

have to be ready to jump off the train and rush back to the observation car, fight their way through the crowds to get a good location, and be ready when the candidate appeared. At no time could the cameramen afford to let the candidate appear without safeguarding themselves by being on the spot with their cameras. None could foresee what might occur; witness the shooting of Mayor Cermak when an attempt was made in Florida to assassinate President Roosevelt.

In all of the major cities where the candidate campaigned the local authorities would arrange for quite a celebration and parade from the station to his hotel headquarters. This route had to be covered and arrangements had to be made for a special automobile to carry the cameramen at the head of the parade. Although this arrangement was agreed upon with the candidate and his staff it very often happened that the camera car would have to battle against being pushed out of the parade. Passes, police cards, and other identifications meant nothing to some of them. There is a perpetual feud between newsreel men and police. The constabulary always have their own ideas as to where the newsreel fits in. It was very important that the candidate be covered completely but it meant constant fighting to do it.

There is never a dull moment for the hard-working cameraman. He never knows what the morrow will bring for him. Some local assignment, city fathers pinning a medal on visiting heroes, a political speech, amateur boxing or basketball, Atlantic City beauty pageant, or a trip around the world. Perhaps just a fire that will keep him on the job all night and day, or a strike. Whichever the case, it will be on film, and the next day he will be back for more.

### THE NEWSREEL CAMERAMAN

WALTER McINNIS\*

Fifty years ago this October, Hammerstein's Olympia Music Hall rang to the cheers of an enthusiastic audience as President McKinley's Inaugural Parade was re-enacted in all its pomp on a motion picture screen.

In 1927, the Fox-Case Corporation launched its famous Fox Movietone News. It was instantly popular and the public who had become

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sound conscious overnight, received it with great acclaim. Before long the silent-type newsreel became antedated and just as quickly so did the silent type of coverage suffer a momentary lapse. All newsreel stories were covered with the prime thought in mind, "How is it for sound?" This was purely a transition period. The newsreels had found their voice, but had not yet learned to talk.

Public acclaim for the sound newsreels was not to be denied. Before long all five major newsreel producing companies were operating sound trucks throughout the world, although none quite so extensively as Fox Movietone. It surely seemed as if the day of the silent camera had waned, but already the pendulum had reached the limit of its swing and was enduring that split-second battle with inertia before returning. In other words, motion pictures with sound were no longer newsworthy *just because they had sound*. Now, the sound had to be justified, and thus the newsreel commentator was born. It soon became apparent that many newsreel shots could be covered "MOS"—or in newsreel parlance, "mitout sound"—and joyfully, cameramen rushed to their respective attics and reverently dusted off the old silent cameras.

Aided and abetted by the newsreel editors who once more had become "coverage conscious" the pendulum raced back across its arc with increased momentum while the amount of field-recorded sound that was heard in the newsreel became reduced to nearly the vanishing point.

During this period many improvements in sound camera equipment were made by the Wall Camera Company of Syracuse. A new compact self-contained camera, comparable in weight to a silent Mitchell camera, and requiring a light 12-v storage battery for its operation, was delivered to Movietone cameramen. It had the first of the popular *D*-type intermittent, a rack-over arrangement for critical focusing through the objective lens, and a right-side-up finder. This camera could be used with a 400-ft magazine as well as the 1000-ft type, an important weight decreasing factor. All of the restrictions imposed upon cameramen by the use of the old-type sound camera equipment were eliminated with this new camera. The sound equipment, too, had become very portable and movement became almost as unrestricted as with the silent camera. Another important improvement was the Akeley gyrotripod permitting smooth "pan" and tilts coupled with ruggedness of construction. For nearly all types of stories this tripod is still unsurpassed.

Newsreels today show the result of 50 years of progress. No small tribute to the newsreel institution is the record of combat coverage in the last war. The pool of war correspondents of the five major producing companies was responsible for much of the documentary film which will provide the motion picture history of the war. Combat cameramen attached to the Armed Forces rapidly acquired the newsreel technique under the tutorship of many oldtimers in the business. In fact, at this office and at the *March of Time* Newsreel Cameramen School operated during the first year of the war, hundreds of fighting cameramen were put through these two institutions. The graduates in turn trained the great body of fighting cameramen who have given us the complete history of World War II in motion pictures.

In October 1929, in the pioneer days of sound newsreels, I was given an assignment to go to India on a tiger-hunting expedition. Before leaving, a rush call came for a lightweight outfit to make pictures with sound aboard the dirigible *Los Angeles* on a test run over Philadelphia and New York. We took off at 5:00 P.M. and made pictures of the crew's quarters and other interiors. Approaching New York approximately at 8:30 P.M., with the light not too good, we took a chance and made some night shots of the City. The Commander of the *Los Angeles* was good enough to describe the time and places we were passing over; his voice recorded exceptionally well, considering the drone from the motors. We were later complimented on the quality of the negative and sound, and were informed that these were the best night shots made over New York up to that time.

Our first jungle assignment was in Hyderabad, where our camera was placed on a platform built in a tree at a 15-ft elevation. The microphone was set where we hoped a tiger would make an appearance to kill a water buffalo or cow. This continued for nearly three months with only partial success—the tiger refused to co-operate.

We then moved to the native state, Cooch Behar, north of Calcutta. The Mahareni of Cooch Behar was very co-operative and we made several tiger hunts from elephants. In all we had 32 elephants. We were more successful on this enterprise. On our first trip into the jungles the two elephants mentioned before had quite a battle over a maiden elephant, and that nearly ended our hunt before we even got to our jungle location, but the mahouts appeased the elephants.

About 20 elephants would form a large circle and drive in any tigers or other animals that were encircled in the ring toward the fire line where we, the Mahareni, and her guests were set up. Our first

drive netted a huge black bear with two cubs clinging tightly to their mother's back. The huge bear came out of the jungle so close to my camera elephant that he became startled and reared back on his hind legs, and in turn gave me quite a scare not knowing whether he would crash back on me and the equipment. The elephant finally settled down and surprisingly enough we had some very good pictures with sound of the elephants trumpeting wildly and loudly. The Mahareni's guests made no attempt to shoot the bear because it is not considered sportsmanlike to shoot a mother bear with cubs.

In our next beat-in, we rounded up a leopard, and the following day we rounded up a large tiger weighing nearly 400 lb. This is really a sport of kings as one has to be an invited guest to take part in a hunt of this nature.

In April 1930 we returned to Calcutta. The city was in an uproar. The Ghandi riots had started; so instead of returning to New York we shot a lot of material in Calcutta, and then proceeded to Bombay where the fighting was more intense. We made thousands of feet of riot pictures.

## NEWSREEL SOUND

WARREN M. McGRATH\*

The wedding of sight and sound in motion pictures was pioneered in no small extent by newsreel soundmen and engineers. Since the remarkable sound picture record of Lindbergh's takeoff on the first Trans-Atlantic flight early in 1927, a small group of intrepid field soundmen have brought back a library of sounds and sound effects that should remain a lasting tribute to their skill, ingenuity, and daring. The few field soundmen who remain continue to record sound under acoustic conditions that would be the despair of the average studio mixer.

It was inevitable that newsreel sound should pass through an era of growing pains before settling down to a specific treatment acceptable to all major newsreel producing companies. Since early 1932, the commentary type of newsreel story has increased in popularity until today it is accepted as the most lucid manner in which to present

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