Pfof, and video editor, Bob Meacham, with all they need to address Fred’s script.

Bob’s first rough edit was shown at the VVP production meeting, January 16th. Bob, in cooperation with Fred and assisted by Irv Webster, the

production’s designer, will continue to fine-tune the commercial through editing techniques, graphics and titling. They expect to present a revised version at the next production meeting on February 6th.

“Dearly Departed”

Our next feature movie with the working title “Dearly Departed” is now underway. Following the success of “Maybe Today”, the team hopes that this new, more ambitious production, will be as well received. Completion date for submission to amateur movie festivals is August 1st, 2007.

A first draft script by Brian Lucas has been reviewed and a production team is now being assembled. To date, they include:

- Producer: Bob Meacham
- Director and Writer: Brian Lucas
- Assistant Director: Fred Pfof
- Videographer: Franz Helbig
- Audio: Jack Gorham

Other crew positions are still to be confirmed and VVP invites Viewfinders members to get involved in making the new movie. There are many assistant positions available, so here’s a chance to hone skills and get some hands-on experience working on a movie crew.

TECH TIPS

By Frank Swanson

At the end of each monthly general meeting program of the Viewfinders Club, I will be presenting a 10-minute live presentation or a video clip that will provide you with the chance to expand your knowledge of camcorders, shooting techniques, audio recording, editing tricks and tips, or post-production tools.

At our January meeting I ran the Digital Juice "I've Been Framed" 8-minute clip which explained five fundamental shot composition techniques to help make your movies look like they've been shot by a pro.



1. The Rule of Thirds: imagine a tic-tac-toe grid over your viewfinder and place your subject so that they simultaneously fall along one of the two horizontal lines and one of the two vertical lines. This rule is especially true for framing people and objects, and works well whether your shooting wide, medium or close-ups. Very far shots don't need to follow this rule as their purpose is usually to just provide an establishing shot.

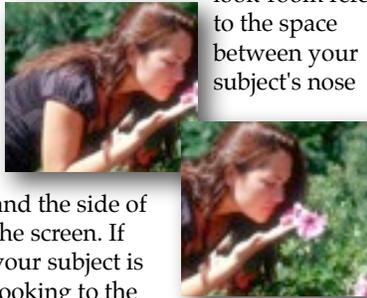
2. Don't Chop the Chin: When shoot



ing extreme close-ups of people, it's a sin to chop the chin. It's

OK to chop the top of the person allowing the forehead to fall out of the frame, but it's not OK to cut off the chin.

3. Compose the Nose: Nose room or look-room refers to the space between your subject's nose



and the side of the screen. If your subject is looking to the right, allow for some breathing room in the direction that the nose is pointed, that is to the right, and vice versa. Placing the subject on the left vertical thirds line will provide breathing room to the right. Placing the subject in the middle of the frame is not good because it just provides a good shot of their ear, and placing them on the right vertical thirds line just looks bad.

4. Lead Them On: Lead-room sets the Rule of Thirds in motion.



When shooting people in motion you need to allow ample room ahead of them. As you pan with the subject, try to keep them on the trailing third vertical line. This give the person room to move into the area ahead of themselves. If there's a group of subjects, give the front runner the lead-room, and don't worry about the others who trail. A good fluid-head tripod will make for a smooth pan motion and make this lead-room process easy and smooth.

5. Beware of Bad Backgrounds: When you shoot, compose the whole frame. Look for poles or plants that seem to protrude out of the top of your subject's head. Look out for wires that seem to go in one ear and out the other. Simply move your camera to one side or the other or raising or lowering of the tripod will correct the



problem. Catch these problems before you start to record so that you don't record bad footage in those situations where you only get one chance.

These five tips for superior shot composition can be seen on your computer by going to www.digitaljuice.com, click on "DJTV" on the top of your screen, click on the "all videos" tab, click on Page 3 of 10, and finally click on "Take 5: I've Been Framed". There are a whole bunch of other great clips from Digital Juice that are just waiting for you to watch while you're there. I'll pick another one for screening at the end of our February meeting, so be sure to come and hear what I've got to say about my choice for next time.

MEETING REFRESHMENT VOLUNTEERS

Below is a list of those members who have offered to provide meeting refreshments. If you would like to volunteer to help out, please email Brian Lucas.

- Feb: Jack Gorham
- March: Bernie Wood
- Sept: Frank Yap
- Nov: Fred and Joan Pfof

That leaves a lot of empty months. Please consider this easy task. The cost to the volunteer to do this is approximately \$10.

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Six years ago, I was in England to attend a family wedding. My sister-in-law goes whole hog when it comes to launching her children into married life, so this was a fairly grand affair. The church and reception hall were chosen for their settings and classiness. The bride was driven in a horse drawn carriage and the wedding party attired in morning suits and, for the Scottish bridegroom's best man, a kilt. Everything had to be first class with no hair out of place, nor a seam misaligned.

My wife and I were waiting outside in the vestibule when I felt a grip on my arm. Turning round, I found my sister-in-law, shadowed by the enormous hat she wore for the occasion.

"Here!" she said, thrusting forward my brother's video camera. "Les has to do his duty as father of the bride, so here you go." She handed over the camera and hurried into the church to oversee the seating arrangements.

I tried to distinguish the various buttons, levers, etc. It was very different from any camera I'd ever encountered before. I heard the clatter of the horses' hooves as the carriage bearing my brother and niece approached. I lifted up the camera and hit the "Record" button. Relief! The viewfinder indicated it was recording. I captured a wonderful scene of my brother descending from the carriage and assisting his daughter down the steps and



into the church. I zoomed in as the bride and groom recited their vows. I hurried outside and made sure I recorded their exit from the church as husband and wife. Later, at the reception I recorded their first dance, the toasts, the conviviality of all the guests. I felt confident that I was contributing to a lasting memory that the family would share for years to come.

The next day, my sister-in-law, keen to relive the festivities of the previous day, asked to see the footage. No doubt, she wanted confirmation that her months of planning and orchestration had produced a memorable and noteworthy experience that would be treasured for years to come. Yes, I'd caught the carriage arrival, a little off center, but there was my brother and his daughter smiling into the camera as they descended. Suddenly, the camera swung down and there was a jerky but clear shot of my well-shod feet. And it stayed there, with the sound-track of people's conversations trailing above. Next, was a lovely wavering image of the altar and the "I do's." Then more shots of

my feet. As the new couple exited the church, I had captured and fixed on an unintended artfully angled shot of the church roof with a sound-track of excited cheering. The reception events were non-existent apart from audio of conversations that accompanied even more dizzying shots of my feet.

The rest of the family laughed at my embarrassment but not my sister-in-law. I mumbled a brief apology, but she held up her hands and placed the blame on my brother, a not uncommon occurrence, for neglecting to instruct me in operating the camera.

The moral; never get caught at an important family event with a strange camera.

Brian Lucas

VIEWFINDERS QUARTERLY THEMED VIDEO CONTEST

Theme:

"WATER"

Deadline for the club short video contest is the April club meeting

Acceptable run time for entries will be from one to ten minutes.

Only Viewfinders club members are eligible to enter.

Winners will be voted by club members in attendance.

Good Luck!

AMMA 2007 CONVENTION CRUISE FOR SINGLES?

Last month we reported on AMMA's New England Fall Convention cruise. Viewfinders member Bill Mannion is interested in attending but his wife is no sailor.

As single occupancy stateroom rates are approximately twice the double occupancy rate of \$1185 - \$1555 per

person, Bill is interested in finding someone who would be willing to share a berth with him.

AMMA is unwilling to undertake pairing of singles, so Bill has volunteered to coordinate male with male and female with female interested parties. This offer is open to amateur video makers of all clubs.

The cruise embarks from New York and sails for eight days visiting U.S. and Canadian cities on the Atlantic

coast before returning to the Big Apple.

Deadline for the special group reservation rate is April 9th.

For more information about sharing a berth, email Bill Mannion at billmannion@sbcglobal.net

For full information about the cruise, contact AMMA Convention chairman Harold Cosgrove by mail: PO Box 474, Lewiston, NY 14092 or telephone:(800) 668-9041

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Please send announcements and articles for submission to the publisher during the two weeks previous to the following monthly issue. Send address and email corrections to the publisher.

MONTHLY CLUB MEETINGS

Held in the Cupertino Room, Quinlan Center. 10188 N. Stelling Road, Cupertino, California. Watch the calendar for programs updates. Admission is free.

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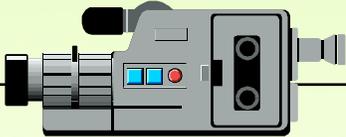
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS
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<p>JAN Jan 3 Meeting: "10 Best of the West" and NCCAMA movies screenings. Jan 5th San Jose Meeting: "Gorillas..."</p>	<p>FEB Feb 7 Meeting: Fred Pfof on "The History of Video Tape" Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>MARCH March 14 Meeting: John Dietrich on "Matting and Chromakey Techniques" Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>APRIL April 4 Meeting: Jim Visser on "Slide Show Production and Techniques" Members Quarterly Short Video Competition screening. Theme: "Water" Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>MAY May 2 Meeting: Club Members Video Screening Night. Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>JUNE Inter-club Exchange Night (still to be confirmed) Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>JULY MV Student Video Festival Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>AUG Panel Discussion of "Audio in Video: Microphones, Capturing, Editing and Voice-overs" Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>SEPT</p>  <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>OCT Club Annual Video Contest. Screenings. Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>NOV Annual Gold DVD Awards and Social. Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>DEC</p> 

