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Senior Project Internship: Inside a Public Television Documentary

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Introduction

This paper, in conjunction with the internship experience it describes, comprises my senior project at Fairhaven College and for Western Washington University's Honors Program. My self-designed degree, or "concentration," is *Documentary Production: Capturing Moments, Constructing Narratives*. My concentration studies taught me how to produce media at a basic level and gave me a theoretical understanding of how documentaries ideally should be produced, but I needed experience in the real world to discover how they actually are produced in a professional setting. An internship with independent producers of a public television documentary provided that opportunity. In this paper, I will describe the internship, what I learned about the process of producing independent documentaries, and assess the strengths and shortcomings of this process for "capturing moments and constructing narratives."

Of course, no Fairhaven student's experience would be complete without a self-evaluative element, so I have included a self-evaluation of my performance in my internship.

There are also three appendices. Appendix A includes some of the footage logs I created during my internship, and which serve as examples in parts of the paper. Appendix B is a brief set of impressions of the footage that I wrote for the producers, which I explain more thoroughly in the section "The Process of Producing Independent Documentaries." My performance evaluations from the producers are in Appendix C.

Internship Overview

For my senior project I interned as a production assistant for a team of two independent documentary television producers based at KCTS, a PBS station in Seattle. My role in the production was to log and evaluate footage for an hour-long broadcast documentary program called *Hot Potatoes*. The documentary is about a new, virulent strain of potato blight that is threatening crops worldwide, and how this current threat is exacerbated by dependence on expensive fungicides that can be frustratingly ineffective against this new form of blight. It tells the stories of Don McMoran, a Skagit Valley potato farmer struggling against blighted fields and the threat of financial ruin; John Niederhauser, an octogenarian plant pathologist who worked with Mexican farmers to develop a more robust, affordable, and environmentally benign approach to blight management; and Rebecca Nelson, a younger scientist who is continuing Niederhauser's legacy with her research and work with subsistence farmers in Peru.

Both of the producers of the documentary are accomplished professionals with extensive experience in broadcast television production. Jack Hamann has spent twenty years as a television news journalist, beginning as a reporter at network affiliates in Eugene and Seattle, then working for a decade as a correspondent and documentary producer for CNN. Recently, he became the Seattle correspondent for *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, and continues to produce documentaries at KCTS.

John de Graaf has worked for twenty-three years as an independent producer of documentaries and other public television programs. He is committed to environmentalism, and he focuses his efforts on projects that reflect his convictions. Many of his programs have aired nationally on PBS, including the popular *Affluenza* and *Escape from Affluenza*, which used humor to critique materialism and the United State's grossly disproportionate use of the world's resources.

Hot Potatoes is John de Graaf and Jack Hamann's second collaborative documentary program; the first, *Green Plans*, showed how several countries around the world are creating comprehensive environmental plans that balance industrial and ecological needs.

My duties as a tape logger were to view, summarize, and assess footage for the producers. This involved evaluating the product of earlier recording sessions, and anticipating how the footage could be used later when editing the final video. My access to the footage that they recorded provided insight into their process for "capturing moments." Summarizing and evaluating the footage gave me the opportunity to participate in constructing the narrative. I have often watched finished documentaries with an eye towards detecting how they were filmed and edited, but with this internship I was able to reverse the process: this time, I viewed the original footage and envisioned how to assemble it into a final production.

In addition to access to the footage for a professional broadcast documentary, the producers also provided me with access to information they had collected while researching the documentary and the materials they created to solicit funding. Most importantly, the producers encouraged my exploration of the documentary process by generously scheduling conversations with me to discuss my questions.

The Process of Producing Independent Documentaries

My Fairhaven concentration frames documentary production as the interface of two processes: capturing moments, then fashioning these artifacts into a narrative document. I find the first half of this enterprise more intrinsically appealing: the part of a documentary project when one is on location in the field; interviewing people and collecting footage. In the video industry, the technical term for this stage in producing a program is the homonym "production" – a sign that I may not be unique in my predilection. A further indicator is that the industry defines the activities preceding and following "production" by their relationship to the glamorous camera action – as "pre-production" and "post-production."

These preliminary and final stages of creating a documentary can require vast amounts of work. Pre-production entails all the planning and fundraising that must be done before running out the door with a camera and crew – vital tasks that determine the feasibility of a project, but are far removed from the skills of recording and editing a documentary. The post-production stage corresponds with "constructing the narrative." It includes the tasks of logging footage, writing a script, and editing the video.

In this section of the paper, I will describe the three-part documentary production process I witnessed during my internship, using examples from the work that I did and what I saw of others' work. My vantage point from within a public television documentary production deepened my earlier understanding of these stages, and added new complexities to the three-part process model that I will summarize at the end of this section.

In the three-part model, the first phase of broadcast documentary production is pre-production. A professional independent documentary starts with an idea, which a producer "pitches" to a station, network, or potential grantors to secure the funding needed to make a program. This can be a considerable amount: according to John de Graaf, hour-

long programs like *Hot Potatoes* usually cost between $200,000 and $400,000; this program barely reached the low end of that range, including in-kind donations from KCTS and Oregon Public Broadcasting. In my academic studies, I did not concern myself with the difficulty of raising large amounts of money. I could focus on the craft of production, a luxury that professional documentarians do not have. My internship with individuals who pursue this endeavor as a business, who need to support themselves with their work, opened my eyes to this reality.

The primary method of generating the money needed to create a documentary for public television is to convince several granting foundations that the production will actually be made, will address an issue that fits the foundations' mission, and that the program will be engaging and educational. Producers usually create a written proposal that they submit to potential funders that includes information about how the production will look, the importance of the topic, and who will make it and how much it will cost.

The core part of this proposal is the "treatment," a brief description of what viewers will see when they watch the completed program. Here the producers demonstrate how their approach to the topic will result in a compelling visual experience that will entice, entertain, and educate the audience. It describes how the production will look, the tone of the program, and information about the main characters, locations, or events that will be included.

The rest of the proposal explains the importance and timeliness of the issues explored in the video, and details the experience of the project personnel. In order to demonstrate that the program will actually be completed and aired, the producers include information about any funding they've already received, and work that is already done.

Because John de Graaf has an impressive track record of producing high-quality documentaries that have aired on PBS, the proposal package for *Hot Potatoes* also included a letter from the associate director of science programming for PBS, attesting to his confidence in the producers' ability to produce a program that they would air. The

package also includes a letter from Bullfrog Films, an environmental film and video distributor, stating that they would be eager to distribute *Hot Potatoes,* and believe it will appeal to a wide range of educational and other markets.

The *Hot Potatoes* proposal also includes letters from agricultural professors and researchers who attest that this is a worthwhile and important issue. They also included recent magazine and newspaper stories about the issue to demonstrate that this is a timely and newsworthy topic. The final component of the proposal is a budget for the project, itemizing the various costs that the producers expect to incur to create the program.

In the case of *Hot Potatoes*, the producers had already received a $40,000 grant to shoot the initial footage and plan the production, but they still needed to find additional money to complete the program. Since they had footage, they created a sample video that presented the main characters, showcased some of their best scenes, and explained their vision for the final program. In effect, it was a twelve-minute ad to convince funders that the topic and characters would make for an excellent hour-long program. After almost three years, enough additional grants dribbled in to complete the project.[1]

As producers create their proposal and budget for the project, they are anticipating logistics for the next stage of a documentary project, the "production" phase. The written proposal should identify important details that will affect this next phase: the scope and style of the production, the project's key team members, and the people who will be the main subjects or characters in the story. In the *Hot Potatoes* project, the production team members mentioned in the proposal include a freelance camera operator and a sound recordist with whom the producers have developed a long-standing working relationship. Jack Hamann would also be the on-screen host and narrator of the final program.

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[1] The grants ranged from $23,000 to $50,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Bullitt Foundation, the Wallace Genetic Fund, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, plus in-kind services from KCTS and Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Each of these people would contribute specific skills during the production phase, but the pre-production phase demands a set of skills and traits from the producers alone. During this phase they must have persistence and commitment to the project, and the ability to conceptualize, budget, negotiate, research, write and edit. Grantwriting, research, and presentational skills assist with fundraising.

When the pre-production planning is complete and enough financing has been obtained to begin the project, the producers are ready to begin the production phase of recording the footage for their documentary. Getting out on location with a camera crew is a significant accomplishment.

Filming the project is exciting, but it is also very expensive and stressful. "Imagine a vacuum cleaner sucking money from your wallet," a producer on a different project once told me, in explaining the pressure of the production phase. Time in the field is limited and costly: the *Hot Potatoes* budget allocated $1,250 per day in the field just to pay for the photographer, audio recordist, and their equipment. Additional daily expenses included meals, lodging, and ground travel. These costs drive producers to maximize the amount of usable footage they record during each day spent in the field.

Despite these daily costs of filming, the producers I worked with told me that they are careful to treat the crew well, with real meals and adequate time for sleep and rest. Jack Hamann feels that this is essential in order for crewmembers to be able to do their best work. He has worked with the camerawoman, Diana Wilmar, for eighteen years, and he trusts her to get all the shots in an interview situation that they will later need for editing (I will describe these types of shots shortly). Additionally, the producers set aside time in the schedule for the crewmembers to gather images and sound of the location independently and to practice the truly finer aspects of their crafts. For example, Wilmar recorded colorful and dynamic images of a farmer's market on tapes 24 and 25, and early-morning village scenes on tape 35. On tape 38, the sound recordist, Spence Palermo, used some of his more advanced skills to record the thunder of an approaching storm.

Hamann told me that his close relationship with the crew is rare in television; tension between crewmembers and producers is much more common. One way that this can hurt a production, he explained, is that this tension can explode during an interview situation, hurting their ability to put the interviewee at ease. In comparison, when he is working with Wilmar they are a coordinated team: during interviews, Hamann will occasionally glance towards the camera to ascertain whether Wilmar has been able to record important actions and details on tape, or determine if they needed to do a particular action again. I noticed this several times while logging the footage, but didn't note it in the logs themselves. Hamann also told me that they sometimes will use taps on the arm as a non-verbal means of communication: one tap means "record," two taps means "stop."

Interviews Hamann recorded as the producer/host were often recorded using a "walk and talk" style. This setup requires a mobile hand-held camera and clip-on radio microphones. Hamann and the interviewee walk along a path with the cameraperson ahead of them, walking backwards at the same slow rate. Because these sequences will be edited together as conversations, his questions need to be recorded along with the interviewee's responses. The two people's voices are recorded on two separate channels on the videotape, along with ambient "room tone" – about half a minute recorded while everybody is quiet, just to capture the sound of the environment where they are speaking. One example of this is in the log for tape 26, just after a conversation in a greenhouse on a rainy day, when the crew records the sound of the rain pattering on the windows. Recording room tone is important because it can be used to mask audio edits later in the post-production phase.

The visual images of an interview are also recorded using techniques that will facilitate editing. Usually this involves recording a variety of different shots while shooting the interview, many of which are illustrated in the log for tape 27, when Jack Hamann interviews botanist Hector Lasoya. For editing the interview, they will need a relatively wide "establishing shot" to set the scene and give an interview context. In this example, a "two

shot" showing the two people talking with each other serves this purpose. Closer shots of the interviewee when he is talking give the audience a more intimate view of the conversation, and "cutaway" reaction shots of the interviewer listening and nodding will help when editing what the interviewee says, which I will explain in more detail in the next section of the paper. During the taping, the camera usually stays in the same position relative to the interviewer and the interviewee, so that they won't appear to jump from side to side when two different shots are edited together.

In viewing the footage for *Hot Potatoes*, I was quite interested in Hamann's interviewing techniques, and I talked with him several times about his approach. He told me that many producers do not really have dynamic conversations with their interviewees, instead relying on coaching them to deliver pre-arranged statements that they've already discussed before. Jack Hamann says that he eschews this approach because it leads to mediocre interview footage. Instead, he firmly believes in conducting a lively discussion. One way that he preserves the energy of the interview is by avoiding conversation beforehand as much as possible. He researches the people he plans to interview by reading books or articles that they have written or that have been written about them, or by talking with their friends, family, or associates. He finds that in-depth discussions with an interviewee on the phone, or at dinner the night before the taping, can destroy the energy and spontaneity of the interview on tape. Often people's stories will sound stale, and they may begin their statements with phrases like, "As I told you last night..."

In the footage, I noticed that he uses enthusiasm to inject energy into the conversation and to encourage people to be more expressive. To help people feel more comfortable, he worked to focus their attention on him and on their discussion rather than the camera staring at them, and would occasionally reassure them by telling them that they were doing well. He told me that he feels it is essential to keep the filming process out of the interviewee's mind as much as possible, which requires the crew's cooperation by maintaining a low profile and not interrupting the interview because of technical problems.

For example, an airplane might fly overhead while the interviewee is speaking and drown out part of the conversation, or the cameraperson will need to change tapes in the middle of somebody's statement. In these situations, Hamann said that he will ask people to repeat themselves, but he won't explain the reason, because it becomes one more thing for interviewees to worry about. In the case of airplane noise, interviewees may become sensitized to noises and constantly interrupt themselves, asking, "Do you want me to start over?"

In the footage, I noticed that he encouraged people to show processes as they explained them, helping to make the footage more lively than a series of oft-decried "talking heads." When a speaker used jargon or acronyms in his or her explanations, he would ask for clarification. He told me that if interviewees continues to use acronyms or jargon, he will just repeat the term with a questioning tone, cueing them to explain it. He said that it usually does not take long until they become accustomed to explaining these terms themselves, without his cues.

I also asked Hamann about the types of questions he uses, and if he uses notes or a written interview guide. He told me that he does not prepare a list of questions for the interview because he feels that it impedes the dynamic of the conversation. Instead, he does as much pre-interview research as he can about the topic and on the person with whom he will be speaking. He said that at the beginning of an interview it almost doesn't matter what he asks. He said that the people he interviews usually have been preparing for the interview for a while, are nervous, and have several things that they want to be sure to say. He tries to accommodate them and allow them to say what they want to say first, which creates a bond, and relaxes them. He then continues the conversation by asking further questions. He stressed the importance of following up on difficult or embarrassing topics if the interviewee has raised them. Hamann said that even if he decides not to use that part of the interview in the final program, he feels that allows the discussion to proceed more openly and with more depth. He said that despite all the research he does beforehand, he

remains aware that the person he is talking with has a much deeper understanding of the topic, be it some scientific phenomenon or one's personal experience. When the interviewee explains something, Hamann says that he is careful not to assume that he fully understands the full significance of what he or she has said. He told me that his most common responses are "Why?," "How do you know?," "Tell me more," "What do you mean?," and "How come?"

In addition to interviewing and the video and audio recording skills that the producers and crew need during filming, the production phase also demands other skills. For example, producers need time management and crew management skills to make optimal use of these days in the field. Flexibility and collaboration between the producers is also important because the filming schedule will invariably change. Sometimes they must adjust, or even drastically alter, their shooting schedule due to events that take place or information that becomes known only once the crew is on location. The producers must be able to balance their desire for each shot to be perfect with the necessity of staying on schedule.

Once the footage has been recorded, the time comes to begin the "post-production" stage of sculpting the footage into a narrative by logging the tapes, writing a script, and editing the video. The first step is to create footage logs: notes of the contents of each tape, which the producers use to sort through the footage as they write a script for the final program. My process for logging, based on a suggestion by Jack Hamann, was to begin by watching the tape once in its entirety to orient myself with the contents. After the first viewing, I would watch the tape again and describe what each shot depicted, how it was framed, and any camera movement, zooming, or focus changes. Usually my descriptions were fairly concise: most of my logs described a half-hour of footage in a little over a page. However, I experimented by occasionally using the more loquacious "visual" language I read in treatments (an example is my log for tape 36).

Logging the tapes involves evaluation as well as description of the footage, since it is the first screen in a filtration process that reduces hours of footage into a program that will run slightly less than one full hour. In addition to describing the shots, I included evaluative comments and marked entries with asterisks to identify particularly well-composed shots such as a shot on tape 29 where the focus shifts from a potato plant in the foreground to Dr. Niederhauser talking to other scientists as he shows them around a blight-resistant field. I would also use asterisks to mark the best take of a series of similar shots, such as on the third page of the log for tape 36 where I marked the best shot of men hoeing a mountainside potato patch.

Logging the footage required knowledge I'd gained from my studies in several classes at Fairhaven, Western Washington University, and earlier at Trinity University. Several classes had taught me the terminology I needed to describe the footage. I knew the difference between zooming and dollying in or out of a scene; the difference between panning and tilting the camera. I could describe shots ranging from an XWS (extra wide shot) to an XCU (extreme close-up) and variations like a TS (tight shot) or LS (long shot). I found that I'd learned so many various series of letters to describe shots that I needed to consult with the producers to ensure that I was using the terms they preferred.

Evaluating footage requires an understanding of the editing stage to envision how a shot could be used, and to determine what elements and shots are necessary for the editing and which are extraneous. My classroom learning also helped me in this task. Several of those same classes had taught me about room tone, shot composition, and how helpful it is to have a little extra tape before and after a scene, or a moment of silence after a good interview quote. I knew that I didn't need to transcribe the interviews, but just include highlights and locations of images such as establishing shots and cutaways. I had even done some logging and seen others' footage logs in *Video Editing*. However, given my relative inexperience compared with the producers' and videographer's extensive backgrounds in filming and editing documentaries, I knew that they would have additional

ideas of what to do with the footage and might evaluate certain shots differently than I did.

I was reassured to discover that even the judgement of two professionals can differ, based on their backgrounds and philosophies regarding content and pacing. For example, Jack Hamann, with his background in commercial television news, is keenly attuned to creating programs that are accessible to viewers, explaining that his aim is to "get viewers in the tent" – to open people's eyes to an issue.

In comparison, John de Graaf's tendency is to include more information and expert commentary in the program, perhaps drawing from his own background in public television. Their different approaches were exemplified in one issue that arose during post-production: how many supporting interviews to include in the story. John de Graaf felt that they added important information to the program, but Jack Hamann worried that introducing too many people would take away from the main story about Dr. Niederhauser, the plant pathologist.

This type of disagreement is representative of the typical process of a collaborative, independent public television production team. In the case of *Hot Potatoes,* the producers genuinely respect each other's contributions and share a passion for creating media that address environmental issues. Because the producers discuss their differences and make mutual decisions about the project, the resolution of their conflicting visions often strengthens the final production.

The second step of the post-production phase, assessing and organizing the footage, continues from the process of logging the footage to that of writing a script for the final production. John de Graaf honed his method of video production before the ubiquity of the personal computer. He used to create footage logs on a typewriter and do "paper edits," where the paper interview transcripts are actually cut up and rearranged into a script for the video. Although this system may seem dated in today's era of word processors and non-linear video editing systems, it is still the approach he prefers.

During the process of logging, organizing the footage, and writing the script, judgment and conceptualization of the finished project become important skills. This is when the producers must have the ability to leave behind what they'd hoped to record, and instead focus on what they've got to work with and how to sculpt it into a coherent final product. During these steps (and subsequent steps) of post-production, the producers' visual communication skills become increasingly important. Years of experience help the producers structure and pace the narrative to create a video that viewers will understand and enjoy.

At the end of my internship, the producers presented me with an opportunity to further develop my skills in this process at the end of my internship. They asked me to list the images, people, and sequences that left the most vivid impressions in my memory, and to write an informal, one-paragraph summary of the documentary, as if I were explaining it to a friend. This information, they told me, would help them when crafting the important opening sequence of the program (I have included the description and notes that I wrote for them in Appendix A).

Once the producers have written the script, they can then begin the final two steps of post-production phase, in which they edit the actual video footage. It is a two-step process because the flow of the program must be worked out by trial and error with actual video, rather than on paper. It is easier and less expensive to do this experimentation using a non-broadcast-quality studio to work out the nuances of pacing before building the broadcast-quality master tape.

The producer begins in the lower-quality editing suite, called "off-line," making rough drafts of what the final video will be, beginning with a "rough cut" and then progressing over several iterations into a "fine cut," the last rough draft. In this draft of the video, the flow, sequencing, and pacing have been finalized and can be used to create an edit decision list, or "EDL," which indicates the start and stop times for every section of video and audio footage that will be used to assemble the final production. With the fine

cut finished and EDL in hand, the producer is ready to edit in the expensive, broadcast-quality, "on-line" studio, to assemble the final master broadcast tape.

Many of the same skills that the producers use earlier in the project are also necessary for these last steps of the post-production phase. Overall, the most important skills that I saw at work in the whole process were collaborative teamwork and interpersonal communication skills, organizational skills and flexibility with a focus on an end goal rather than on any one specific means to accomplish the goal, and the ability to work on several projects in different phases at the same time.

I first learned about these pre-production, production, and post-production stages in *Video Production*, one of my earliest Fairhaven classes. Despite my familiarity with these terms, however, my internship experience revealed new and important aspects of how this process works outside of the classroom.

First, the extent of pre-production planning and fundraising required to produce a high-quality, independent television documentary is vastly time- and labor-intensive. Second, producers often juggle many projects concurrently. The producers I worked with during my internship usually work on several programs in different stages of production at any given time.

Third and finally, during my internship I discovered that although the creation of a program usually follows a general pre-production/production/post-production path, it often does not follow a straight and orderly path in which one stage is entirely complete before the next one begins. The boundary between pre-production planning and fundraising and production was hazy, since the project had an initial grant that covered production trips to get part of the footage. However, after this production activity, the producers went back to fundraising. Similarly, there was no abrupt dividing line between the production stage and post-production: the production trip to Peru took place after much of the footage had been logged. These steps would have seemed out of order based on my previ-

ous learning, but in interning with *Hot Potatoes*, I have learned that this order is not as clear-cut as it appeared before.

Independent Documentaries as a Means of "Capturing Moments and Constructing Narratives"

Seeing how professional independent producers make television documentaries allowed me to examine this enterprise in relation to my concentration studies and my own perspective on the practice and purpose of documentary production. In this section of my paper, I will compare this perspective with the goals of the *Hot Potatoes* producers, then assess how the tools and methods of producing television documentaries perform in the pursuit of "capturing moments and constructing narratives."

This phrase encapsulates my perspective of documentary production, and formed the basis of organizing my concentration studies. I see documentary as a fusion of these two processes, used to preserve and communicate true stories about our world. I am fascinated by how different media and media-making techniques can be used to record and assemble portraits of real life. I am intrigued by how different media and forums for those media influence the shape of the narratives they present. Thus, my definition of a "documentary" includes a broad range of productions that record and preserve real events as they happen, or that present a non-fictional narrative.

However, there are many other ways to define documentary film, its purpose, and how to go about accomplishing it. John Grierson, who coined the term "documentary,"[2] felt that the documentary form should be used to advocate social change. In the 1930's, Grierson's British film unit made documentaries that were some of the first to take a explicit stance on an issue.[3] Many documentary producers have continued to use documen-

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[2] Rabiger, 16.

[3] Barnouw, 99.

tary film and video to comment upon, or to try to have an influence upon the state of the world.

John de Graaf operates within this tradition of advocacy, specifically working to raise awareness of environmental issues. In addition to producing television programs that address environmental issues, he founded an environmental film festival to provide a forum for environmental media and to foster networking between producers, distributors, activists and educators.

Jack Hamann, on the other hand, approaches his documentary work from a journalist's perspective. He does not regard his role to be an advocate for a cause, but rather as an insatiably curious investigator of important and complex issues. His style of documentary seeks to explore an issue without bias, to present an issue in a way that encourages the audience to think critically about it. While he recognizes that it is impossible for anybody to be completely objective, he feels that he is able to keep his own opinion removed from his work on most issues, and does not accept projects where he feels that his opinions would interfere.

It would appear that these two producers have radically different perspectives on the goals and methodology of their craft. How can they work together as a team? Their answer is that they do not see their philosophies as being in conflict, but rather as two different points on a continuum of advocacy and impartiality. Jack Hamann believes that he was able to investigate the issues raised in *Hot Potatoes* without bias. However, he recognizes that it is difficult to fund a project on this topic. John de Graaf feels strongly about the issue and persevered to find the funding to address it. He feels confident that once people become informed about the issue, they will recognize the logic of his position. Therefore, he is comfortable that Jack Hamann's dedication to presenting a balanced story won't detract from his aims. In fact, they both agree that a one-sided approach would hurt the program's chances of appealing to a wide audience, and even of airing on public television.

Importantly, one area of agreement between the producers is that they both are committed to reaching a wide national audience with their documentary work. My perspective is less focused on the goal of reaching a vast audience of national television viewers. My own perspective is also less focused on the goals of advocacy or journalism. I have seen many excellent documentary films that take up a cause (such as *Harlan County, USA*, or *Roger and Me*), as well as those with a more traditional, journalistic approach (like *New York* by Ric Burns). I have also seen others that address lighthearted topics (Les Blank's *Gap Toothed Women*) or that tell a dramatic story without any obvious agenda (like *Hoop Dreams*). While most use some form of narrative structure, others (such as Fredrick Wiseman's films) barely have any at all. These films and videos represent a variety of approaches and documentary-making philosophies, but I consider all of them to be fine examples of the documentary form.

All these films and videos "capture moments and construct narratives." How does the process of producing independent television documentaries serve as a means to do the same?

Technological characteristics

At the most basic level, video (and film) is a stream of vision and sound. As such, it portrays events in a more all-encompassing way than any other medium. Compared with the experience of viewing a photograph or hearing an audio recording, watching an event unfold on a film or television screen comes closest to actually witnessing the event firsthand. The linear streaming presentation of unfolding events in video and film make the events on screen seem quite realistic. "Captured moments" have a powerful immediacy: it seems as though we are watching the event with our own eyes, rather than through the lens of a videocamera. This verisimilitude of the on-screen action can be convincing – or deceptive, especially when viewers do not take note of certain video editing techniques that I will consider shortly.

In order to create this stream of vision and sound, mechanical eyes and ears must be present at the events one wishes to record. Cameras and microphones can capture moving images and sound, but they cannot do so without human assistance. This help – turning the camera and microphone on and off, and positioning them to see and hear what we deem important – is the most basic, primary form of subjective authorship that transforms a moment, while it is being captured, into a constructed narrative.

If the decision about where to point a camera seems at all trivial, consider two examples. In *Visual Anthropology*, we examined how the framing of an image can alter the messages viewers draw from a photograph. As we looked at a series of images of a young woman, we saw how elements outside the camera's lens can alter, or even contradict, the message one draws from what one sees within the frame. The first image was a close-up of a woman wearing sunglasses who looked mysterious. A wider shot revealed a child next to her, revealing that she was probably this child's mother. But it turned out that this wider image had been cropped: we then saw the same picture, but with a larger frame that revealed a sign next to the pair that read, "Will work for food."

The example was purposefully composed (but not staged) by a student to illustrate the power of cropping. Such situations also occur in the real world: in his book *Doing Documentary Work*, Robert Coles stresses the subjectivity of all documentary projects, illustrating his point with an example of two published versions of an image by the Dust-bowl documentary photographer Dorothea Lange, one which is cropped to remove the wife from the original scene of a husband and wife.[4] Further, he analyzes other pictures taken at the same time as her famous "migrant mother" image that portray the same woman at different distances, pictures that include different elements and present different information, each leaving viewers with a different impression. Viewing photographic

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[4] Coles, 106-109.

images, whether moving or still, is always different than actually witnessing the photographed event.

Besides the inherent subjectivity that a camera operator introduces to the resulting representation of an event, the very presence of the camera and operator duo has an impact on the event itself. In the 1960's, when 16mm film cameras and lightweight synchronous audio recorders allowed film documentarians new freedom to follow people and action, two new documentary forms developed: direct cinema and cinéma vérité. Practitioners of cinéma vérité acknowledged the camera's presence on an event by using it to provoke action, but direct cinema advocated a more observational, "fly on the wall" approach.[5] In my *Documentary Critique* project, I studied *Salesman,* a popular direct cinema film that follows four salesmen as they sell bibles door to door. The cameraman for the film insists that people quickly became accustomed to his company, to the point where he and the camera were just "furniture in the room."[6] This may be true, but it seems to me that people may still modify their behavior when a camera is present, even if they are used to its presence.

These attributes I have discussed so far are similar for video and film. Both recreate life-like action, but are constructions despite their realism: Both media need someone to point the camera, which shapes what viewers will see and what happens in front of the camera, as well.

Video and film are not the same, however. One difference is the cost of the footage. Film footage costs about twenty-five dollars per minute, while a half-hour Beta SP videotape (used for many television productions, including *Hot Potatoes*) only costs about

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[5] Barnouw, 254-255.

[6] Al Maysles, quoted by Reynolds, 402.

eleven dollars when bought in bulk.[7] This dramatic cost savings may explain why many theatrically-released documentary films are now originally shot on video (*Buena Vista Social Club* and *Startup.com* are two recent examples).

Another aspect that makes video different from film is that the signal from a video camera can be monitored during recording. During production in the field, it is better to learn of technical problems in the footage of an event while the event is still happening, rather than the next day when the rushes arrive from the lab.

Video becomes more obviously different from film when one considers the tool most commonly used to distribute video programs: television. Television screens are much smaller than movie screens, which means that television productions use more close-ups and fewer wide shots than films use. Of course, some viewers may have elaborate home entertainment systems, but the majority do not, and many viewers' experiences may be complicated by poor reception or distorted colors. Even as U.S. stations are retooling to broadcast in the wide-screen High Definition Television (HDTV) format, some viewers in the United States or other parts of the world may still be watching black-and-white television sets. While there can be a marked difference in the quality of two movie theaters, there is an even wider variation in the quality of home television sets. This variability can destroy the effectiveness of subtle elements and fine image details: The color of a "blood red" scarf may vary from magenta to orange on different television sets. Text in a small font may be indecipherable on a small television set. If part of the audience may not be able to see subtle cues, a producer must decide between relying on bolder, more obvious cues, or risking that a part of the audience will not understand part of the message. Either choice has an effect on the quality of the resulting documentary for some of the viewers.

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[7] The figure for film footage comes from an article in the Seattle Times by John Hartl ("Filmmakers got intimate look at dot-com world." June 22, 2001). The videotape price is from the *Hot Potatoes* budget.

Viewing television is also different from film in terms of the economics involved. Payment is usually not required to view a particular television program; programs airing on commercial stations are financed by consumers who purchase products that advertise on that station or network. This model varies slightly in the realm of public television, where viewer membership contributions and federal funds join advertising underwriters in supporting program production and broadcast. Programs that air on television must compete for uncommitted viewers who, unlike a movie audiences who have paid to see a particular film, have no reason not to switch channels or turn off the set. But at the same time, this aspect of television also provides an advantage: the opportunity to reach a wide range of viewers.

Cultural and institutional layers

While the basic characteristics of the tools of video production affect how video media can be used for documentary work, technology includes more than just tools or hardware – it also consists of the social and cultural forces that use and create them.[8] In the world of producing independent public television programs, the larger forces at work include PBS and television broadcast networks as a whole. These institutions are in turn driven by U.S. politics and culture. These factors all affect the type of tools producers use, and how producers use those tools.

For example, the demands that television broadcast networks place on a production exacerbate the impact of the camera upon an event discussed above. Only a small camera is absolutely necessary to tape an event, and the camera operator can be the only person needed to film an event, even doubling as an interviewer (as Ross McElwee demonstrated with his film *Sherman's March*). However, television broadcast networks

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[8] From Philip Bereano's keynote speech at the *Humanity, Technology, and Change* special quarter at Fairhaven College on January 7, 1997.

demand a much more elaborate recording process, requiring a level of quality for both image and sound that in turn requires a larger crew and more sophisticated equipment. So instead of a single camera, possibly operated by a single person, a broadcast television production needs several people with special technical skills and equipment to be present at any event one wishes to record. In addition to the producer, one person must be completely focused on the filming: framing shots, focusing, and holding the camera steady. Another person must completely focus on the audio signal, monitor recording levels, and hold a boom microphone just outside of the camera's view.

In addition to adding to the impact of filming upon an event, the high video quality standards for broadcast also increase the cost of the production. As previously noted, the budget for *Hot Potatoes* stands at over three thousand dollars per program minute. The need for this amount of money can create a considerable barrier for producers who are not well-connected with funders, or who are working on a topic that threatens or does not appeal to underwriting corporations or foundations.

In addition to affecting the tools producers use and the related expenses for those tools, broadcast requirements also influence *how* producers tell their story – how the program is shot and edited. Programs airing on broadcast television have the capability to reach a wide audience: Nielsen estimates that ninety-eight percent of all U.S. households have at least one television. Because the hallmark of broadcast television is the wide audience it reaches, it is also dependent upon the programming it airs to attract wide viewership. The *raison d'être* of the commercial television network is not to deliver entertainment or information to viewers, but rather to deliver large numbers of viewers from certain demographic groups to advertisers.[9] Although public television attempts to distinguish itself from commercial networks, it also needs programming that attracts and retains a wide range of viewers. Often, in the minds of network executives, this means that

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[9] Blumenthal and Goodenough, 12.

programs should tell an entertaining story and, in the case of anthropological topics, explain unfamiliar behavior.[10] At PBS, programmers also want programs on controversial issues to have a fair and balanced tone.[11]

Broadcast television networks are more concerned with whether a program has a compelling narrative and broad appeal than the nuances of a producer's fieldwork methodology. This orientation is quite different from that of oral history or ethnography. This emphasis on the entertainment value of the final production influences the interviewing techniques producers use for broadcast television programs.

In the previous section, I noted that Jack Hamann told me that many producers do not do interactive interviews with spontaneous dialogue. Instead, they prefer to know in advance exactly what somebody will say, then record them saying it on tape. Hamann advocated a more dynamic approach which corresponds in many ways with oral history interviewing techniques I learned in *Interviewing* and *The Narrative Voice.* Both approaches advocate conducting pre-interview research and the importance of establishing rapport. Both suggest avoiding extensive pre-interview conversations. They both view the interview as a dynamic interaction in which the interviewer should engage the narrator and probe his or her statements, silences, and particular words and phrases for meaning. Also, they both encourage asking questions that give the narrator permission to discuss issues or topics that may be uncomfortable for us as listeners.

However, I also noticed significant differences between Hamann's approach to interviewing and that which I studied in *Interviewing* and *The Narrative Voice*, mostly due to the uneven balance of power between the interviewer and the interviewee. Hamann operates as a journalist rather than an oral historian, and while he is guided by ethics, he also maintains his rights as a reporter. He believes that he has the right to ask any questions he

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[10] Turton, 289, 291.

[11] Bullert, 23.

wishes in the interview, to use any of the interview footage he wishes in the final production, and to edit interviewees' statements as long as he doesn't alter the meaning of their words.

This point of view contrasts with oral historians who are highly attuned to the potential for a researcher's agenda to misrepresent another's narrative.[12] In *Visual Anthropology*, I learned that some ethnographic filmmakers share any profits they make with those who appear in their films.[13] Hamann's philosophy differs. From his journalistic standpoint, paying people to participate in what he sees as news interviews would amount to "checkbook journalism."

Hamann's interviewing methods help the producers create a powerful final production, but some aspects of his technique would be unacceptable in these other fields which are more cautious of an interviewer's impact on those whom he or she interviews, and that place a greater emphasis on preserving the integrity and flow of the narrator's story. The interviews that I witnessed in the footage for *Hot Potatoes* had a different purpose at their core. The producers structured the program's narrative around Dr. Niederhauser's story, but it is presented the way that they feel it is most engaging. The final program uses parts of Niederhauser's and other interviewees' perspectives, but does not preserve all of any one person's story told from his or her point of view. In the end, the production is in the hands of the producers, and it must be snappy and entertaining. Thus, the producers must find a balance between allowing interviewees to say things in their own way, and editing their statements to be concise, pithy, and relevant to the overall production.

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[12] Borland's article examines her grandmother's disagreement with Borland's interpretation of her oral history narrative.

The role of a broadcast television producer is not to "capture moments" so much as it is to construct a narrative that entertains and informs the viewing public. Producers are hired to tell a story. When used skillfully, videotaped events are a compelling way to tell a story, but they are a means to an end. The emphasis is on constructing the narrative.

In addition to how this emphasis on constructing the narrative affects interviews, it also affects how producers respond to legal issues. Producers try not to allow the threat of litigation to affect their choice of topic, or to dampen aggressive reporting when they believe they are within their rights. One of the producers, who was involved with a lawsuit that went to the U.S. Supreme Court, told me that he is careful not to violate trespass, invasion of privacy, or defamation laws, and that he keeps network lawyers informed of any potential issues as soon as they arise.

The way the *Hot Potatoes* producers approached participant releases was surprising for me. Most of my classes in which I gathered interviews or produced videos stressed the importance of obtaining releases from all the recognizable people who appear in a video. In *Video Production* and *Video Editing*, we worked on a documentary about homeless youth in Bellingham. We were concerned with obtaining signed releases from the people we interviewed, and troubled by the issue of what to do with minors who could not legally sign a release. The *Hot Potatoes* producers chose not to seek releases, seeing it as a slippery slope that could threaten their editorial control over the program. They maintain that their program is a journalistic work, as opposed to a commercial entertainment program, and as such is protected under the First Amendment. This defense corresponds with a short passage I found in my *Law of the Press* textbook about a television network that was sued for including somebody in a documentary who could not legally give consent.[14]

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[13] Asch, 202-203.

[14] *Delan v. CBS*, discussed in Pember 223-224.

In that case, the court found that the documentary did not pertain to "advertising or trade purposes."

Documentarians working in public television also may face inadequate equipment and resource constraints. Once again, the producer must focus on finding solutions to construct a narrative. A successful producer must be pragmatic and resourceful, and find a way to produce a piece despite challenges that may arise. Public television in the United States is cash-strapped, and similar to my experience at Fairhaven and Western, there are limited resources that must be shared by all the producers at the station. Even professionals can have problems getting access to equipment, or finding tools that work properly and don't interfere with the creative process. One such difficulty that vexed me during my internship was a television monitor with a slightly fuzzy picture tube in one of the viewing suites where I logged tapes. This problematic piece of equipment added to the challenge of assessing the image quality of the footage. While the resources are generally of better quality than those at school, they are still shared and need to be used efficiently.

John de Graaf's method of beginning editing with a "paper edit" may seem old-fashioned, but it ensures that he doesn't have to use as much time in the shared editing suites. Thinking through the production on paper is much less draining on shared resources than thinking it through while using one of the off-line suites. One engineer at the station told me that he holds de Graaf in high regard because of his reputation for having his production clearly planned out before scheduling time in the editing suite.

The way in which producers edit their programs is also shaped by the institution of broadcast television, many of which simply mirror larger cultural expectations. Many television documentary programs, including *Hot Potatoes*, use shooting and editing techniques developed by Hollywood fiction filmmakers as methods to depict non-fiction events. For example, producers will often use match action edits, which join two separate actions in a way that makes one action appear to be the continuation of the other from a

different perspective, appearing as if the image switched between two cameras in a multi-camera shoot.

Documentary producers can use a similar editing technique when they wish to join two separate statements by the same person into a single unit. The technical problem that arises when editing an interview on video is the jumpcut: when a speaker's body, head, or face suddenly shifts position at the point of the edit. One way to surmount this technical issue is by switching to a cutaway shot that overlaps this visual evidence of a cut. With a clean audio edit, it can be very difficult to distinguish whether a speaker's statement has been edited.

Common cutaway shots include a visual image of the interviewer listening, a wide shot of the interview that corresponds with the speaker's posture or gesture, or visuals that illustrate the topic under discussion. The footage of Jack Hamann's interview with Hector Lasoya on tape 27, includes typical cutaways reaction shots of Hamann listening to Lasoya and of Lasoya listening to a question. It also includes a "reverse shot" of the two talking from behind. This shot would probably work well as a cutaway since it mostly shows their backs.

One more shooting and editing aspect that corresponds with our cultural expectations and Hollywood films is the elision of the presence of the camera, microphone, and crew from the representation of the filmed event in the final production. For example, in the footage for *Hot Potatoes*, I saw that during interviews the host and the interviewee would often wear small, clip-on lavaliere microphones with radio transmitter packs clipped to their belts on the back of their waist. Another method they used to record sound without a visible microphone in the picture was to suspend a "fishpole" boom microphone above the scene, just out of the camera's view. Once, the audio recordist was momentarily caught in the picture, and he scurried out of the frame. In the end, the only person from the production crew who will appear on screen is Jack Hamann as the host/correspondent,

and the people we encounter address him, rather than the camera, when they present their narratives.

These aspects of the way producers tell stories using broadcast television belong to the grammar of accepted stylistic conventions that video producers use to communicate with viewers – some of which may be universal, and others that are culturally specific. In *Visual Anthropology*, we watched *Intrepid Shadows*, a film by Navajo filmmaker Al Clah. This film was made during the course of an anthropological study by Sol Worth and John Adair. During the study, Worth and Adair taught several Navajo people basic movie-making skills, and then analyzed the content and structure of the films they made. Worth and Adair noted that many of the films used narrative elements and editing techniques that are different from those used in films made in our culture. For example, some filmmakers chose to include many long scenes of people walking in their film, but removed scenes of other activities that seemed to have more to do with the film's topic. Also, sometimes the filmmakers introduced jump cuts with their editing even though they could have easily avoided them. Although these differences seemed odd from our cultural vantage point, Worth and Adair correlated these moviemaking techniques with the Navajo language, myth structure, and cultural values. Worth and Adair's conclusion was that while technological characteristics of a medium may affect how people use it to tell stories, culture also has an important role in how people use the medium to communicate. Just as spoken languages are artifacts of culture, so too is the language of media.

Worth and Adair noted that when they presented their participants' films to the rest of their community, the Navajo valued educational topics.[15] However, it seems that the majority of U.S. viewers consider television and film as media for entertainment programming. Commercial television supports itself by attracting a wide audience, and public television also seeks to appeal to a broad range of viewers. U.S. viewers may also value

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[15] Worth and Adair, 21-22.

educational programming, but in a system that serves such a wide audience, it also must have high production values and not bore or offend too many viewers.

Because it must appeal to a broad audience, today's American public television system is less well suited for documentaries that use experimental approaches, deviate from a traditional narrative structure, or strongly advocate a particular stance on a controversial issue. Furthermore, the pressure to entertain viewers and conform to esthetic requirements can conflict with the goal of depicting an event as honestly and faithfully as possible. However, after observing and participating in the creation of an independent production, I believe that dedicated independent documentarians still can operate within public television to construct engaging and relatively truthful narratives that fit within its bounds.

Self-Evaluation

I had two sets of goals for my performance in this internship: to achieve my educational objectives, and to meet the producers' expectations of me in my role as a member of their production team.

My educational goals included advancing my knowledge of professional television documentaries production, gaining a deeper understanding of the context that shapes this process, and drawing connections between the internship experience and my studies.

At the outset, I realized that I would learn quite a bit by logging tapes and viewing the footage the producers had collected. I also expected that I could take advantage of the opportunity of access to the station to seek out and talk with the producers and their co-workers to learn more about the world of public television production.

Logging tapes is a solitary job, and I generally prefer activities that involve more interaction with others, so I was looking forward to opportunities to learn this way. While I did find and initiate interaction with other people at the station, finding time to discuss issues related to my learning objectives was more challenging than I had expected it would be. The producers with whom I interned were often out of town or needed to focus on other projects. Others at the station were also quite busy with their work, and despite my reluctance to ensconce myself in a tiny viewing room, my role as a tape logger meant that I often needed to do just that.

These realities of my situation led me to shift my learning strategies to emphasize careful viewing, reviewing, and reflection upon the footage rather than extensive discussions with others at the station. Despite having to adjust the mode by which I learned, I feel that this internship experience was very rewarding, and it provided me with the inside look into the world of professional television production that I had desired. I was able to use skills I had previously developed to describe the footage, continue to build my under-

standing of the television documentary production process, and consider that process within the framework of my studies.

Organizing and performing my internship allowed me to further develop my experiential learning skills. I took initiative in arranging the internship, and seeking out information at the station. I built on my interpersonal skills as I networked within the organization to meet additional sources of information, and I applied my interviewing skills in conversations with these people. I also took notes that helped me track my learning and write this final paper.

Of course, there are also areas in which I can improve: my notes could have been more complete, and my interviews could have been more structured or systematic. But overall, I feel that I did an excellent job of making this internship a rewarding learning experience. Writing it all down and giving it shape on paper was not easy, but with persistence I was able to do it, aided by the support of family, faculty, and friends.

Regarding my goals for my performance as a production team member, I am satisfied that I met the expectations the producers had of me, although in one area I fell short of my own expectations. When I arranged the internship, I had intended to log all the footage for the production. I discovered that this was a much larger task than I had anticipated and was unable to complete it. The producers have assured me that the quality of my work makes up for this shortcoming, and I realize that I may have been overly ambitious, but I still wish I had been able to accomplish this goal. However, I am proud of the accuracy, clarity, and descriptiveness of the logs I created. Working on the *Hot Potatoes* project was exciting and educational, and I am looking forward to seeing it when it airs.

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Appendix A: Examples of My Footage Logs

01:30:30;00	TAPE 24 -- CHIPS ON STREET; DOWNTOWN TOLUCA; 8/23 MARKET (RAINY)
01:30:30;29	CHIPS ON STREET -- Man working at a potato chip stand: Frying potato chips, peeling potatoes, stirring them and removing them from the fryer.
01:32:49;25	Man buying potato chips.
01:33:01;23	More shots of the stand and equipment: peeler and bag of potatoes.
01:33:38;23	Boy buys potatoes, other shots of people buying potatoes. Squirting salsa on the chips. More peeling: the man uses a cloth to protect the hand that's holding the potato. Good sound of potato peeling. More people buying potato chips.
01:37:04;15	DOWNTOWN TOLUCA -- Policeman directing traffic, traffic scenes.
01:37:47;12	CU of the word "TOLUCA" on the back of a blue taxi cab.
01:38:13;00	Woman eating corn. More shots of policeman directing traffic.
01:39:19;24	People walking down street.
01:40:19;29	Camera walks down street. (Too bouncy).
01:40:57;24	Good traffic shot with hill in background.
01:42:07;08	Another food stand, selling corn? More traffic, policemen, people walking.
01:45:32;07	RAINY MARKET 8/23. Shots of vendors setting up.
01:46:25;24	CU of peas.
01:47:09;25	Unloading peas. Guy with pineapples, women looking at a gourd. Man wiping avacados. Pouring beans, scraping a cactus.
01:49:58;15	Frying potatos.
01:51:27;28	Good shot of pouring beans.
01:53:15;22	Old woman buying potatoes.
01:54:25;16	Good shot of weighing potatoes and putting them in a bag.
01:55:25;09	Vendor standing, potatoes in background, looking for customers.
01:55:28;22	Neat shot of flipping through produce price signs.
01:55:59;23	Low angle shot of tomato and potato piles.
01:56:50;14	Potato vendor yelling for customers, more shots of weighing potatoes.
01:58:48;08	Potato vendor tells camera that potatos have lots of vitamins.
	END OF TAPE

02:30:03;14 TAPE 25 -- CONT. MARKET MADNESS/J.N. TALKS TO VENDORS

02:30:46;13 CONT. MARKET MADNESS -- Weighing and selling potatoes.

02:32:03;04 Good shot of putting potatoes into bag.

02:32:53;28 Nice LS of potatoes for sale in market. Several good shots in here of potatoes for sale at market. Faces: Older male vendor, young child.

02:37:21;17 Money changing hands.

02:41:41;20 Shot of ground while walking through the market.

02:42:05;20 Puddle shot.

02:43:14;21 CU of rain dripping from tarp.

02:44:18;09 Crowd shots, faces.

02:45:21;19 CU sharpening a knife.

02:45:44;17 J.N. TALKS TO VENDORS -- J.N. talks with vendor with cowboy hat. What type of potatoes: Rosa, rema? This type of potato has more or less resistance? Something about Don Jose.

02:47:54;01 New topic, I think JN's telling him that he was here in Chalupa in 1947. Something about Lopez....

02:49:48;13 J.N. talks with woman vendor. Talking about types of potatoes. "Rosa" & "Rosita" are the same kind of potato, rositas are younger.

02:50:38;19 Alfa potatoes -- "the traditional variety."

02:50:53;07 J.N. talks with younger woman vendor. Talking about which potato is better quality.

02:53:33;17 LS talking with vendor.

END OF TAPE

03:30:36;00	TAPE 26 -- J.N./PACO GREENHOUSE; P.P. FIELDS
03:30:36;04	J.N./PACO GREENHOUSE --WS, J.N. and Paco standing, talking about plants.
03:31:52;11	XWS
03:31:57;04	WS
03:32:21;12	XWS, zoom to WS.
03:33:16;23	TS Paco
03:33:25;01	MT J.N.
03:33:38;10	Shot of plants.
03:34:31;19	Pan from shot of plants to WS of J.N. and Paco.
03:36:06;18	Two shot of Paco explaining something to J.N. Good hand gestures.
03:37:13;20	J.N. and Paco by box of potatoes.
03:39:08;00	CUs of potatoes in box, hand picking potato from box.
03:40:28;05	Recording rain-on-roof tone.
03:40:32;05	CU of potato plant leaves, water drops on leaf. Nice change of focus and zoom.
03:40:47;12	P.P. FIELDS -- WS of Paco walking through fields, pulling up weeds.
03:43:36;25	Potato plant with flower getting a little rain, shots of plants and leaves.
03:45:22;19	PLANTS WITH BLIGHT:
03:45:32;03	Almost dead.
03:46:24;12	Dead.
03:48:16;18	Healthy.
03:50:52;04	More dead leaves. Some powerful images here.
03:54:25;29	WILD POTATO COLLECTION -- JACK HAS PACO EXPLAIN WHAT EACH SHOT IS --
03:54:30;22	Wild Potatoes from Wisconsin
03:55:03;04	Tubarifers(?) from Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, and Mexico
03:56:11;25	Another variety of wild potatoes.
03:57:02;24	A wild species with purple flowers.
03:57:42;01	Wild potatoes that have been exposed to blight to test their resistance.

04:00:27;11 Nice shot of blight-infested leaves: Tilt up and shift focus.

END OF TAPE

04:30:26;19	TAPE 27 -- WALK AND TALK WITH HECTOR; CUTAWAYS.
04:30:26;19	LS -- Potato field, yellow church in background. John and Hector walk past, left to right.
04:31:10;18	LS, MS -- Jack and Hector walk down road towards camera, as camera trucks backwards. Discussing PICTI-PAPA, why it's based in Toluca.
04:33:22;24	Pan from potato plants to same type of shot as above.
04:34:49;26	Jack and Hector examine plants.
04:37:27;26	CU -- Holding leaf, showing white blight spores.
04:37:36;26	More Jack and Hector examining plants, talking about how blight works, why PICTI-PAPA was founded in Toluca.
04:38:31;16	Good 2 shot of Jack and Hector.
04:40:17;07	Good shot of Hector.
04:41:19;02	Good CU of Hector.
04:41:46;04	Potatoes, pan right to LS of Jack and Hector crouched, talking in field
04:42:00;11	Cutaway of Jack listening.
04:42:12;10	Reverse angle of LS of Jack and Hector crouched in field.
04:42:39;05	Cutaway of Hector listening.
04:46:31;00	** Hector: "Late blight was not important to the rest of the world. That's something very important. You see, who cares about late blight? It only happens in Toluca -- in the Toluca Valley. That's what people thought, 30 or 40 years ago." He goes on to say that now there is an interest in blight-resistant potatoes, and people are surprised that there are many Mexican varieties. "Everything started with Niederhauser."
04:47:59;23	J.N.'s belief in "horizontal" (vs. "vertical") resistance.
04:48:24;24	Cutaway of Jack
04:53:07;15	Hector: "Now, people may not care about subsistance growers. But Nieder did. Because here he was surrounded by subsistence growers."
04:53:31;23	** Hector: "But now, that the many types of late blight are in first world countries like Europe and the USA, now they are interested in this program. Not because they have subsistance farmers, but because they have late blight. And very aggressive."
04:54:03;10	Camera follows feet walking down field.
04:54:21;00	LS John and Hector walking down field, right to left. John on left.
04:54:59;26	Reverse angle of same shot.

04:55:30;06	Jack and Hector arrive at a blight-infested potato.
04:56:16;20	LS, Jack and Hector stroll left to right in the field, misty rain. Jack on left. Lots of takes.
04:57:37;19	END OF TAPE.

07:01:02;19	TAPE 29 -- GOOD-BYE MANUEL VILLAREAL GONZALEZ/JN; P.P. GROUP IN RESISTANT FIELD (WILLOW TREES); ARRIVAL MANUEL VILLAVERDE BENEDET/JN
07:01:21;21	GOOD-BYE MANUEL VILLAREAL GONZALEZ/JN -- Shots of plaque, JN saying goodbye to Manuel.in his office and outside.
06:35:15;25	PICTI-PAPA GROUP IN RESISTANT FIELD (WILLOW TREES) -- LS of field, group in field, group walking with J.N., mountains. No sound until about 38:10.
06:38:41;21	Mexican scientist talking to scientists in Spanish by potato plants. Conversation with J.N.
06:40:39;25	Low angle LS of group.
06:40:48;08	More up-close shots of conversing. J.N. explaining something.
06:41:51;20	J.N. introduces who they are: Two from Panama. LS of group walking around with J.N.
06:43:40;07	CU potato plant, hand picking up potato. Tilt up to man talking.
06:44:01;12	** LS of J.N. with group: focus on plant in foreground shifts to group in background.
06:44:41;12	Other shots of scientists.
06:44:59;00	MCU of J.N.
06:45:14;22	More scientists.
06:45:45;15	J.N. talking to others from group's POV.
06:46:19;03	Good shot of scientist listening to JN.
06:46:32;04	CU of J.N. talking to group.
06:47:02;10	More shots of group talking.
06:47:56;04	CU, Woman scientist listening. More shots of group talking, walking.
06:52:06;28	ARRIVAL MANUEL VILLAVERDE BENEDET/JN -- J.N. meets with couple, they walk into building.
06:53:35;03	Villaverdes and J.N. introduce the laboratories and themselves by a plaque commemorating J.N. and Villaverde, remember their early years working together.
06:54:28;17	Shots of plaque.
06:54:37;07	END OF TAPE.

10:00:08;03 TAPE 35 -- MOUNTAIN VILLAGES; A.M. SHOTS (ROAD, TOWN); SHEEP; COWS; VILLAGERS; SPRAYING (JOSE FIELDS); CHEMICAL LABELS.

10:00:34;01 A.M. SHOTS (ROAD, TOWN) -- LS of village, morning sun on church, but the sky is grey. Smoke rising from a chimney, a few cars drive towards the camera on the road in foreground..

10:01:26;29 LS of shacks stacked tightly on side of hill. A few village kids walking in foreground, glancing back at the camera.

10:01:52;14 More early morning shots of village. It's an overcast morning with a little fog. Many shots have crops in foreground or laundry on the line. Smoke wafts from chimneys. A few villagers are in the pictures: A woman walking down a road, an older man smoking a cigarette. A chicken hops up on a porch.

10:04:03;04 SHEEP -- A man in a white hat with a blanket over his shoulder stands with his herd of sheep grazing on a verdant hill. ** With the help of his dog, he leads them down a steep dirt road. A car can be seen approaching in the distance.

10:05:17;10 COWS -- ** A grizzled man wearing a buttoned sweater and cowboy hat rides a BMX bike as he shepards his cows through town. Roosters crow, the man makes a kissing sound, and the sound of hooves on pavement.

10:06:57;15 VILLAGERS -- People walking and biking in the town center in the morning. The sun is shining again. Kids walking hand in hand, dressed for school or church? Dog snoozing. A woman in a blue smock is giving some sort of culinary demonstration, cutting up a chicken. ** CU of a dead bird -- "dead duck?"

10:10:03;02 ** A cathedral sillouetted by stormy skies. Ominous!

10:10:12;25 More village scenes: A bus drives by, revealing a street with people walking and parked cars. A man carrying a bed headboard. A big clock (almost 9 a.m.). ** Men riding on a horse-drawn cart. A woman and man dolly wooden carts down a street. ** They stop to greet an eccentric old man with a long white beard, grey suit, and cowboy hat. Another man rides a bicycle cart down the street.

10:15:12;25 Brief LS of scientists in potato fields.

10:16:06;17 WORKERS IN FIELDS -- Picking plants and throwing them in piles. Sun is shining. ** Good low-angle CUs of picking plants.

10:20:06;25 SPRAYING (JOSE FIELDS) -- A red tractor drives slowly through the fields with a sprayer arm spraying the potatoes. CUs of the sprayer, the man driving the tractor, a potato on the front grille of the tractor. Sound of the tractor engine and the spray.

10:26:04;16 CHEMICAL LABELS -- Labels on the spray packages: Skull symbols, ** Good pull focus on the word "Toxico." Tilt down to skull and "Peligro Veneno." ** Good CU of "Toxico" on yellow, Dupont sticker above.

10:28:17;26 END OF TAPE.

12:30:07;23 TAPE 36 -- SORTING POTATOES; HARVESTING (RURAL TOWN) 'RAICES'

12:30:30;19 LS of potato sorting line at Villaverde's farm. Four workers wearing orange gloves and dark blue coats are sorting potatoes. They stand alongside a green conveyor belt that transports potatoes. An orange machine lifts them and drops them on the belt, the workers sort them, the potatoes are sprayed, and then a man at the end shuttles the potatoes into white plastic bins. Another worker stands by, waiting to take the filled bin to a storage space. It is a noisy affair, with the potatoes droppine, the conveyor belt rattling, and the sprayer spraying. Villaverde and a man in a striped shirt are examining a sprayer nozzle on the conveyer belt.

12:30:45;15 Closer shot of Villaverde and the man with the striped shirt.

12:30:56;29 Closer shot of a worker sorting potatoes.

12:31:20;13 The machine has stopped. Villaverde is fiddling with one of the sprayers. Lots of shots of Villaverde fixing the sprayer. CUs of the nozzle, examining a part. Brief shot of workers running to the machine (Not sure what that's about -- Maybe they were turning it off again?)

12:34:22;03 LS of the sorting operation. It's up and running again. Better view of the orange machine that lifts the potatoes up and drops them on the belt.

12:34:45;06 MS of worker wearing a cowboy hat sorting potatoes (brief shot).

12:34:52;00 Villaverde walking around, supervising things.

12:35:00;12 ** Good shot of Villaverde supervising workers: Walks around machine, talks with worker.

12:35:41;14 Shot from potato dropper -- Villaverde looking at the machine

12:35:52;12 Potatoes dropping onto the conveyor belt.

12:36:45;16 ** CU potatoes and gloved hands on a crowded conveyor belt.

12:38:22;16 Conveyor belt workers seen from the potato dropper machine.

12:38:47;14 Workers load potatoes into the potato dropper -- They cut open yellow mesh bags of potatoes and spread them around, as a conveyor belt slowly transports them to the dropper.

12:39:31;22 ** Good CU of potatoes coming out of the mesh bag.

12:40:46;07 ** LS, workers loading the potato dropper. They are surrounded by yellow mesh bags filled with potatoes.

12:41:01;29 Villaverde observes the operations.

12:41:28;15 more potato loading, same LS as before.

12:42:24;19 CU, dumping potatoes from yellow mesh bag.

12:43:18;26	** Good shots of the potatoes moving up the potato dropper. The sun has come out, and they slowly march from the shade of the storage space to the sunhine of the sorting operations.
12:43:47;09	Two workers sorting potatoes.
12:44:08;00	** CU potatoes moving up into the sunshine on the dropper.
12:45:01;14	CU, gloved hands sorting potatoes on a crowded conveyor belt. Like earlier shot. Sunnier than earlier shot, but not as good.
12:45:45;20	SHOTS OF SORTERS -- CU of workers' faces as they intently watch the conveyor belt. Closest man wears a tattered orange baseball cap and has a small cut on his cheek. Shots tilt down to hands sorting potatoes.
12:46:33;29	MS, worker wearing wide hat. This shot is from directly across the conveyor belt. We can see that he is removing twigs and other debris from the potatoes.
12:46:56;09	MS of worker wearing cowboy hat, taken from across the conveyor belt but at an angle.
12:47:17;18	CU face of worker wearing cowboy hat.
12:47:29;11	** CU of potatoes hurtling forward on a well-worn conveyor belt..
12:48:05;10	Reverse angle of conveyor belt. Potatoes dropp from the dropper maching, and a worker sorts them as they come down the line.
12:48:25;00	END OF THE LINE -- Potatoes clatter off the end of the conveyor belt into white plastic bins. A worker stands by, whistleing, pushing bins to the side as they fill up. Another man whisks away the filled containers.
12:48:53;10	CU of the whistling worker.
12:49:08;18	Low angle shot of the jovial worker as he pushes filled bins to the side.
12:49:30;07	The filled bins of potatoes are carted to a new storage area.
12:49:44;08	Bin guy again -- his head, potatoes coming to the end of the conveyor belt.
12:50:10;12	** Low angle CU, potatoes rolling off the line.
12:50:28;06	** Top-down shot of a white bin of potatoes being slid from the conveyor belt, then lifted and set on a cart with other bins.
12:50:38;24	Potatoes rolling off the conveyor belt, jovial worker at the end of the line. Shot from the conveyor belt.
12:50:47;26	Higher angle, same shot.
12:50:54;12	** Top-down CU, potatoes rolling off the belt and falling into the bin below.
12:51:18;25	A worker pulls the cart full of white potato bins.

12:51:23;16	** Potatoes coming down the crowded belt are sorted by gloved hands as they approach the foreground, where they get sprayed.
12:51:44;10	CU, wet potatoes moving towards the camera.
12:52:00;24	CU faces of workers wearing cowboy hats.
12:52:21;06	Shadowy shots of the conveyor belt, taken from the end of the line
12:53:04;16	Brief shot of potatoes being sorted and sprayed, like previous shot.
12:53:11;12	Another shadowy shot of the conveyor belt, taken from the end of the line
12:53:28;08	Shadowy shot of workers sorting potatoes.
12:53:31;26	Gloved hands sorting potatoes, tilt up to faces (Worker looks at camera).
12:53:44;02	** Light green thing (tank of spray stuff?) in foreground, workers sorting potatoes in background.
12:53:55;07	Low angle shot of worker standing by stacks of white bins. The cart arrives, and he begins to stack the white bins.
12:54:17;19	CU as he stacks the bins.
12:54:29;04	LS of the sorting operation, bright sun and dark shadows.
12:54:44;21	HARVESTING (RURAL TOWN) 'RAICES' -- Three men are hunched over, hoeing dark black soil. Occasionally they grab some potatoes and throw them to the side. It's overcast, low clouds are hugging the hills behind them. In the distance is a ridge with trees and other plots. We hear the sound of the hoes cutting the dirt, the heavy breathing of the farmers, and occasionally trucks in the distance.
12:55:10;21	LS of a man hoeing.
12:55:21;07	LS of another hoer, zoom out.
12:55:47;02	LS of men hoeing, different angle.
12:56:07;09	CU of hoe in dirt.
12:57:19;03	LS, two men working.
12:57:52;16	** LS of man hoeing, a line of potatoes behind him. Ridge in background.
12:58:03;23	More shots of men working in field. LS, CU of hoeing the ground and picking out potatoes and tossing them into the line of potatoes.
13:00:14;19	END OF TAPE.

12:30:03;01	TAPE 38 -- MORE VILLAGE SHOTS; CUTTING; THUNDER
14:30:02;07	MORE VILLAGE SHOTS -- Woman washing clothes.
14:30:16;06	MS, a ragged-looking girl in a pink sweater with pick barrets. A couple of boys in picture, too.
14:30:32;27	Woman hanging laundry up to dry - 1, MS
14:30:48;28	Woman hanging laundry up to dry - 2, lower angle
14:31:06;28	Woman hanging laundry up to dry - 3
14:31:14;07	Woman hanging laundry up to dry - 4, yellow church in background.
14:31:40;20	Woman hanging laundry up to dry - 5
14:31:52;28	LS of village along a mountainous ridge. Cloudy, roosters crowing, a radio is playing. Pan right.
14:32:12;08	LS of village, pan right. Quicker. Then pan left.
14:32:41;05	LS of village, tighter angle: laundry lines and wood houses.
14:32:50;19	Roof, smoke rising from chimney.
14:32:58;13	CU of TV antenna, zoom out to LS of village. Pan right.
14:33:40;20	XLS, woman doing laundry in a junky wash area.
14:33:57;15	Woman carrying water.
14:34:03;19	XLS, guys wearing cowboy hats in barn doorway.
14:34:15;27	LS of people, zoom out too quick. camera jumping. follow couple, zoom out too quick.
14:34:58;23	Couple and child walking, potato field in background.
14:35:09;18	CUTTING -- Man cutting plants in field with a machete-like knife.
14:35:23;15	More cutting. Closer shots, CU of cutting.
14:38:27;12	** LS of mountains, zoom out to man cutting plants.
14:39:45;27	** Yellow cross in field with white things on the end. Pull focus shot.
14:39:55;20	More cutting.
14:40:43;20	THUNDER -- LS of buildings, threatening clouds swirling above. Some wimpy thunder.
14:41:10;24	Good thunderclap.

14:41:31;24	End of good thunderclap, a tiny little speck of lightning along horizon on right side of screen.
14:42:52;11	(New angle, looking over fields) Another good thunderclap.
14:43:28;09	End of second good thunderclap. Rain.
14:44:05;08	One more good thunderclap with roosters crowing in background.
14:44:42;19	End of third good thunderclap.
14:44:51;09	(Diana zooms in, crew talking. Looking for lightning.) More shots of clouds on the horizon, nothing special.
14:48:03;08	Sound of a truck going by.
14:48:32;28	END OF TAPE.

Appendix B: My Description of the Major Themes and Elements in *Hot Potatoes*

At the end of my internship, the producers asked me to write a description of the documentary as if I were explaining it to a friend, and to list the most memorable elements I'd seen in the footage. These are the notes I wrote for them.

An informal summary:

Potato blight may sound like a dreary subject for a documentary, but it's more interesting than it sounds at first. Potato farmers around the world are dousing their fields with fungicides -- several times a week -- to protect their crops from a new mutation of the late blight fungus. The film we're working on shows what's happening, and profiles Dr. John Niederhauser, an agricultural scientist who has helped third-world farmers by developing a breeding technique that uses biodiversity, rather than chemicals, to fight blight.

Why is this important?

- Dumping chemicals into our food supply isn't a good idea: it poisons the earth, the farmworkers, and consumers. Fungicides kill all fungi indiscriminately, even those that are beneficial.
- Fungi can mutate, rendering a chemical fungicide useless. A recent mutation of the blight fungus has made fungicides less effective, which necessitates constant spraying. Niederhauser's strategy is to breed potatoes to enhance their natural resistance against blight. In essence, his approach is using the same phenomenon to allow the potato to respond to the fungus.

- Niederhauser's approach is grass-roots. His plan enhances local independence; chemical solutions make local agriculture dependent upon chemical companies. Chemicals have the allure of a "quick fix" -- when they work. However, using breeding strategies is a "better fix" because it is less likely to fail and is more cost-effective for farmers world-wide.

Key images from the footage I logged:

- John Niederhauser walking in the farmer's market in Mexico.
- "Toxico" labels on spray, workers spraying fields.
- Hector's quotes on tape 27.
- Raoul Robinson explaining the concepts of the "lock and key" and "horizontal resistance."
- Morning village shots, harvesting potatoes on mountain (signifying local economy and society).
- Shots of potatoes moving through the sorter (signifying agribusiness/productivity).
- World scientists touring potato field (signifying raised awareness/concern, international effort to work together).

Other thoughts:

I'm wondering how to tie in the baseball footage most effectively. Did Niederhauser draw any parallels between youth baseball and agricultural science? Any shots of kids playing "pickle"? What about old photos of him, farmers, kids... Any old films? Any archival footage of the Little League World Series they won? This could be used as an analogy: Third-world farmers on one side, first-world chemical companies on the other.

Appendix C: Performance Evaluations from the Producers

KCTS 9

June 22, 1999

Internship assessment for Nate Lepley

During the summer of 1998, Nate Lepley performed an internship at KCTS-TV under the supervision of Jack Hamann, a correspondent for CNN, and myself. His duties were to assist with the production of a documentary, *Hot Potatoes*, about the new, more virulent strains of the blight which caused the Irish Potato Famine, and which are now causing havoc for potato farmers throughout the world. His primary task was to log and transcribe footage shot in Mexico, Idaho and other locations. He also provided feedback to the producers about the storyline contained in the footage, and the visual and sound quality of the materials. In addition, Nate did research for additional information about the subject, in one case, coming up with a story that led to one of our most productive tape-gathering trips.

Nate Lepley was an eager, clearly very intelligent, and responsible intern. He did excellent work on the *Hot Potatoes* project, which is now nearing completion. He learned WinTEP, a very difficult software system for logging videotapes – so difficult, in fact, that none of the other producers here at KCTS have been able to master it as Nate did. I believe he learned a great deal about the process of effectively logging tapes for use in a documentary, and at the same time about the interviewing and directing techniques used by Jack Hamann and me in the field.

He also got a chance to view and examine the work of a very accomplished professional videographer, Diana Wilmar, the winner of numerous Emmys for photography. This experience will help him as he works in the field with other camera people. By observing Diana's work, Nate will be better able to suggest creative approaches to less experienced videographers.

I was impressed by Nate's ability to maximize his learning from the somewhat narrow and limited work which we provided for him. Jack's and my schedules have been such in the past year that we have simply not had time to provide much direction for the interns who have worked with us. Nate used his natural skills as an intelligent observer to learn a great deal about the documentary-making process by observing our work and talking with us informally whenever the opportunity presented itself. I also know that he took the opportunity of being at KCTS on a regular basis to meet and observe many other producers and technical personnel and learn from them as well.

In summary, Nate Lepley performed the work requested of him at or above our highest levels of expectation. If he chooses in the future to go into the business of making television documentaries, I believe he will be a creative and successful producer. If you have any further question about the quality of Nate Lepley's work during his internship at KCTS, please call me at (206) 443-6747.

Very sincerely,

John de Graaf
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June 10, 1999

INTERNSHIP EVALUATION: NATE LEPLEY

I am the co-producer of "Hot Potatoes," a documentary for public television. Nate Lepley, a student at Fairhaven College, completed an internship for our documentary under my partial supervision.

Nate's primary responsibility was to view, log and summarize dozens of 30-minute videocassettes shot for the documentary during the past three years. The work is typically tedious but challenging, and requires someone with an alert and inquisitive mind.

I also asked Nate to take a broader view of the documentary, and to offer ideas, suggestions and questions about the characters and subject matter. Nate and I met every few weeks, even after the term of his internship expired, to discuss the issues in the project, and to explore the challenges and intricacies of documentary production.

When Nate completed his internship, I reviewed his work. I found his tape logs and summaries to be accurate and thorough. His comments and suggestions were well-reasoned and timely. His grasp of the subject matter was impressive.

In general, I think Nate underestimated the substantial time it takes to properly review even one videotape, and I therefore think he overestimated the number of tapes he would be able to log during the course of his commitment. Nonetheless, the quality of his assistance made up for any concerns I had about the quantity.

More important, I found Nate to be an engaging student of the documentary process. He asked excellent questions and made thoughtful observations. He initiated many opportunities to view completed documentaries, attend presentations by producers, and travel to regional conferences designed for aspiring documentarians. He was serious and thorough about his work.

I am pleased to conclude that Nate's internship was a successful introduction to professional documentary production.

Jack Hamann