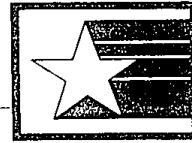


Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor 644-1100



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107C

'In the genes' TV news cameraman's heritage involved with film

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

IF SKILL, TALENT and enthusiasm are genetic, then recently retired WJBK-TV, Channel 2, news cameraman Sid Siegel inherited zeal for things photographic from his grandfather, Jacob. Grandfather's 1917 Baltimore motion picture projectionist license is framed and prominently featured on the wall of the study in Siegel's Birmingham home.

"It was in the genes because my father's father was interested in film and the story was, as told to me," Siegel recalled, "that my grandfather was the projectionist, my father played the piano for the silents, my aunt took the tickets — this was out in the backwoods around Odessa."

Grandpa Jacob was an itinerant projectionist in the rural areas around Odessa, Russia, prior to World War I. When he raised enough money from showing motion pictures, he would sell his film and projectors and take one of his children to America where he would buy another projector, some new films and go back to Odessa to repeat the process. Thus Sid's father and three sisters came to America.

Prior to World War II Siegel's interest in photography developed. In 1940 he built his own drum processor for black-and-white reversal motion picture film which he developed at home, an exceptional and difficult task for amateurs even today.

A CASS TECHNICAL High School student, Siegel studied acrobatics. Despite that, no doubt because of the mysterious ways in which the military operates, his World War II service (1943-1946) was as an infantryman in France,

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— Sid Siegel

Italy and Germany, including six months in combat.

"It was in the final days of the war," Siegel remembered. "I dropped out of a long march from exhaustion, and a day or so later when I rejoined my company, there was a whole German army in front of us."

But the Germans surrendered, and the spoils of war included lots of German Luger pistols, then quite a novelty as souvenirs. Siegel said, "I had Lugers coming out of every pocket and I traded them off for the granddaddy of what turned out to be the Hasselblad. I think it was called the Primaflex. In turn, I traded that for my first Bolex movie camera, and when I got home, I was in business."

That business — filmmaking of all kinds, weddings, bar mitzvahs, industrials, documentaries, but most of all news film — has occupied Siegel and his wife, Naomi, for more than four decades.

In the late '40s and early '50s, "Television had no local newfilm and I was very anxious to get into television," Siegel said. With his wife's help and support, he began a free-lance firm, Telespot News, which furnished newfilm to the local stations. But in those days stations were reluctant to spend \$100 or so on newfilm when they could rent a movie for \$5.

TWO STORIES, in particular,

launched his career as one of the leading newfilm producer-cameramen nationwide as well as in the Detroit market.

Late in 1951, some American soldiers in Japan chartered a plane to come home for Christmas. But they couldn't afford the fuel. The story circulated, and local merchants started a campaign to raise funds for the GIs' trip home. When they landed at Willow Run, Siegel was there with his camera. He processed the film and took it to Channel 2.

The next day there was a blizzard, and every day that week he took newfilm of the blizzard into the station. At the end of the week he was given a 13-week contract as a freelance producer. He contracted for a local news story every day. At the end of the 13 weeks the station hired someone else — lower rates — to produce their newfilm.

To add insult to injury, Siegel recalls that the next Monday, "I had gone out to my car and somebody had cut into the glove box and stolen a camera. While the policeman was filling out the report, I'm listening to his radio which was telling about the Jackson Prison riot."

"Well, I didn't bother filling out the rest of the report. I said, 'Never mind,' and I got in my car with another camera and went to Jackson.

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Sid Siegel has spent four decades in filmmaking of all kinds. He began his career with "Telespot News," a free-lance firm. Through the years, he has worked as a stringer for national TV networks, as well as locally for WJBK-TV, Channel 2.

upcoming things to do

Deadline for the Upcoming calendar is one week ahead of publication. Items must be received by Thursday to be considered for publication the following Thursday. Send to: Ethel Simmons, Entertainment Editor, The Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.

● **Children's concert**
The Creative Center for Young Children at Walpole Lake will sponsor a children's concert from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 10. Children's entertainer Maureen Schiffman will perform with music, movement, puppetry and stories. The show will be on the theme of Valentine's Day. Children two years old and up may attend, accompanied by an adult.

The cost is \$3 per child at the door. The Creative Center for Young Children is a full-service nursery school for children ages 2-5. For more information call 348-3820.

● **Bal Polonais**
His Eminence Edmund Cardinal Szoka is honorary chairman for Bal Polonais VII on Saturday, Feb. 17, at the Detroit Athletic Club. Assisting

the Cardinal will be Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. VanderKloot, one of the founders of the Michigan Opera Theatre, who also are honorary chairmen of Bal Polonais. A benefit for MOT's upcoming Polish opera presentation, Bal Polonais, is noted for its 17th Century Polish Court — garbed pages and herald trumpeters, jousting knights in shining armor, richly clad dancers leading the

Grande Polonaise apres dinner and featuring, for the first time this year, Presentation of the Debutantes of Bal Polonais. Tickets are \$125 per person (Patrons, \$175; Benefactors, \$250). For information call 642-2730 or 822-7085.

● **Dinner theater**
"Plaza Suite" by Neil Simon, with a cast including Rosemary Rock of

Birmingham, plays at 6:30 p.m. every Saturday night through March 31 in dinner theater at Fiorelli's Restaurant in Flat Rock. The show is produced by Jackson Productions and directed by Harvey LaFramboise. Cost is \$20 per person for dinner and show. For reservations call 782-1431.

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