

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ALUMNI

Review

APRIL, 1938



» TRAVEL ISSUE «

University Trains Cinema-Minded Students

STUDENT PRODUCER OF TROJAN NEWS FILM
RECOUNTS HISTORY OF UNUSUAL PROJECT
FAST BECOMING MODERN CAMPUS CHRONICLE

by Jack L. Herzberg '38

STURDY OFFSHOOT of the rapidly growing Department of Cinematography at the University of Southern California is the Trojan campus newsreel, an authentic student project that is proving its worth as a chronicler of campus activities.

Started four years ago by Robert Monosmith '36, who, with the assistance of Dudley Warner and Ralph Acton, attempted to produce a picture every two weeks on a budget of \$10.00 per showing, the newsreel has become an integral part of campus life and has advanced to a position of scheduled showings eagerly awaited by the entire student body.

The difficulties of these three pioneers in the field of student newsreel production were tremendous. With outside help sadly lacking and technical knowledge at a premium, the idea was finally abandoned, not to be revived until 1936 when it was taken over by the members of Delta Kappa Alpha, professional cinematography fraternity. The group felt that as a fraternity project the production of a campus newsreel would be unexcelled, and recommended to the Student Senate that an

A.S.U.S.C. committee be appointed to undertake it. Approval of the recommendation and appropriation of \$25.00 per showing gave new impetus to the Trojan Newsreel, which was produced on this basis for one year with two showings each semester.

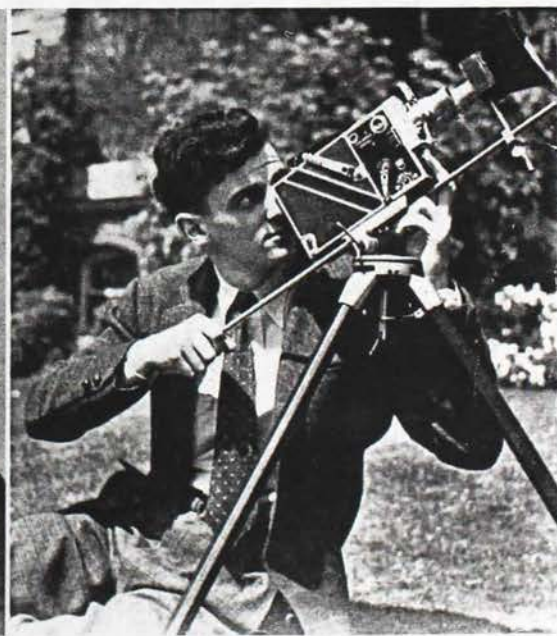
The small budget, however, and the limited crew made it impossible to continue that plan, and in September, 1937, Dr. Boris Morkovin, head of the Department of Cinematography, realizing the possibilities and value of the film, made a wise move by establishing it as a project of the whole department. His action succeeded in raising the newsreel from a mediocre, amateur effort to near-professional standards.

The writer was appointed producer of the film and instructed to organize procedure as he saw fit. With a budget of \$42.00 per showing and with invaluable help and advice from three advisers, Gardiner Pollich, president of the Student Body; Arnold Eddy, general manager of Associated Students, and Dr. Morkovin, an organization has been

built which closely resembles a modern Hollywood studio.

Today, this undergraduate organization consists of approximately fifty active persons working on a definite routine. Student body events, such as dances, athletic contests, and new buildings, are accurately pictured in review. Especially particular has the newsreel unit been in its policy to film an individual department of the University for each issue. At the beginning of this school year, the student body was shown, through the medium of the film, exactly what happens from the time a news story is reported until it is put on the printed pages of the *Daily Trojan* and delivered. In a later issue, the building of a radio show as it is done here at the University was treated in like manner. The first step revealed the birth of a program idea; the second, the writing of a continuity; later steps pictured casting and production of the show on the air over S.C. stations. Other student activities, as, for example, the Men's Stag Rally,

Left: Cinema Students Edit and Title a Film.
Right: Ace Cameraman Ellis Yarnell Taking Unusual Angle Shot.



the Women's Hi-Jinks, the Interfraternity Sing, or the Freshman-Sophomore Brawl, all brimming with news value, are filmed.

When an activity is to be filmed, the wheels are started rolling by the calendar girl, whose duty it is to place the shooting schedule on the various Department bulletin boards. From this schedule, the Story Department makes up its shooting continuities. The director gets his assignment and the finished story from the producer. The cameraman is given time to investigate the locale and to decide the best type of equipment to be used, including lenses, filters, lights, and so on. The technicians are warned, and the script girl is given her script.

On the scheduled date, the unit manager completes arrangements and sees that the company is on the set at the proper time. The scenes are taken under the supervision of the director, and the film turned over to the assistant producer, in charge of all equipment, who sends it out for development and receives the finished film from the laboratories. When the rushes are back, they are previewed by the producer, the assistant producer, the director, and the editor. Suggestions are made as to editing, and thus armed, the editor cuts the film and establishes the theme and mood of that particular episode. Cut into final form, the film is passed on to the Story Department, which views it, times it to the second, and then writes the commentary for the showing.

Simultaneously with the production of the film, the Publicity Department is engaged with the creation of the "house organ," a term applied to our publicity magazine. Published in this magazine are newsy little quips of happenings on the set; explanations of technical problems that come up, together with their solution; advance publicity stories for the showing, plus any other details which could be used to maintain campus interest in the forthcoming movie.

Before a venture can enjoy any success, the personnel of that organization must be capable. To that end,

freshman and sophomore majors in the Department of Cinematography begin training for work on the newsreel in a classroom of Newsreel Production, under the direction of the producer, where they are made familiar with the methods of the organization and the manner of their own promotion up to the top positions. Freshman and sophomore members first engage in such duties as cleaning up the laboratories, taking care of the auditorium, running errands, and carrying equipment. This enables them to be present on the set and in the editing room, where they become acquainted with procedure and terminology, and allows them the opportunity to watch details and see how and why things are done.

After they have served their apprenticeship, the men are promoted to the position of technician. As such they hold lights and perform other minor services on the set. Before they are permitted to do even these simple tasks, however, they must have completed the course in the Fundamentals of Motion Picture Production so that they have a working knowledge of how best to focus the lights in the least amount of time and still gain the desired effects.

Women move up into the position of script girls, and to them falls the job of correlating the script with action on the set, advising the director of the next scene, keeping an accurate record of every scheduled and extra scene taken, and typing up the report for the editor.

From technicians, students may become assistant cameramen, if that is their goal, or assistant directors, if directing is to be their forte. As assistant directors they undertake general management of the locale and the sets. The assistant cameraman's job is to aid the cameraman and assume charge of the technicians, seeing to it that the proper lighting is obtained. When enough time has been spent as a member of the newsreel crew, and after instruction in approved cinematography courses in which they have received grades of high standing, the men enter into actual camera work, if, along

with their background and their own private films, they have proved themselves capable operators.

Chief cameraman this year is Ellis Yarnell, graduate student from Pomona who has been at S.C. for the past two years taking cinema work and who recently won second prize in the international contest sponsored by the American Society of Cinematographers. His prize film, "Europa Touring," was filmed last summer while he was touring Europe as the official photographer for a party from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Directors, before being appointed, must have completed required academic courses toward directing and demonstrated that they have both creative ability and a knowledge of story continuity and cinematic effects. Students whose grades in story and continuity in the classroom and whose experience in active service likewise deem such appointments advisable, are given positions in the Story Department. The head of the Story Department is chosen in accordance with the merit of his or her record as to organization and creative ability in the classroom and on the staff.

The Publicity Department is usually supervised by a student whose major, for obvious reasons, is Advertising. It is his business to publicize the Trojan Newsreel in every way possible. His assistants make up posters and secure still pictures for their news releases.

For assistant producer it is customary to have a student of junior standing whose creative ability, business management, and experience on the newsreel in its major fields have warranted his promotion to the position. He is the one who must be groomed to take over the job of producing the following year. Chief of staff and top man in the unit is the student producer in charge of all production. His appointment comes about through the head of the Cinematography Department, Dr. Morkovin, upon the recommendation of the outgoing producer. His work in the newsreel organization must be outstanding; his grades in the class-●TURN TO PAGE 28

Looking INTO THE FUTURE

UNFORTUNATELY, the only real way we have of judging the future is by the experiences of the past. Speaking financially, what have been your investment results during the past two years? Looking ahead, what do you expect the years to bring in the way of steady income, profits and safety for your principal?

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DO YOU LIKE FOOTBALL ■

If so, you will be interested in the preview of the prospects of the forthcoming season as summed up by Al Wesson. His story, appearing as the feature in the 1938 GRADUATE GUIDE, will reach subscribers about April 15th. WATCH FOR IT!

is the type of American policy that enjoys universal approval. No hurry about getting into the mess of Europe or Asia. Let us build ourselves a strong, defensive structure; let us organize the forces of our economic, social, political, spiritual and moral front, and make ready for any eventuality. We still maintain all of our world friendships. We still are in a position to offer a bit of advice whenever anyone will be in need of it. We still are opposed to the present high-handed methods of warfare. And while the world is busy elsewhere, we have a golden opportunity to mend our fences in the Pan-American world—to establish in this hemisphere a working Democracy such as a Bolivar and a Washington dreamed of in the early youth of the American Republics.

CINEMA

FROM PAGE 6 ● room, his creative ability, and his business judgment must prove his qualification for the role. It is up to the producer to keep the organization intact and running smoothly, make promotions within the group, take care of all business arrangements for shooting, and serve as contact man between faculty and students in the Department.

In everyday shooting there are certain events that come up, such as a dance, a trip north on the train, or a banquet, where it is impossible to have a full crew on the scene. For such an occasion the camera operator who has been doing the best work in the past week or two is awarded the post as cameraman. If it is to be a particularly big affair, the producer goes along as general manager of the unit, and the assistant producer and top directors take over the jobs of the technicians. In this way the most favorable results are obtained with a minimum of intrusion.

■ When production started this year the newsreel unit had no equipment whatsoever, and its budget of \$42.00 was too meager to allow for the purchase of much paraphernalia. A few lights and some film have been acquired, but because of its inferior

quality extreme precautions must be taken. In spite of the difficulties of a small budget, however, and a lack of much needed technical apparatus, the organization, because of its strength and inherent creative ability, has definitely established its place and importance among Trojan activities. The films produced have been of sufficient calibre to win attention outside of the University circle, and major studios in Hollywood are keeping the Trojan Newsreel in mind not only as a means of reviewing collegiate life, but more especially as a source of potential motion picture talent, particularly in the technical fields.

With the majority of minor difficulties solved, the newsreel staff is pointing toward the next issue, in which, if plans develop as expected, there will be approximately three hundred feet or nine minutes of sound on the film. At present the Radio Department at S.C. has charge of the commentaries and musical backgrounds which go out over the public address system during the showings.

■ This constant striving for new features, new techniques, and new processes, despite handicaps, has been largely responsible for the growth of the Trojan Newsreel. Its success as a student project is an achievement of which the University of Southern California and the Department of Cinematography, which is the only one in the country, may well be proud.



KEEPING IN TOUCH

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21)

■ **George Walker**, former manager of the S.C. Central Mailing Office for three and a half years, is now a successful greeting card salesman for Buzza-Cardozo for whom he has been working in the Los Angeles area since leaving the University last December 1st. George received his A.B. degree from S.C. in 1937 and thus is officially a member of our class, but has been well known on the Trojan campus since 1930 when he came here as a transfer from Pasadena J.C. to work part-time in the Student Book Store, becoming head of the Mailing Department upon its formation in 1933. He expects to go north shortly as sales manager of the northwest district with headquarters in Seattle.

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