

## John Carlson (1951–2021)

**J**ohn Carlson, a lifelong SMPTE member of the SMPTE San Francisco Section and a national office-holder, vice president of Monaco Film Labs & Video, and Bay Area film educator, has died. He was 70. Carlson made numerous contributions to the Society, first playing an important role in the monthly activities of the San Francisco Section as a manager and officer and then on the national level as a Section Vice President, Governor, Life Fellow, and key contributor to two San Francisco-based SMPTE international conferences in 1989 and 1991. A 1991 bio from the *Journal of the SMPTE* is available at [tinyurl.com/Carlson-SMPTE-work](http://tinyurl.com/Carlson-SMPTE-work).

Carlson met Ampex videotape pioneer and the then-SMPTE President Charles A. (Charlie) Anderson at a San Francisco Section meeting in 1984. Monaco labs owner Dick Monaco was also at the meeting, and the three formed Monaco video on the spot. Anderson knew video—he helped invent it!—Monaco had the film knowledge and expertise, and Carlson was tasked with managing the new enterprise. Monaco played an important role in the San Francisco Bay Area video production and film-to-video transfers.

Carlson received a BA in film studies from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI, in 1974 and an MA in film from

San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA, in 1980. He worked at Leo Diner Films, San Francisco, as a film timer from 1975 to 1983, followed by 20 years at Monaco Film and Video, as a vice president and a chief colorist. He was a member of the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) and the Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) dedicated to the preservation and study of film and video imaging and of audio recordings.

A long-time educator in film production, he supported the non-profit Canyon Cinema Foundation, San Francisco, dedicated to educating students and the general public about independent, non-commercial, experimental, and avant-garde moving images. With the Film Makers Cooperative, Canyon Cinema is one of the only major sources for prints of avant-garde and experimental films in America and related research information.

In his teaching work, Carlson's use of experimental films from Canyon Cinema and others provided students with examples of “do's” and “dont's” in filmmaking. Aiding his hands-on style of instruction were field trips to local independent film resources and exhibition spaces such as Little Giant, Monaco Labs, Canyon Cinema Salons at New Nothing, San Francisco Museum of Modern Arts film screenings, and other cinematic events reflecting

the diverse San Francisco local filmmaking scene.

Carlson was well known for his expertise in color timing and color correction for Monaco's many commercial clients and the Bay Area Television Archive. He taught post-production and experimental film at the Academy of Art University from 1993 to 2016 and as adjunct professor at City College of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, teaching courses in “cinematography and lighting” and “experimental film.”

His teaching style in his “cinematography & lighting” class at City College is visible in a 2-minute clip from the spring of 2018 at [tinyurl.com/Carlson-teaching-method](http://tinyurl.com/Carlson-teaching-method). In the clip, Carlson directs from the center of the production action; he is the one with a beard and checkered shirt.

Married 40 years, Carlson is survived by his wife, Susan, their daughter, Sonja, and his brother, Fr. Gregory. The Carlson family requests donations in his memory be sent to a memorial fund administered by Canyon Cinema, dedicated to assisting future film students. Visit [bit.ly/john-carlson-memorial-fund](http://bit.ly/john-carlson-memorial-fund).

—Peter Hammar  
Former San Francisco Section Chair  
Sections Governor  
SMPTE Life Fellow

