"VILLAGE OF MY FATHERS"

AN EXPERIMENTAL FILM

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Douglas B. Knowlton
1962

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

"VILLAGE OF MY FATHERS"
AN EXPERIMENTAL FILM

by Douglas B. Knowlton

This study consists of two parts: a motion picture film,
Village of My Fathers, and the present volume which explains
the conception, planning, and production of the film and
then, by citing audience reactions, estimates how well the
film succeeded in achieving its intended effect. Copies of
the film are available at the Department of Radio, Television,
and Film and at the film library of the Audio-Visual Center,
Michigan State University.

In addition to scholastic study of film and television
production, the author has had several years of professional
experience as a film editor and camera man and lesser exper-
ience as a director, animator, musical composer, and sound
recordist.

This study was an attempt to make a truly cinematic film
from a series of still photographs. This was done by exten-
sive use of complex camera movements, positioning and crop-
ping of the photographs, editing, and suggestive music. The
unique feature of the film is the use of full photographs
which do not conform to screen proportions.

The first chapter considers the planning and design of the film. It begins with the conception of the idea, includes the scripting, music recording, and the preparation of camera guide sheets which controlled the filming.

The second chapter surveys the processes of shooting the film, recording and editing the voice track and the final preparations for making prints.

The final chapter is an assessment by the author of how closely the finished film reflects the design and how well it achieves its intended effect. Reactions of casual audience members as well as those of other film makers are cited.

This study should be of value to people planning to make films using similar materials and techniques. As a description of the process of developing a very detailed film design, it should be valuable to film makers desirous of refining their own designs. The reader should have some knowledge of film production and animation techniques to derive fullest benefit from the study.

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AN EXPERIMENTAL FILM

By

Douglas B. Knowlton

A THESIS

Submitted to the College of Communication Arts
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INTRODUCTION

> Film resembles painting, music, literature, and
> the dance in this respect -- it is a medium that
> may, but need not, be used to produce artistic
> results.[1]

I undertook the graduate study of film to expand my
capacities for using the medium to produce artistic results.
It seemed clear that the best way to expand capacities was
by the thoughtful production of results: films, which
thru the experiences of production, self-evaluation, and
audience criticism, could serve as the treads and risers in
a flight of ascending artistic merit. The film Village of
My Fathers, which is submitted as the major part of this
thesis, is the last of these few but significant steps which
I took as a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts.
From the beginning of my studies I pondered what this last
step should be. The ideas for many films were found or
created but were quickly shelved or discarded. Some ideas
were quite fully developed and then set aside. Films died
aborning due to insufficiencies of time, talent, cooperation,

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[1]Rudolf Arnheim, Film as Art (Berkeley: University of
California Press, 1957), p. 8.

and funds, particularly funds. Somehow a film had to be produced for no money.

One of the film ideas I carried about with me was the vague notion that it would be interesting to attempt making a truly cinematic film from a series of still photographs. Many collections and series of photographs were viewed with this notion in mind. The first of these viewings that developed into anything started at about 7:05 p.m., March 18, 1959. I tuned in WMSB-TV. The program in progress was a presentation of some photographs of Italy taken by Italo P. B. Scanga -- photographs I had seen previously in the gallery of the Kresge Art Center. The television cameras looked at the pictures and the music of a string quartet provided the sound. I felt that the program gave a fairly adequate view of the photographs to those of the audience who had not seen them in the gallery. It seemed to me, however, that the dimensions of time and sound added little to these stills themselves. The program was not an artistic entity in itself but rather a transmission of previous artistic results: the still photographs. I asked myself, "What would I have done with these stills to give them a larger life?" Before I could ponder the reply I was rushed on to other activities.

In June, 1959, the subject of film, Italo Scanga, and I were thrown together in the film laboratory sessions of a course entitled <u>Local Production of Audio-Visual Materials</u>. Italo was a student and I was assisting in the instruction. After one of these sessions an informal discussion between the two of us turned from the film making problem of the day to the television program of Italo's photographs. As a result of our talk we agreed to explore the possibility of making a film using the same stills. The idea that was to eventuate in <u>Village of My Fathers</u> began to take shape.

In the pages that follow the reader will find described the initial concept of the film, how it was shaped into a script and formalized into highly detailed guides so that the concept could be actualized on film, and the process and problems of production. How accurately the finished film reflects the design and how successfully it achieves its intended effect will be discussed in the final chapter. To benefit fully from this study the reader should bring to it some knowledge of film production and animation techniques. I will discuss general techniques only as I deem necessary, to make clear specific variations or applications of my own.

CHAPTER I

PRE-PRODUCTION PLANNING

The most important thing is to have the
vision. The next is to grasp and hold it.[2]

HAVING THE VISION

Whence cometh a film? Most films start when someone

with an idea he wants to express or communicate decides that

film would be an effective medium for doing so. Others start

when someone decides that film would be an effective means of

recording some visually observable occurrence. A few start

when someone is excited by the cinematic possibilities of

some particular images or techniques and then seeks an idea

which these images or techniques can effectively communicate

or express. Village of My Fathers started this last way.

I sat in Italo Scanga's apartment with a pile of excit-

ing images -- photographs Italo had taken of Lago, his native

Calabrian village. Images alone do not a movie make. What

was the idea that could be expressed with this group of

photographs? Each photograph expressed its own discrete

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[2]Sergei Eisenstein, Film Form, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda
(New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 261.

idea. There was no apparent unifying element that organized them into a theme or story. Like the fortune teller's cards this stack of photographs could be reshuffled and a different story imagined each time they were lifted, one by one, from the pile. These stills were the images available for expressing an idea, but they did not define an idea. They could be used to illustrate a sociological lecture about southern Italian peasant culture. Stacked one way, they could say, "Ain't life beautiful." But, then, looked at in the reverse order, the message could become "Ain't life sad."

If I could discover no satisfying story or theme in the pictures themselves, there was one, certainly, in the situation surrounding their creation. After all, it was not by happenstance that these one-hundred enlargements of differing sizes and proportions had been brought into being from a selection of more than five hundred negatives each exposed through the mediating influence of the photographer. Italo had not simply recorded what he saw around him as objectively as he could, he had reacted to it. These pictures were the visual evidence of those reactions. I needed a fuller understanding of his reactions.

I asked questions and Italo began to tell me about his

pictures. At first he talked about who was in them, the circumstances under which they were taken, his thoughts on the composition and technique. Gradually his expressions became more subjective. A picture of an old crumbling wall, which for me had only pictorial interest, reminded Italo of how he had felt suffocated in the narrow streets of the village when he first returned there. Other photos elicited further revealing subjective statements. Gradually there developed the image of a man who had returned to the familiar but foreign world of his childhood and found himself in great sympathy, but out of harmony, with it. This, then, was an idea involved with these pictures. Italo left home as a child, returned home as a man, and then, because of his experiences there, broke away from home psychologically as well as physically.

This was the nucleus of the idea, the theme, from which I considered making a film. Was it filmic? Limited to using only those visual images which the motion picture camera could discover in these stills, was it possible to express this theme effectively? I thought it was. I thought that these pictures could be arranged in such a way, looked at in such a way, that with the addition of the right words the idea could be communicated to an audience.

Yes, words would be needed. Words suggested by what Italo said about his pictures. Words which augmented the quality of reaction I perceived in the stills. Why not use music as well? Music has the capacity to indicate qualities of reaction.

If I did decide to use music, it would have to be composed for the film so that it would complement the other elements of the total design. Could we find an artistically capable composer who would also be sympathetic to film requirements? Italo thought we could. Inquiries led him to Sherman Krane, a graduate student in music composition here at Michigan State University. Sherman was interested in the idea of composing a film score, but with reservations. Generally, he considered most films he had seen, especially those in that peculiar category called 16 mm., very misdirected in their use of music. Specifically, he had never attempted a film score. Even so, his interest was strong enough so that he did agree to discuss the project with Italo and me.

GRASPING AND HOLDING IT

Well, where was I? I had visual materials from which to make a film. I was hopeful that Sherman would turn out

to be the composer I needed. Before I talked with him I

wanted to organize some of my ideas concerning the design

of the film. Accepting the idea of making a film from still

photographs imposed automatically the basic feature of the

visual design. There would be no "live" motion; no movement

of elements within the frame in relationship to each other.

All motion of the "motion picture" would come from camera

movement toward, away from, and across each still, and from

the editing, considered as motion in time. Regarding the

pictures themselves, about one-half of them had approximately

the same proportions as the motion picture screen. The

other half were taller than they were wide. I felt it

would be impossible to make an effective film without using

any of the pictures in this second half. On the other hand,

if I cropped these pictures so that I could fill the screen

with them, so much of their area would have to be cut off

that some of them would become almost meaningless. The

photographs had been designed as finished, self-sufficient,

works of art, not for film use. I wanted to use many of

them in their entirety. Instead of fitting the pictures to

the screen, I wanted to make the screen fit the pictures.

This called for using flexible screen proportions. I would

shoot those pictures I wanted to use in their entirety

against a black background, placing them as desired within

the camera frame. I hoped that by a happy combination of

film stock, exposure, and processing the density of the

film would be great enough so that the black background

would be perceived as part of the general black of the

viewing room. Then, in effect, the proportions of the screen

would be those of the picture being viewed. Establishing

a certain flexibility in screen proportions would also make

possible more flexibility in the positioning of succeeding

photographs. I felt that this would be a great aid in

implying spatial relationships between the subjects of suc-

ceeding stills. For instance, if a still showing a man

looking to the right was projected in the left side of the

screen area and this was followed by the picture of a tree

projected in the right of the screen area I felt that the

implication that the man was looking at the tree would be

much stronger than if the two stills each filled the screen

with their subjects more or less centered. The pictured

"viewer" and the object viewed would be in a relationship

which made the viewing possible. I also believed that there

was a possibility that the physical eye motion involved

when an audience member shifted his center of attention from man, left, to tree, right, would help imply the desired spatial relationship.

An additional means of suggesting relationships between succeeding pictures is found in the techniques used for making the transition between them. A rapid pan from one still to "find" the next could be used to suggest spatial relationship. The brief superimposure of images during a dissolve could suggest a thematic relationship. Cutting from a detail of a still to a detail of the next which was similar in form could help emphasize the subject similarity or contrast of the stills as a whole. For instance, if I identified a bunch of grapes in a still as something that was for sale and followed that still with another of a bunch of baskets, they, too, might be taken as something for sale. Thus, I planned to use similarity of form to suggest similarity of the essence of the subjects.

I saw much of what I intended to do in regard to proportion, position, and transition as serving a real communicative purpose. Of course, many of my intentions regarding technique were concerned with instilling in the film that grace of expression which elevates art above function and

utility. Well designed music in films traditionally has
had much to do with instilling this grace. Ah, yes, music --
what was I going to do with it and why? Sherman Krane, the
composer-to-be for my film, made it very clear that he had
no desire to compose "background music." This was fine
with me because I wanted music to be a functioning, inter-
related element of the film. I intended to use music to
suggest the subjective attitudes I wanted the audience to
have toward some of the pictures. In some cases this would
be simply a matter of reinforcement -- for instance, using
happy music with a picture which showed happy people. The
happy music could become the means of maintaining this happy
mood as the pictures became those of walls or trees or other
neutral visual images. The music could be used as a counter-
point to suggest the mood of the main character, the music
could suggest his sadness as he looked at the happy people.
Quite in another vein, music could give a sense of motion
and force to certain sequences. The hoes of men working in
the fields, their motion arrested as they raced toward the
earth, could almost seem to swing and strike if complemented
by suggestive music.

Neither picture nor music, singly or together, could communicate all the ideas I wanted to express in this film. Spoken words would be needed. They could very quickly and economically establish the frame of reference within which the film should be viewed -- important in a short film. They could help identify people and things where necessary. In addition, words could aid in making the unrelated still photographs all a part of the unified expression.

Confident that I now had some design ideas that could be developed into a successful film, I arranged a meeting with Sherman Krane and Italo Scanga.

When the three of us got together that first time we talked about music, film, art, and finally, the pile of photographs. As we discussed the stills I arranged them into some fairly obvious sets. Pictures of a funeral, men working, shopping, a religious procession, old men and women, trees, children, were grouped by subject. As I talked about my ideas it became clear to Sherman that I wanted the film to produce its effect through the balanced integration of all its elements. Since the music was to be more than just background he eagerly accepted the challenge of com- posing the score. Of course, before he could start composing I had to write a script.

This was to be the production procedure for the film.
First, I would develop a final script in which every scene
was precisely timed. Second, Sherman would compose the
music to fit the intent and timing of the script. Third,
the music would be recorded. Fourth, I would make whatever
adjustments were necessary in the script timings so that
the music, as recorded, and the other elements of the film
would be in the desired relationship, one with another.
Then would follow all the steps of programming, shooting,
voice recording, and the laboratory processes which would
lead to a final release of the film.

I gathered up the stills and set off to write a script.
In addition to the enlargements I had contact prints for all
of the negatives of Italo's trip to Lago. In all, I had
approximately 500 pictures from which to select those to be
used in the film. For the interests of economy, I planned
to select the majority of stills to be used from those
already enlarged. Money was not available for making more
than a few additional enlargements.

I had a headful of information and reactions that came
from listening to Italo talk about Lago and the pictures.
Each day I thought of other questions to ask Italo as I

looked at the pictures with which I had surrounded myself.

Gradually the feelings and ideas which I wanted to communi-

cate about Lago, its people, Italo, and his stills organized

themselves into an overall scheme and a title: <u>Village of My</u>

<u>Fathers</u>. Lago is a village rooted in the past. I hoped the

plural <u>Fathers</u> would help suggest this. Some people still

refer to the film as <u>Village of My Father</u>. But Italo was not

returning to the village in which his father had lived, he

was returning to the place where all his forebears had lived

for as long as anyone could remember. He was returning to a

way of life which had been their way of life.

The over-all shape of the film developed into what I call

a vignette: a short, graceful sketch. It presents an atti-

tude, then a situation which modifies it, and finally the

modified attitude. In the spirit of experiment I set out

to make my main character exist more by what he saw and what

was said to him than by what he said; and of course he did

not exist visually at all. The identification of the audi-

ence members with my main character is all that would carry

him through the mid-section of the film once he had been

established. To complicate my problem, I was going to con-

tinually remind the audience that they were looking at

photographs, not reality. I was deliberately rejecting the idea of establishing a film reality in the usual sense by using stills. Even with stills one can become involved, can empathize and sympathize by putting one's self within the frame. Other films made from stills which I have seen always keep the audience within the frame simply by keeping the film frame smaller and within the limits of the photographic frame. Here I was planning to remind the audience again and again that they were not in the frame but observing it, observing the responses of someone else to a remote reality. This meant to me that my communication depended as much on intellection as on emotion to be received as I intended.

The over-all scheme for the film was first written down as the following sequence breakdown. The words in the right-hand column are shorthand references to specific pictures and words I was planning to use.

VILLAGE OF MY FATHERS

Major Sequences

1. Approach   - titles, valley, little girl

2. Arrival   - crumbling walls, old age, depression

3. Funeral   - "He died, she died, we will die."

4. Work   - town crier (reaction), butchered
                       hind quarter, pig, woman with
                       chicken, food shops, other shops,
                       people, market day

5. Evening at home - doorway groups, interiors

6. Church festival - individuals, small groups, happy
                       talk, united procession

7. Farewell   - village, little girl, village

The End

With a clear sequence established, I now concerned my-
self with the precise arrangement of pictures and words. I
planned to direct precisely the way in which the audience
would look at the pictures -- what they would see of them
and in them and when. I looked thru the pictures as I wanted
the audience to see them. I panned with my eyes, zoomed in
and out with my head, created closeups using my fingers to
define the frame. By imagination and manipulation I created
the transitions from scene to scene. As I did this, I also
concerned myself with the words. I wanted the words to do

more than simply amplify what the audience would experience visually. They had to be the things the returning son heard, the articulated thoughts of rather inarticulate people, the reactions of the son to what he saw, heard, and felt. Words had to create other dimensions not available in the pictures. The returning son is never seen. He must be created by words and by what he sees. The pictures were very specific images of individuals in a particular village. Words, too, would sometimes be concrete, specific. In addition, however, I wanted the words to suggest the universal quality of the returning son's experience: many people have returned to the place they still regard as "home" to find life there different from their memories of it.

THE SCRIPT

I went thru this process of looking at the stills, saying the words, and imagining the appearance of the film on the projection screen many times. Once a pattern of looking at the pictures and saying the words was well established, I set this down on paper as the script.

Sequence six, the church festival, was not scripted. I had in hand only about five pictures for this sequence and planned to use an additional twenty or so which would have

to be printed from the negatives. I tried scripting this
section by going thru the contact prints for these other-
wise unprinted negatives. The attempts were unsuccessful
because I could not develop a sense of specific timing and
movement working with these very small 35 mm and 2 1/4" by
2 1/4" pictures. For this sequence, then, the script
indicates only the type of pictures to be used and their
general sequence. There are no words. Words would be un-
necessary and intrusive if the combination of music and
pictures could convey the developing idea of the sequence.
The festival was to appear in the film as the high point
of community life in the village. It was to begin on a
note of gaiety and develop a sense of the villagers'
emotional involvement in the group religious experience. At
the very end of the sequence the procession recedes and
leaves the returning son excluded from the group and the
group feeling. Words are then used again to help convey
the returned son's lack of involvement in this experience
and his bittersweet disappointment with the images of his
youth.

The script written, I went thru the pattern of pictures
and words that it prescribed. I timed scenes and words

with a stop watch and recorded these times on the script.

Of course, for sequence six, the church festival, there were

no specific scenes and so there could be no specific timings.

Since I wanted the film to be eleven minutes long, the length

of sequence six was established by subtracting the time of

all other sequences from eleven minutes. This left 121

seconds which I felt was about right for sequence six, con-

sidering the over-all balance of the film.

Here, then, is the script -- the basic record of the

film design.

VILLAGE OF MY FATHERS

(0)[3]   1. Valley - tilt   Fourteen years . . . fourteen

years ago I left this valley.

Fourteen years away from the

valley, from Calabria, from

Italy. A half of my life,

spent in America, separated

me even now from this valley,

from village of . . .

            swish to
(21)   2. Little girl.   GIRL: Mister . . . where

are you going?

NARR: To the village of Lago.

GIRL: Why are you going

there?

NARR: Because . . . I was

born there.

            out of focus & pan to
(30)   3. Village.

        (33) Fade in title   (VILLAGE OF MY FATHERS)

        (38) Diss title   (PHOTOGRAPHS - ITALO SCANGA

MUSIC - SHERMAN KRANE

PRODUCTION - DOUGLAS KNOWLTON)

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[3]Figures in parentheses indicate cumulative time in seconds.

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                fade out titles (50)

                zoom in & diss to
(53)      4.    Narrow street - zoom
                diss., pan
(59)      5.    Devil.              DEVIL:  Welcome to Lago.


                diss
(62.5)    6.    Walls.              NARR:  Welcome to Lago . . .

                                    Old memories crowded me in

                diss
(70)      7.    Pan across wall.    the narrow street.  I could

                                    not breathe, crushed in by

                                    these fragile walls and

                                    memories.


                diss, pan
(75)      8.    Narrow street.

                  (77) start zoom to  In America I had forgotten . . .
                       back wall
                                    almost forgotten . . .

(82)      9.    Wake.               death.

                                    VOICE:  She died . . .

(87)     10.    Crucifix (upper right)  He died . . .

(89.5)   11.    Wake (9 fld)        We will die.

(93)     12.    Corpse (6 fld)      She died . . .

(94.5)   13.    Crucifix (4 1/2 fld)  He died . . .

(96)     14.    Watchers ( 5 fld)   We will die.

(97.5)   15.    Watchers (5 fld)    We will die.

(99)     16.    Watchers            We will die.
```

(100.75) 17. Watchers.

(102.75) 18. Watchers.

(105)   19. Watchers.

         diss
(108)   20. Procession (coffin,
             3 fld)

             (110) zoom out, tilt
                 up.

             zoom in on girl.

         diss
(130)   21. Little girl (4 fld)

             (132) Swish to right,
             pan left and zoom out

             (139) mask (zoom?) in
             to fern bouquet

(140)   22. Cemetery.
             mask out from coffin

         diss
(145)   23. Sealing sarcophagus.
             zoom in, go out of
             focus

         diss
(150)   24. Cemetery.
             out of focus -
                 zoom out 1 sec.
                 hold 3 sec.
                 FO 2 sec.

             (156) 1/2 sec. black.

         wipe on
(156.5) 25. Devil.   DEVIL: Don't feel so bad.

In Lago there is more to life
than death. Every morning
the men go out to work the
fields to bring forth new life
from our old soil . . .

(music up)

		slow diss
(163.5)	26.	Hoing in fog.
(168)	27.	Hoing in fog.
(171)	28.	Hoing in fog.
(174)	29.	Hoing.
(177)	30.	Hoing.
(180)	31.	CU hoing.
(183)	32.	Youth.
(189)	33.	Children.
(193)	34.	Couple.

MAN #1: We work and it keeps
us alive.

MAN #2: If crops are no
better this year . . .
I'll go to the Saar for a few
months and dig coal.

YOUTH: Why work? My father
drills for oil in Venezuela.

CHILDREN: When we grow up
we will go to America.

MAN: I make big money up
North. Let me take you away
from all this.

(199)	35.	Old man.	OLD MAN: I worked in America
			for twenty years . . .
(202.5)	36.	Old man.	but here I am back again.
			This is home.
(207)	37.	Old man.	OLD MAN #2: I am old. I go
			nowhere. I do nothing.
		diss (on "nothing")	
(212)	38.	Tree trunk.	
		diss	
(217)	39.	Bare fig tree	
		zoom out	MAN: Our old trees still . . .
		diss	
(221)	40.	Same tree with foliage.	bear figs and olives each year.
		zoom, tilt up to figs	
		diss	
(226)	41.	Olive tree. tilt down	And we . . .
(230.5)	42.	Pickers.	pick them.
(236)	43.	Old man.	We harvest, the trees drop . ..
(240)	44.	Plowing. (3 field on bare tree) zoom out	their leaves, and we dig and plow again.
		zoom in to ox	If one of the plow oxen should
			happen to break a leg in a
			hole, there is . . .
(252)	45.	Butchering ox.	butchering to be done.

```
            (257) CU man

            (258.5) CU meat

            diss
(259.5) 46. CU meat                Beef is special, so the town

            zoom out to full pix   crier calls to the people of

                                   the village . . . (trumpet)
            diss to wall pan to
(266)   47. Two women.             CRIER:  Beef, fresh beef . . .

                                   Fresh beef can be bought today

                                   at the shop of Marchelli.

(276)   48. Two women.             (Trumpet) Fresh beef can be

                                   bought today . . . (under)

(281)   49. Devil, side view.      DEVIL:  Do you hear?  Now

                                   there is pleasure in shopping

                                   for something special.  Beef

                                   is special.

(286)   50. Pig's head.            Pork is special.

(290)   51. Kid.                   Kid is special.  But, then, in

                                   a small, poor village any

                                   shopping is a pleasure.
            diss
(295)   52. Fruit shop
            zoom in to slices
            of stuff

            diss
(302)   53. Hanging stuff
            CU bananas,
```

```
                    pan left and zoom out
                    tilt down, zoom in to
                    grapes

                    diss
(314)       54.     Bunch of baskets
                    zoom out

                    wipe on
(322)       55.     Harness.

                    (330) zoom in on man

                    diss
(333)       56.     Fish vender, CU empty
                    scale pan

                    zoom out to full pix

                    zoom in on sad woman
                    (3 fld)

                       center right eyes

                    diss
(344)       57.     Two women,
                    CU right woman
                    zoom out to full pix

                    pan wipe to
(350)       58.     Chicken woman, CU face.    WOMAN:  I hope I'm lucky

                    zoom out to show hen       today.  I hope I can sell

                                               this old hen.  I hope no

                                               one can tell she won't lay

                                               anymore.

(358)       59.     CU hen.

                    diss
(360)       60.     CU woman
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              diss
(361.5)  61.  CU hen.

              diss
(362.5)  62.  CU woman.

              diss
(363)    63.  CU hen.

              diss
(364)    64.  CU woman
              pan off left to wall

              diss
(367)    65.  Pretzel woman.
              CU wall, zoom out to
              full pix

(373)    66.  CU pretzels in hand

              diss
(375)    67.  Man with bread.
              CU bread, zoom out

              pan wipe to
(381)    68.  Wine sale.

              zoom in to funnel,
              tilt down to bottle

              diss
(392)    69.  Water woman                 MAN:  After a busy day,
              CU right hand, zoom
              out                         getting water, shopping,

                                          working . . .

              diss                        what pleasure to go home
(401)    70.  Faggot woman
              pan right                   to those who so eagerly . . .

              diss                        wait for you.  Home to your
(405)    71.  Two boys.
              zoom in, tilt up            family
```

```
              diss
(415)    72.  Woman.
              Tilt up on dress, zoom out


              diss
(420)    73.  Old woman.

                          ↑
                    center faces

              diss
(425)    74.  Girl.


              pan wipe left to
(431)    75.  Two kids.
              zoom in on boy


              diss
(438)    76.  CU woman's face


              zoom out to
              woman and child            Ah, to be with one's . . .

(444)    77.  Family group.             family.

                                        With one's . . .

(460)    78.  Man drinking wine         family.  In one's own
              CU pictures
              zoom out                  home.

              zoom in on glass


              diss
(468)    79.  Old and young woman.
              CU wine glass


              zoom out


              diss
(467)    80.  Woman in kitchen.         WOMAN:  When the pots and

                                        pans are clean and hanging

                                        in place again, there is
```

			often still enough light
			in the doorway . . .
		diss	
(486)	81.	Woman in doorway.	for a little sociable
		zoom in on knitting	knitting . . .
		diss	
(491)	82.	CU knitting, talking group.	or talk.
		zoom out	
		diss	
(498)	83.	Men in doorway.	
		zoom in to old man	
		diss	
(504)	84.	Devil	DEVIL: A good day, no?
			And tomorrow . . . the
			feast day of San Nicola.
		fade out	
(519)	85.	Pop in festival pix.	

FESTIVAL TO 640 SECONDS

    Line of kids waiting
    to march.

    Spectators and marchers
    waiting.

    Town band (about 520).

    Group laughing at band.

    Waiting groups.

    Procession (about 535).
       Shots alternate between
       marching priests and
       onlookers.

Villagers following priests.

Image of the Virgin Mary
(about 600).

(640) X.Devil   DEVIL: Still not as you
      zoom out
                                 remembered? Has the village

                                 changed, or have you?

(646) Y.Little girl.   GIRL: Are you leaving Lago,

                                 Mister?

                                 NARR: Yes.

                                 GIRL: Why?

                                 NARR: Because it is no

                                 longer my . . .

(655) Z.Village.   home.
      zoom out

      fade out (660)

      credits (to 680).

                        The End

This script defines a film. It acts as a frame of reference within which all subsequent design decisions regarding the film are to be made. Still the script is only the bare bones of a larger body of design decisions which have already been made, but which are not reflected in it. What follows is a filling out of that body of design. Hopefully, this will elucidate those decisions which eventuated as script elements.

The film begins. Throughout the film the camera is equated with the main character. Scene 1 must establish the main character and begin to establish the camera-narrator relationship. I present the audience with a picture which gives them nothing unusual in the way of form to deal with. Since it will no doubt be perceived as a "motion" scene the audience is not distracted by the necessity of adjusting to a "still" motion picture. Hopefully, audience attention is concentrated on the main character or narrator as he is over-heard, speaking in sentimental reverie about the scene which both he and the audience sees. Now comes the jolt. The narrator is interrupted by a small girl who is no respecter of reverie and wants a matter of fact statement about why he is walking along her road. This is a foreboding that the

narrator's memories and present realities will not mix.
The jolt is complex because now the audience realizes it is
looking at still pictures , ones of non-screen proportions
at that. Reverie is not disrupted easily, however, and the
narrator answers that he is going to Lago, "Because . . . I
was born there." This summation of his feelings about the
old place reinforces the impression that this is a senti-
mental journey. The village now comes into view. On the
scene of the village the music begins. A single chime, as
if the bell of the village church, is heard. The titles now
label the film and the village as well. In scenes 4 thru 8
the narrator is suddenly overwhelmed by Lago and his memories
as he moves thru the streets. The camera, still his eyes,
takes the audience along with him. The music reflects his
internal turmoil. Then the camera cinematically leaps dis-
tance and time to bring the audience to a wake. The audience
is now the only reactor. It no longer has the verbally ex-
pressed reactions of the narrator to share. If any sense
of a main character is to persist until the end of the film,
a film narrator-camera-audience relationship must have been
established by this time. The narrator was saying, "This
is the way I feel about what I see and hear." The audience

is now called upon to contribute to the film experience by saying, "What I feel is what this man feels." The music continues as a reacting element. From scene 14 to 20 a three note musical figure should follow after each "We will die" in the same rhythm pattern as the spoken words as a specific reaction to them.

The audience view of the funeral procession, scenes 21 thru 24, is public as contrasted with the very personal nature of the wake. As Emily Dickenson put it, "After great pain a formal feeling comes." The music here should reflect the public, formal reaction to death. The transitions in this funeral sequence reflect the principle of editing according to visual similarity. A close-up of the little girl in scene 20 dissolves into a close-up of another little girl in scene 21. The masked in bouquet against the black dresses of scene 21 becomes the metal floral decorations of the coffin in scene 22. Between scenes 23 and 24 the transition should emphasize the plurality of death, visually echoing the earlier, "We will die." Rather than simply zooming back from the sarcophagus to view the whole cemetery, zooming in to concentrate on this particular death and then coming out to the whole cemetery, helps make this

a statement on the general nature of death rather than merely a wider view of what has just been seen. At the end of scene 24 the picture fades and for one-half of a second there is nothing to be seen, befitting the gloom which has been generated.

At the beginning of scene 25 the music suddenly becomes an announcement rather than a reaction. A sprightly musical figure reintroduces the character I have dubbed "The Devil." I gave him that name because of his appearance. It has nothing to do with his role in the story. To heighten the feeling that he is intruding into the black mood he slides in from the side. This character, the Devil, is the village sage. He welcomes the returning son and suggests to him the pleasures to be found in the village with the cynical knowledge that they are actually tedious and pleasurable only when romanticized. This first reappearance of the Devil is the test of how well the narrator-audience relationship is holding up. If the audience members perceive that this direct statement is addressed to the returning son, whose part they are now taking, the intended form of the film will be perceived and the narrator's closing re-vocalization and the statement he makes will be accepted as a logical outcome

of the film. Here in scene 25 the Devil is saying, "Cheer up. Don't let your first impressions get you down." Of course, the pleasure he now suggests is the joy of hard labor on old soil. The music should be strong and rhythmic to supply the vitality and force of work to the pictures. Here the music is not reacting to the pictures but complementing them by suggesting the dynamics which are suspended in them. In scenes 30 and 31 the music and voice must be coordinated to give the effect of the workman's speech being interrupted by the strain of striking the ground with his pick.

The music from scene 32 through scene 44 should gradually modify from its "work" quality to suit the more relaxed character of the following scenes. However, the quality or development of the music must be consistent enough so as to suggest that these somewhat dissimilar scenes are concerned with the same general idea; earning a livelihood. The Devil's nice idea about bringing forth new life from the old soil gets pretty well tainted by the time we are through listening to those who work the soil and those who don't have to.

With scene 44 the work sequence comes full cycle as the film returns to the idea of tilling the soil. But scene 44

also begins an extension or sideline of tilling -- the butchering of draft animals either injured or too old to pull a plow. To lose an ox is serious but the vocal emphasis should suggest anticipation since this is one of the few circumstances in which the villagers are able to obtain meat.

The music in scenes 45 and 46 should suggest the violence with which the men hack at the carcass of the ox.

Scenes 47, 48, and 49 are people listening to the town crier who is introduced in scene 47 by a two note trumpet figure. These scenes begin the sequence concerned with shopping.

For a touch of humor an attempt is made to equate the dried-up old woman with her dried-up old hen in scenes 58 thru 64. Visually this is done by matching the position of the hen's eye and the woman's eye in the succeeding shots, by using very short dissolves (4 to 6 frames) between shots to create a momentary super-imposition or after image, and by shortening each succeeding shot. The music should be suggestive of a cackle and timed to the dissolves. In scenes 65 thru 69 the pictures and music have again the quality of the beginning of the shopping sequence.

Scene 70, the shepherd, is the beginning of the evening
at home sequence. The voice and music should be character-
ized by warmth and richness. There should be a distorted
musical figure at the transition to scene 73 to introduce
the old crippled woman. The music can come to rest at
scene 79 and then begin again on scene 80. This will create
a more definite separation between the scenes of coming home
and the brief after supper sequence. The voice here should
be a little flippant but affectionate. The reappearance of
the Devil, introduced by his theme, at scene 84 ends this
sequence and sets up the next.

The church festival sequence begins at 504 seconds. No
voice is used for this sequence. Pictures and music can
convey the desired ideas without verbal help. The festival
begins with a line of children waiting to march in the pro-
cession. The next few scenes are marchers and spectators
waiting for things to start. Then the homespun, off-key
town band strikes up a tune. This is followed by a group
laughing at the band and then by other groups still waiting
for things to start. Then the procession begins. The
canopy is seen approaching in the distance. Then shots
alternate between the priest marching under the canopy and

people watching him. The canopy goes away down a narrow
street and then the mass of following villagers is seen.
Finally the image of the Virgin Mary is seen. This is the
climax of the procession. However, almost as soon as it
begins to build it falters and fades, both visually and
musically. This is to suggest that although this group
religious activity is the fullest experience the village
has to offer, it is a disappointment to the returned native
son.

At 640 seconds the Devil is introduced by his theme for
the last time. His remarks cap the disappointment of the
returned son, give a reason for it, and suggest the basis
of the reason. The delivery of the lines should suggest a
feeling of sympathy for the returned son's inability to find
in Lago the home he assumed was there. The little girl in
the next to last scene reflects the one in scene 2. She is
unaware but matter of fact. The returned son, the narrator,
is finally heard again. His response to the little girl's
question must suggest a sadder-but-wiser acceptance of life
as it is.

The last scene is a fast zoom back from the village. The
music reaches its climax, resolves and fades out at 660

seconds. The credits last for an additional 20 seconds and are accompanied by the single chime with which the music began.

The film is what it is, partly because of the attempt to give it a bit of a cyclic structure. It begins with the narrator, a little girl, and a single chime and ends the same way.

THE MUSIC

The script completed and timed, we were ready to move on to the next step in the production process; composition of the musical score. I delivered to Sherman Krane the script and the sequenced photographs. As I went thru the script and photographs with him many points of design were discussed as in the preceeding paragraphs. Sherman wrote extensive notes on my comments so that his composition would reflect my general and specific musical desires. I suggested to Sherman that he might find it interesting but perhaps not very helpful to look thru The Technique of Film Music.[4] Before starting his composing efforts, he did look thru it and found it interesting but not very helpful.

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[4]John Huntley and Roger Manvell, The Technique of Film Music (New York: Focal Press, 1957).

Sherman did the bulk of the composing while on vacation the month preceding the opening of fall term. When the term was well under way, he organized an ensemble to record the music. Sherman and I went over the score together. He gave a virtuoso performance, humming all the parts. From what I could tell from the score, and the humming, the music was eminently compatible with my image of the film.

The music was recorded in the band practice room of the Music Building using an Electro Voice model 666 microphone and an Ampex 601 tape recorder. The musicians were all un-paid volunteers whom Sherman had recruited from the faculty and student body of the Music Department. The musicians had one brief practice session the day before the actual record-ing. At the recording itself, the ensemble read through the entire score and then began working on the music section by section. Starting from the beginning, the music was recorded until an error in playing occurred; the error was then cor-rected and the recording begun at the head of the section in which the error occurred. What with repeats to alter inter-pretations of certain sections, we recorded about twenty-five "takes" representing about ten distinct sections of the score.

Most sections were recorded at least twice. One section was recorded five times.

To make it easier for me to edit a mosaic of sections into a complete music track, the ensemble then recorded the whole score without stopping to correct or re-do any section.

Two nights after the recording session, Sherman and I played back the recorded tapes and selected the best takes. As it turned out, Sherman decided that one of the sections sounded better in the complete "cue" recording than in either of the separate renditions of it. I assembled the good takes into a complete music track which I then transferred to 16 mm. magnetic film. Thus, the music for <u>Village of My Fathers</u> was recorded and in a form which made it subjectable to the precise time analysis required for the next production step -- readjustment of the script to the exact timings of the recorded music.

THE CAMERA GUIDES

The first step taken to adjust script timing to the music was to construct a skeleton of the film structure. For this purpose I used a roll of clear leader upon which I marked scene changes and effects with a grease pencil. I will refer to this strip of marked leader as the guide roll.

I ran the magnetic music tract and the guide roll thru a
Moviola editing machine. This allowed me to hear the music
and mark the guide roll in relation to it. Since the first
music cue occurred at thirty seconds from the start of the
film, I first located the note on the track that corre-
sponded to the cue and then backed up the track eighteen
feet, the 16 mm. equivalent in length of thirty seconds in
time. I labeled the frame of track thus arrived at 0 (zero)
and the corresponding frame on the guide roll 0. This was
followed by a standard symbol for <u>fade in</u> twenty-four frames
in length and this in turn was followed by the numeral 1.
Thus was indicated a twenty-four frame fade in on scene 1. I
proceeded thru the entire roll in this fashion, marking the
effects and numbering the scenes. I followed both script
and score as I worked my way thru the music track. To guide
me as to Sherman's intentions regarding the music there were
occasional time indications on the score. These ranged from
three seconds to one hundred and two and one-half seconds
apart. In the longer stretches this required extensive in-
terpolation by bar and note to get a sense of the composer's
intent. While there were many distinctive musical figures
which I knew were intended to go with particular pictures,

additional time indications would have made it much faster to relate music to script.

By the time I reached scene 25 the music was twelve and one-quarter seconds longer than planned. Since this extra length had shown itself as a slightly slower pace than planned during the funeral sequence I wasn't disturbed by it. The pace fit the mood. However, as I checked thru the next sequence it was readily apparent that, quite the other way, I was going to run out of music-to-hoe-by much too soon. The work sequence as a whole was seventeen seconds too short. Since it was at the head of the sequence, the part showing the men working in the fields, that I needed more music, I looked there for a way to stretch it. Studying the score, I decided that six bars could be repeated without in any way upsetting the musical line. Therefore, I made another 16 mm. magnetic copy of that section of music from the original 1/4 inch tape. By careful editing of the track I was able to insert the additional six bars and thus gain almost fourteen seconds of time.[5] This was the only place in the track that music was mechanically lengthened, and nowhere was it shortened.

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[5]See Appendix, page 68.

Scenes 45 and 46 provide an example of a different type of adjustment. Here the planned time of fourteen seconds has been reduced slightly to thirteen and one-third seconds but the number of shots has doubled from a planned four to eight. This came about because I felt that the music prescribed this treatment and that, fortunately, it heightened the feeling of violence that I wanted to communicate.

Following scene 69 there is another example of picture additions suggested by the music. In this case I repeated elements of pictures already used to form a visual and musical recap of the foregoing sequence. Here again I think this change added to the film by creating a small climax and rest point before the following change of mood with which the reappearance of spoken words now coincides.

The progressive unmasking of the picture in scene 80 was suggested by the music. However, this is also an example of how the composer's intentions were sometimes disregarded. Sherman had intended this music to start in the middle of scene 78 after the words "In one's own home." I did not feel that this was an appropriate place for a new musical beginning. Since it was possible to adjust this new beginning to scene 80, I did so. With the music-picture

relationship thus established, I felt that the transition between scenes 79 and 80 did a smooth job of leap-froging the unvisualized supper hour.

The next sequence for major consideration is the church festival. This is the sequence for which Sherman was given no internal timings, only an indication of what the pictures would be and the sequence in which they would appear. The music worked out very well in this sequence. I would have liked the very successful band music to come just a few seconds earlier but I was very satisfied with the rest of it. My satisfaction is a bit surprising in light of the fact that the music with which I end the film in the farewell sequence was intended by Sherman to be used with the credit titles. Evidently I had not made it clear that I expected to use the chime with the credits. A thirty second shift in the music at the end gave me just the feeling that I wanted for the end of the church procession. However, I would have liked the crescendo at the end of the picture to have been just a bit longer.

I now had a guide roll marked to show when every picture would be on the screen and how I would make the transition from one to the next. In addition it was marked with symbols

to indicate when many of the camera movements were to take place. In a few cases I had written on the guide roll words of dialogue to indicate where they should occur in relation to a picture or a particular musical figure. The low fidelity of sound editing equipment makes it very difficult to pick out individual notes in any music in which there is a background of sustained tone. Because of this mechanical problem and the necessity of adjusting the music-script relationships more than anticipated, it took about fifty hours to complete this operation.

To get a sense of the structure and the music timing of the finished film I now projected the guide roll in a synchronous projector while playing the music track on related sound equipment. After this screening I returned the rolls to the Moviola to readjust about ten of my cue marks. In all cases I changed relationships so that either picture or music would seem to impel the other to change rather than just having them change at the same time.

Once I was satisfied with the guide roll as being representative of the structure I wanted the film to have, I measured the cue marks and symbols in a footage counter and transferred these measurements in feet and frames to the script.

This precisely timed script now indicated when scenes should begin and end, the type and length of effects to be used in transition from scene to scene, and when certain of the internal effects (zooms, pans, tilts) were to begin or end. In addition, there was some indication as to which part of a photograph was to be filmed in a given shot and in some cases the field size was indicated. For scene 20, for instance, the script indicates that the scene fades in at 69 feet and 21 frames with a view of the coffin on a three field and, further, that starting at 71 feet and 35 frames there is to be a zoom out to be followed by a tilt up followed, in turn, by a zoom in on a girl at 74 feet and 29 frames. Finally, scene 20 dissolves into scene 21 at 80 feet and 20 frames.

This detailed prescriptive information had to be further refined, however, to make the script amenable to execution by means of the single frame animation technique. The spatial relationships which were to pertain between camera and subject materials had to be planned for each of the 16,796 frames of the film. The most practical method for indicating these relationships, considering the equipment and materials in-volved, seemed to be the use of overlay guide sheets. A

sheet of tracing paper was laid over each photograph and the edges or corners of the photograph marked on it. The center of the desired camera field was then marked on the guide sheet for each frame of film on which that photograph was to appear. All horizontal relationships were indicated with points and lines. The vertical relationship, the distance from the photograph to the camera, could not be indicated graphically. These relationships were prescribed by notations of the desired field size and, in the cases where zooms were to be made, by a column of numbers run off on adding machine tape which corresponded to numbers on the animation stand elevation indicator.

Figures one through three illustrate actual guide sheets of increasing complexity. Figure four illustrates the zoom tape which accompanies the guide sheet in figure three.

The guide sheets, then, were the frame by frame notations of my mental images of the finished film. Whatever art I had brought to bear on the visual elements of the film was noted now on these sheets of paper. The script, that gross design for a film, had now been refined to its practical limit.
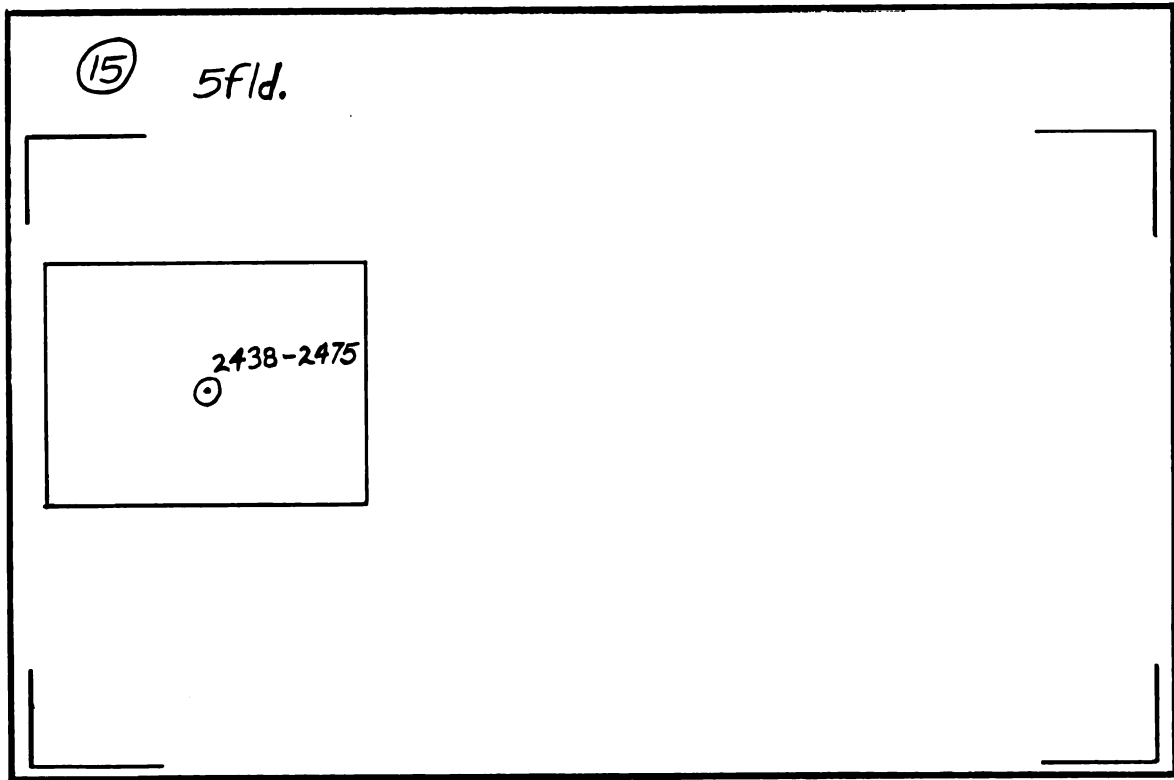
Figure 1: Guide sheet for scene 15. The "L" shaped marks
near the corners of the guide sheet indicate the corners of
the photograph. The camera center is indicated by the cir-
cled dot. The numbers of frames to be exposed by the numbers
2438-2475, the field size by 5 fld. The frame drawn on the
guide sheet also indicates the field size but was for plan-
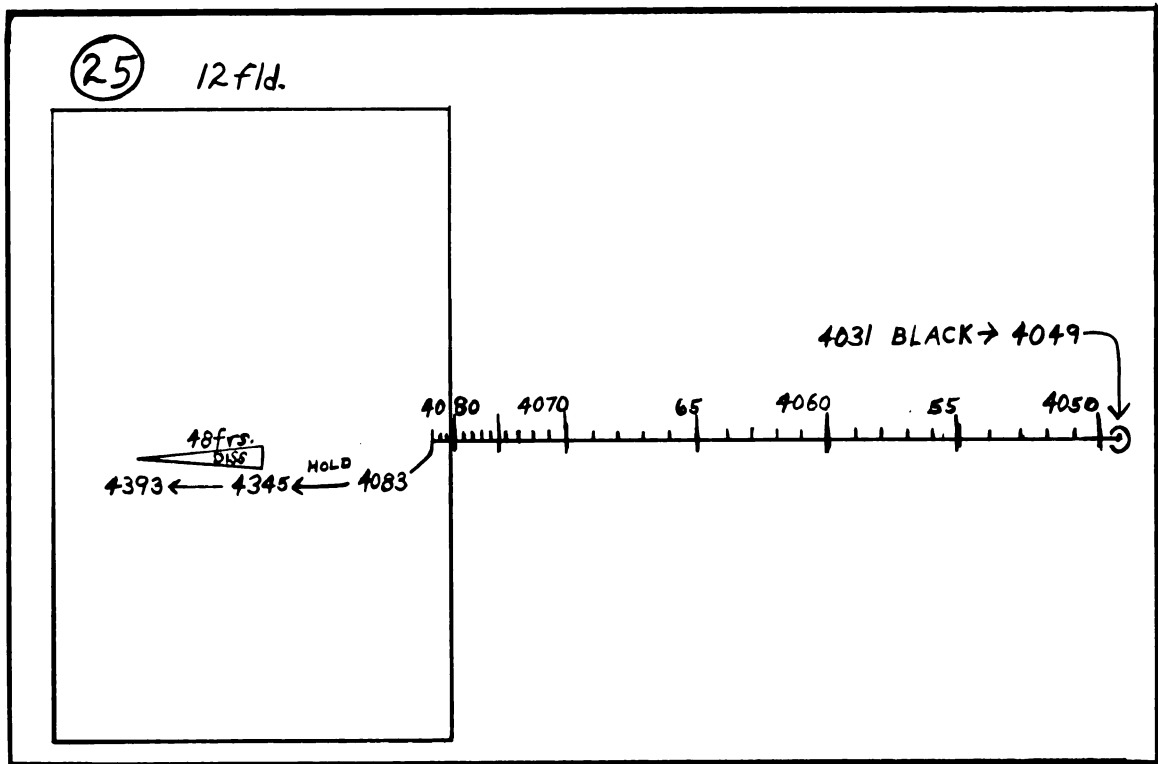ning only. It was not necessary for purposes of filming.
(Scale: 1" = 3")

Figure 2: Guide sheet for scene 25. Here the photograph is indicated by a complete outline. Frames 4031 thru 4048 are not to be exposed or "black." The line with numbered camera center marks is the line of camera travel. The edge of the picture will actually appear in the camera frame at frame 4050. The distance between camera center marks decreases as frame 4083 is approached. This will have the effect of decelerating the pan. Camera center position is to be held from frame 4083 to frame 4393. A forty-eight frame dissolve is to begin at frame 4345. The long triangle symbol indicates that a fade out is to be made on this scene. The shutter must be gradually closed starting at frame 4345. Once the still for scene 26 is positioned, the film must be run in reverse back to frame 4344 with the shutter still closed. Then the shutter will be gradually opened on scene 26 starting with frame 4345 and a dissolve or lap fade will result.
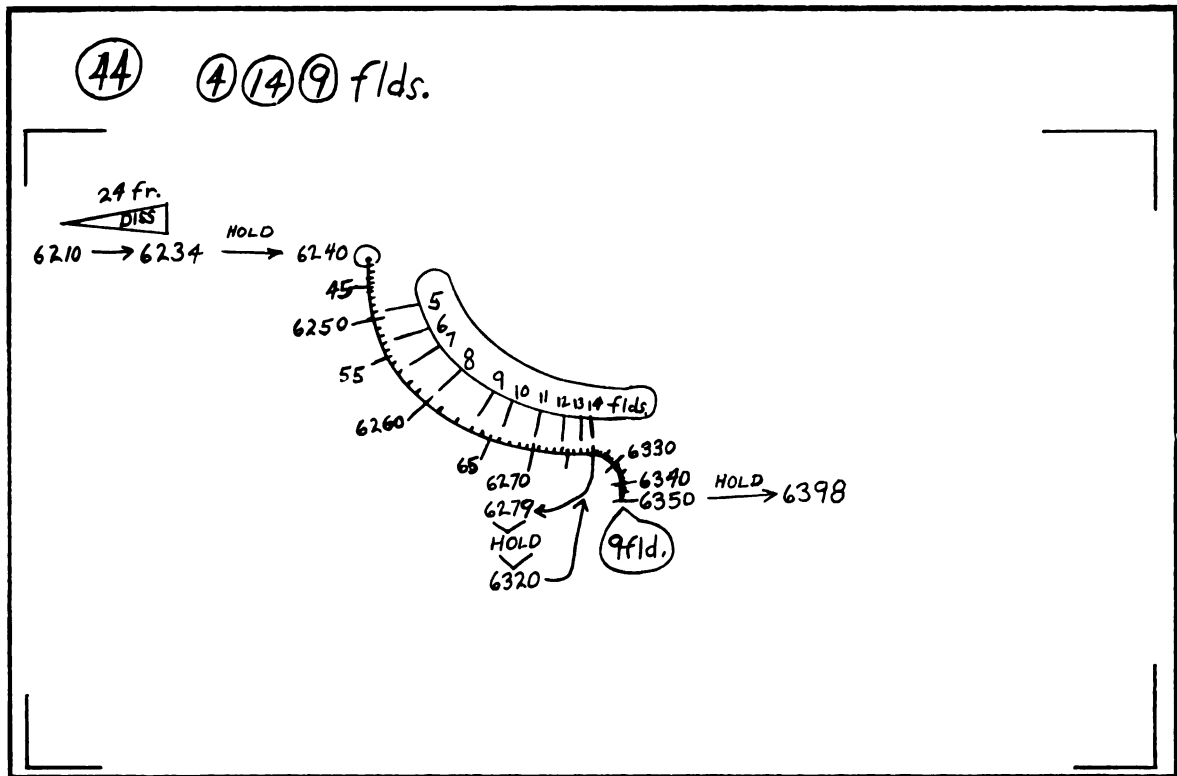
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Figure 3: Guide sheet for scene 44. The field sizes indicated at the top of the sheet indicate the beginning field size, the biggest field size and the end field size to be used. The movement indicated is three dimensional; a combination tilt and pan and a zoom-out-zoom-in. The speed of the horizontal (picture plane) movement accelerates and then decelerates between frame 6240 and 6279 as indicated by the varying distances between camera center marks. The circled intermediate field size numbers indicate the frames at which given field sizes were to occur. They were not used for shooting purposes but as a planning guide only.
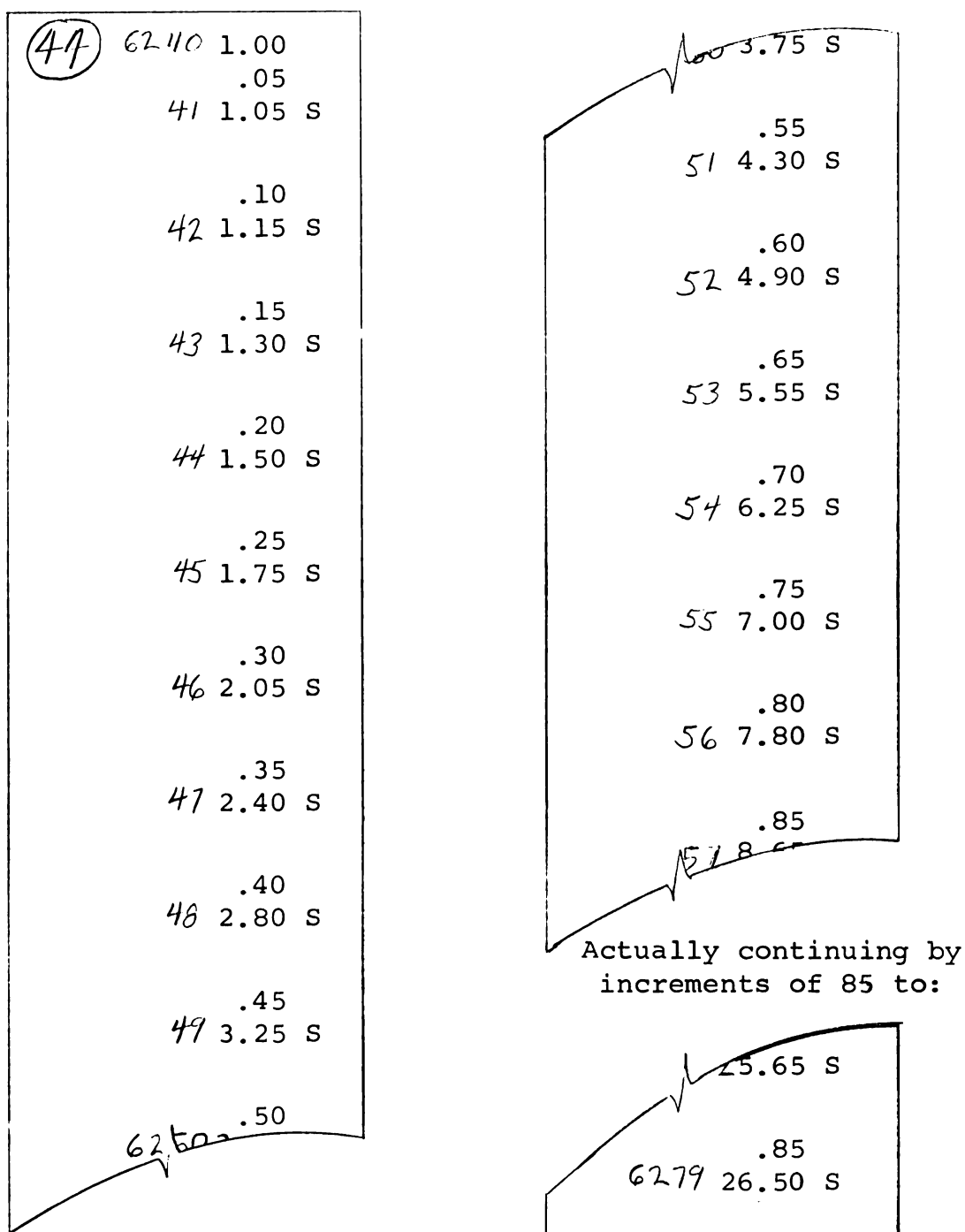
(44) 6240 1.00
　　　　　.05
　　41 1.05 S

　　　　　.10
　　42 1.15 S

　　　　　.15
　　43 1.30 S

　　　　　.20
　　44 1.50 S

　　　　　.25
　　45 1.75 S

　　　　　.30
　　46 2.05 S

　　　　　.35
　　47 2.40 S

　　　　　.40
　　48 2.80 S

　　　　　.45
　　49 3.25 S

　　　　　.50
　6250

3.75 S

　　　　.55
　51 4.30 S

　　　　.60
　52 4.90 S

　　　　.65
　53 5.55 S

　　　　.70
　54 6.25 S

　　　　.75
　55 7.00 S

　　　　.80
　56 7.80 S

　　　　.85
　57 8.65

Actually continuing by
increments of 85 to:

25.65 S

　　　.85
6279 26.50 S

Figure 4: Zoom tape to accompany guide sheet for scene 44.
The beginning frame number is 6240 and the camera height is
100, equivalent to a 4 field (2650 equals a 14 field).

CHAPTER II

PRODUCTION

Those phases of making this film which have arbitrarily
been included in this chapter are shooting the film, record-
ing and editing the voice track, and the final preparations
for making prints. The performance and recording of the
music, which are usually considered phases of production,
have been considered earlier because so much of the pre-
production planning depended on their outcome.

SHOOTING THE FILM

Before the shooting of the film could begin, the camera
equipment had to be modified to accommodate the dimensions
of the selected photographs. The film was shot on an Ox-
berry Model S-A animation stand at the Audio-Visual Center,
Michigan State University. The compound of this stand will
accommodate art materials up to 10 inches in height and 13
inches in width. I was using many pictures which exceeded
these dimensions, some being as wide or as tall as 22 inches.
To overcome these limitations of the stand it was necessary
to remove the compound so that the large pictures could be
placed directly on the bed of the stand. Then, in the case

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of pictures over 13 inches wide, it was necessary to sub-
stitute a wide angle lens for the one normally used on the
camera so that all of a picture could be seen. A sheet of
3/4 inch plywood of approximately the dimensions of the
animation stand bed was placed upon it to cover the hole
normally filled by the compound. To this board was hinged
a sheet of plate glass 30" by 40" in size. The function of
the glass was to hold the pictures flat and in place. A
sheet of glossy black poster board under the glass served
as background for the pictures. With this setup the camera
could now expose fields varying from size three to size
fourteen with the normal lens and from size six to size
twenty-seven with the wide angle lens. Field size corre-
sponds to the width in inches of subject area exposed. The
guide sheets were placed on the right hand end of the bed
of the stand. A fixed pointer over the guide sheets cor-
responded to the center of the camera frame over the pictures.

A picture was placed under the glass so that it was
approximately centered. The corresponding guide sheet was
placed on top of the glass in registration with the picture.
The bed was then moved so that the start point on the guide
sheet was centered under the cross hairs of the camera

viewer. The guide sheet was then placed with the start point under the guide pointer. Any change in the relationship between guide sheet and pointer now made a corresponding change occur between picture and camera. The stand functioned as a sort of an elaborate pantograph.

Once the picture was in position and the camera was at the desired height, one frame of film was exposed. If there were no effects or movement on the picture the shutter control was simply kept on until the desired number of frames was exposed. At the other extreme of complexity, shooting involved making five adjustments between each frame. The sequence of adjustments usually followed this pattern

(1) Change camera height,
(2) Change focus,
(3) Adjust fader control,
(4) Change horizontal position of picture,
(5) Change vertical position of picture.

After all this, one frame was exposed and the process repeated. Most of the shooting fell between these extremes of complexity.

Shooting the film required approximately sixty hours. This total time includes about five hours spent in reshooting two short sections which were damaged in processing.

RECORDING THE VOICES

The voice recording sessions were conducted before the
film material was returned by the laboratory. Thus, none
of the people involved were able to see the film of which
their voices were to become a part prior to recording.

Since I realized from the outset of this project that
it would be impossible to find people with authentic Italian
accents to fill all the roles, I rejected the oft made sug-
gestion that accents be used. Italo and I recruited the
recording talent from among our acquaintances and families.
The necessity of using free talent inevitably imposed some
compromises on my original conception of how the voices
should sound.

The voices were recorded in the Audio-Visual Center
film studio in a total time of about four hours. This in-
cluded numerous rehearsals for some voices and the time spent
trying to get an adequate performance from two people for
whom I later substituted other voices.

In order of appearance, the voices are as follows:

Scene 1. Narrator (The Returning Son)   Patton Lockwood

Scene 2. Little Girl   James Knowlton

Scene 5. Devil   Edward P. McCoy

Scene 9. Voice (During Wake)   Constance Knowlton

Scene 29. Man #1   Chuck Cioffi

Scene 30. Man #2   Chuck Cioffi

Scene 32. Youth   James Douglas

Scene 33. Children (changed to one voice) Debra Mitchell

Scene 34. Man (from up north)   Chuck Cioffi

Scene 35. Old Man   John Herr

Scene 37. Old Man #2   John Herr

Scene 39.- 46. Man   John Herr

Scene 47. Town Crier   Douglas Knowlton

Scene 58. Woman (with chicken)   Mary Scanga

Scene 69. Man.   Chuck Cioffi

Scene 80. Woman(changed to man's voice)   John Herr

Scene Y.   Girl   Janet Mitchell

For this collection of talent there was a production cost
of sixty cents -- twenty cents paid to each of the children
involved.

All the voices were recorded initially on 1/4" magnetic
tape. The good takes were transferred to 16 mm. magnetic
film. Then the voices were edited to a work print of the
picture. One other deviation from the script became neces-
sary at scene 36. I had not allowed enough picture length

to accommodate the whole line and so the last part of it, "This Is Home," had to be cut. This did not disturb me greatly because I felt that the idea was strongly implied.

After interlock projection of the work print, voice track, and music track, minor adjustments were made in the voice track.

The two tracks were then sent to the laboratory for mixing and transfer to an optical track for printing with the picture negative.

The first trial print, or answer print, was received from the laboratory approximately two hours before its scheduled première showing, on May 6, 1960, as part of a program of student compositions presented by the Michigan State University Department of Music. It was Sherman Krane's original music score for the film which caused it to be included in the program.

The film was received with exuberant acclaim by those closely connected with its production -- all of whom, except for myself, were seeing the film for the first time.

CHAPTER III

CRITIQUE AND CONCLUSION

One of the underlying ideas which caused me to produce
this film in the way that I did, following the particular
sequence of planning and production steps that I did, was
to see how close I could come to matching the finished
product, projected on a screen, to my mental image, as hinted
at in the script and other plans. I feel that in this sense
the film was a success. Of course, there were shortcomings.
Several of the voices were far from sounding like the
earlier image of my inner ear. My own lack of experience
and skill as an animation camera man injected quite a lot of
visual "noise" -- jerks and bobs in the middle of what should
have been smooth, gliding, camera movements. If the execu-
tion had been of greater precision, the design would have
come closer to reflecting my mental image.

The design itself fell short of bringing forth an execu-
tion of my image in the following ways. First, a minor and
specific point: the rapid movement of the picture in
scene 45. This gave an impression of a still picture moving
rather than that of a man moving. This was the only attempt

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of its kind in the film to inject a feeling of primary
motion into the film. All it did was pointedly reaffirm
that, although you can do a great deal with still photos
in films, you can't make the subject move.

The second shortcoming of the plans concerns the com-
munication of my total image to others. I wanted to com-
municate the image of a man returning to his boyhood home
and then coming to the bittersweet realization that it was
no longer the place where he belonged. Unfortunately, this
idea escaped approximately 30% of the people who saw the
film. I had not provided them with enough cues so that they
identified with the returning son at the beginning and re-
tained this identification. Some perceived him as two dif-
ferent persons, one at the beginning of the film and one
at the end, who made up part of the passing parade in a small
town. Others identified other men as also being the return-
ing son. This led to great confusion at the end of the film
because from this viewpoint the "son" returns, settles down
and gets married, but then leaves again. Other viewers
thought that they should identify with the returning son
but didn't really feel an identification. This placed a
burden on them which interfered with their enjoyment of the

film. I found that there were not many viewers of this

last description. Viewers either were captured into my

narrative snare and perceived my image or they missed this

main point of the film.

As a group, my most perceptive audience was a seminar

of graduate students in art, here at Michigan State Univer-

sity in the fall of 1960. In general, their individual

comments were very gratifying for they had perceived many

of the subtleties of positioning, composition and movement

which, while I assumed they would have some effect on audi-

ence perception of the film, I felt I was including pri-

marily for my own enjoyment. In the group of twenty-three

students there was only one dissenter -- an attitude that

I attributed not to any insensitivity on his part, but

rather to the fact that he was born and raised in Brooklyn.

Villages were simply beyond his ken.

The film was shown at the 1960 University Film Producers

Association Conference. There it garnered this review:

> Village of My Fathers (Michigan State University, 8
> min. B W) is the most ambitious student production [of
> those shown at the conference]. It tries to tell the
> story of an Italian student's visit to his old home
> village through still photographs and a multi-voice sound
> track. In some ways this film is genuinely experimental,
> with an attempt to find new methods of handling stills

within the fixed ratio of the screen. Individual shots
are composed as on a magazine page layout, sometimes
using a black background, occasionally mounting more
than one picture in the frame. It is an interesting
attempt on a technical level, but as a film it never
gets off the ground because of lack of pacing, variety,
and build.[6]

Village was shown at the Conference to an audience of

fifty-seven. In response to the rather enigmatic question,

"Do you feel that this film fulfilled its intended purpose?",

forty-three viewers answered, "Yes," four voted "No." In

addition, ten viewers wrote comments on cards which were

handed in and eventually delivered to me. Of these, three

made glowing remarks, six liked the film with reservations.

The remaining card simply states, "very disturbing." I'm

afraid this has been the reaction of at least one-third of

the people who have seen this film. This disturbing quality

is basically a function of the design. Edward P. McCoy, head

of film production at the Michigan State University Audio-

Visual Center has made the following comments on the design

of this film. I believe they accurately assess the major

causes of this disturbance.

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[6]Calvin Pryluck, "A Review of University Produced
Films -- 1960," Journal of the University Film Producers
Association, XIII (Fall, 1960), 9-11.

Village of My Fathers should be of interest to any film-maker for the modest but significant departure which it makes in film form. Its basic elements are conventional, at least with modern film-makers: still photographs, music, human voices, absence of sound effects. (I mention this latter negative element because its absence is as significant a film design selection as any other aspect of the film.)

The still photographs have considerable merit in themselves, but one significant and successful characteristic of the film designer has been to make these totally subservient to his cinematic art, rather than subserving their merit with his camera: What we see, how long we see it, with what visual progress and design it develops on the screen, what camera movement is made relative to it -- these matters are decided not on the basis of getting a look at or interpreting still photographs, but in terms of cinematic effect.

In the montage of these stills, there is a deliberate discard of the fixed dimensions of the camera frame, and a dynamic attempt to develop flexible and changing "frame-shapes" on our screen -- a kind of cinematic collage. This is one of the more original features of the design, although it is not totally successful, nor does it seem totally assured. One defect, possibly, is the acceptance at the opening of the film of the conventional screen aspect, instead of using this crucial point in the film experience to begin to generate a validity and meaning for the flexible frame immediately the film experience begins to develop.

Musically there is nothing particularly new. The score is original and, depending on one's musical taste perhaps more or less appropriate. No radically new relationships between music and picture are made to pertain. The music generally is dominant and assertive, so much so that one takes it psychologically as the authoritative commentary on the pictures yet misses any musical development and resolution which are cinematically conceived.

The voice track is the least decisively handled ele-
ment in the film's design. The relationship of the
voices to the pictures is not clear and is not consis-
tent, nor is it effectively inconsistent: It is
indecisive and unassured in a film that is too brief
for either quality to be desirable.

It is presumptuous to suggest what a film maker might
have done, but it is probably reasonable to suggest
that what may be lacking most in this film is a devel-
opment into the new and interesting form which it
suggests, even illustrates, but never psychologically
effectuates. The film never becomes. It is. The
relationships between the elements are. They do not
develop or grow to be. And before we quite solve them
or yield to their impact the film is finished.

When evaluating a film such as Village of My Fathers,

it is possible that someone may raise the question: "Is it

art?" Important as that question may be, I consider it to

fall outside the scope of the present study. What men call

art varies from prehistoric paintings on cave walls to the

music of Schoenberg. The essential nature of these diver-

gent objects and experiences seemingly defies definition.

Therefore, I will leave the question of art to the delibera-

tion of a philosopher of esthetics with space and time

enough to resolve the various notions about art and the natures

of esthetic stimulation and satisfaction. I shall simply

state that Village of My Fathers is more than a casual re-

cording or literal transcription of a group of photographs,

a piece of music, and some words. It is, or at least at-
tempts to be, a unified, audio-visual experience, its ele-
ments related and focused to express a particular facet of
the human condition. It is a deliberate attempt to explore
the potentialities and limitations of the sound motion
picture film as a medium of expression and communication.
Whether or not viewing this film results in esthetic satis-
faction will be left to the individual viewer to decide for
himself.

Making this film was a very instructive and rewarding
experience. I would suggest that the development of a very
detailed design calls for much mental experimentation at the
planning stage. It requires that many of these decisions
which often are defaulted to the editing stage in film
making be made before the shooting begins.

This approach to film making emphasizes pre-production
planning. The opposite approach is to film a number of
objects and actions with no particular design and then, at
the editing stage, to construct a film from these images.
Most film making falls between these extremes of planning
and non-planning. Practically speaking, detailed planning
of any film will lead to savings in production materials,

time, and a consequent saving of money. This is an impor-
tant consideration for any film maker, especially one on a
student budget. Making a film of this type, using static
materials such as photographs or sculpture, also leads to
money saving because of the precise control which can be
exercised. One has to expose very little more film stock
than the eventual length of the finished film.

To conclude, I would recommend to students of film making
that production of films of this type can provide very worth-
while experience in design and economy in production.
Furthermore, the concept of using inanimate objects and
other art media as the subject materials for films is by no
means exhausted. The horizons of cinematic potentiality are
there for anyone willing to reach toward them.

APPENDIX

SELECTED PASSAGES FROM THE MUSIC SCORE

VILLAGE OF MY FATHERS

These are the opening bars of the musical score. The numbers in squares represent the cumulative film time in seconds. The music began thirty seconds after the beginning of the film. The repeat signs in the following passages indicate the six bars which were mechanically repeated by duplicating a section of the music track and editing it into the full track.

(WORK SEQUENCE)

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