

INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY FILM PRODUCTION:

MAKING "THREE DAY GOLD"

By

Morgan Wesson

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submitted to the Department of Architecture on January 20, 1978 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

The task of this thesis was the production of a major documentary film. The film, "Three Day Gold," is presented with this proposal on three-quarter inch U-Matic videotape cassette.* In original format it is a 72 minute 16mm color sound motion picture. The film documents the story of the 1976 American Olympic Equestrian Combined Training team through team selection, training, and in competition at the 1976 Olympic Games.

"Three Day Gold" was produced as an independent documentary film. Production began in June 1976 and ended in May 1977. "Three Day Gold" currently is distributed throughout the United States to interested equestrian groups. Cost of production was funded in full by the United States Combined Training Association.

Throughout production the author maintained creative control of the project, directing and executing production, cinematography, editing, and scripting of the film. The written portion of this thesis is adjunct, or background, to the film itself. Viewing "Three Day Gold" is essential to understanding of this written thesis material.

Thesis Supervisor: _____

Richard Leacock

Title: Professor of Cinema

*"Three Day Gold" is presented on two cassettes, parts 1 and 2.

Independent Film: A Definition of Purpose

My work at M.I.T. has been focused upon obtaining the skills and experience I need to be an independent filmmaker. Independent filmmakers are artists and communicators working to define what are essentially personal concerns and relationships toward the objective world. To function they rely on support from private foundations, the business community, state and federal arts and humanities related programs, personal resources, and a variety of non-profit educational or service oriented institutions, such as schools and museums. Independent filmmakers are distinguished from their counterparts in the communication and entertainment industries to some extent by the size of their projects, differing aesthetic concerns, and their working habits.

The film and communication industries in the United States are highly centralized business-based industries emphasizing the concerns of most business related activity: marketability, profitability, and ease of operation. These industries define work in film and video in craft terms. Industry separates and compartmentalizes elements of the filmmaking process to speed production. This has created a group of highly paid specialists: editors, writers, directors, cameramen, engineers, and producers, most of whom are highly professionalized and unionized. This work force produces practically all of the

programming on national television, feature films in national and international distribution, and many small scale industrial and promotional films.

To enter this group of professionals, the filmmaker needs specialized technical skills, usually acquired under apprenticeship or in a professional school. Once entering what is fundamentally a closed shop craft system maintained by the unions and the industry, professionals are socialized toward the needs of the industry. They work for good salaries won for them by the unions or by their own entrepreneurial efforts as writers and producers. Many writers and producers have jumped from journalism, publishing, theatrical, or business worlds into the film and communication industry.

Independent Film belongs to culture. Rising from relatively inexpensive filmmaking technology available in the last twenty years and the flurry of interest in the activity of filmmaking, the world of Independent Film has provided a new mode of expression for artists, reformers, anthropologists, and communicators. Independent filmmakers as a community, when compared to the entertainment and communication industries, are poorly organized, undercapitalized, divided on aesthetic issues, and have no substantial market or mass audience for their work. It is a small cottage industry, largely dependent on service or education related institutions and government

subsidy for survival. Only basic technical skills are required. There are no formal paths of entry, such as professional education or apprenticeship, to the independent film world. The quality and character of films produced varies drastically.

Despite its chaos and lack of direction, this world of independent artists and communicators has produced an array of startling films. The best film and video artists, documentarians, and radical thinkers produce works challenging accepted social and aesthetic norms and continue to expand the scope of self-expression and the boundaries of social and interpersonal exploration. Independent filmmakers have revealed the weakness of our society's institutions, invented a new visual art form, extended film into autobiography, and have set before us cultures, new stories, and daily events. In general, they do this against accepted standards as defined by broadcast and film industries. These standards address marketability (Is the film directed at a mass audience?) and technical and political factors (Is the film aesthetically and technically in tune with industry practices? Can advertisers or funding agencies be interested by it?).

What I have been interested in is the space between both worlds--Independent Film and Industry--and ways of producing films economically that allow the filmmaker control over the entire filmmaking process, and yet are attractive as a

property for broadcasters and distributors. I have discovered some accommodation along these lines. However, independents, usually regardless of their skill and the saleability of their films, are effectively blocked from distribution outlets that might provide the capitalization they need to survive.

A general aesthetic and political lockout operates against independent filmmakers and their work. "Three Day Gold" has been in distribution for six months. Although there has been broadcast interest in the film, and recent Neilson ratings for a show produced by WGBH in Boston about similar subject matter showed mass audience interest in the subject, the film has been blocked--first by ABC Television and again by Public Television--from the television market.

So one aim of my M.I.T. study, the discovery of viable filmmaking opportunities generated using the sensibilities and advantages inherent in independent film production, has not yet materialized.

"Three Day Gold": By Higher Education Out of Adolescence

We had horses when I was growing up. I spent a lot of time riding them, not always because I wanted to. Horses require a frightening amount of maintenance. Perhaps my riding peers, most of them girls, didn't mind cleaning tack, monotonous conditioning programs, and grooming, but I definitely

did. I did not steal into Chica's stall and whisper secrets or brush her mane until it shone like molten gold. Chica, although she was a game little number with guts, left work behind her. My second horse, Trista York, was a tremendous dressage horse. She slobbered liberally on everything and messed up her bedding. I kept up with riding because there wasn't much else to do in the country and because I loved my father and he loved horses. I think he even loved sweaty horses. It is hard to spend the day with a sweaty horse, but he did it many times. He also believed in the power of riding to keep children off the streets, or out of the country club pool, or the baby sitter's lap: whatever the hazards may be for middle class kids with leanings toward underachievement or sexual confusion. By the time it occurred to me that no future of consequence lay in riding and that I was not rich enough or talented enough to make it my life, I was out of the danger zone (13-17) and, furthermore, had grown to like riding and my riding peers.

Riding is exhilarating, fearful drudgery. To work with an animal, brains guiding brawn, as the notion goes, is a cumulative, exacting process. Most of all I remember the moments when the work came together. Also, I remember different teachers, several of whom communicated to me an understanding of patience and technique.

My upbringing and, particularly, my father's attitude toward equestrian sports influenced my relationship to "Three Day Gold." When the constraints of production, lack of funds, and a distaste for the personalities I encountered threatened to sour my relationship to the work, I fell back upon these basic attitudes toward equestrian activity. The film represents a dedication to what I perceived to be good in the sport and does not address many of the problems encountered in production.

"Three Day Gold" is an apolitical film for horse lovers. When I first showed the film to my film peers, I made excuses about the single-mindedness in the film. I no longer make excuses. Regardless of the tone of the material and the lack of conflict on the screen, "Three Day Gold" was not simply made to order on commission to a client. It was made to please an audience of which I felt very much a part while growing up. Response from audiences viewing the film have confirmed my hopes. I have been at several public screenings and find that the film is understood by a wide age range, provides an educational dimension, and entertains equestrians who aspire to ride at that level if they could or who simply share the exhilaration of competition. By reaching audiences in this manner the film has succeeded. Besides showing Olympic level competition, the film binds together a community of equestrians

in appreciation of a common shared experience. Judging the validity of that activity against a human backdrop including the personalities, foibles, and affluence of the equestrian scene ultimately was not my concern.

Background on the Sport of Combined Training

The sport of combined training is a refined and idealized model of the demands placed on an Army Cavalry officer and his mount. There are three phases of competition: Dressage, Cross Country, and Stadium Jumping. Dressage measures grace and relaxation on the parade ground. Cross country, the most important phase, determines the pair's speed and endurance over different natural obstacles and terrain. Stadium Jumping insures that horse and rider have survived the two earlier tests by demanding precision and obedience over fences in the arena. Combined training is an obscure sport in the United States but is the fastest growing equestrian sport. In England the sport receives national attention, complete with day-long television coverage. This interest is traditional and has been bolstered by the recent competition of Mark Phillips and Princess Anne in many events and on the British Olympic team.

The Influence of Financial Pressures
on Definition of the Task

There were two different problems during production. First, I needed to determine what kind of documentary I could make and decide how the activity could be presented. Next, I had to convince the conservative businessmen, sportsmen and women with whom I would be working to advance funding and access to the world of combined training to me so that I could make the film.

Early in negotiations with my client, the United States Combined Training Association, represented by Neil Ayer, the Association Director, I discovered that funding the film would be difficult. U.S.C.T.A. had made films before, generally silent films of three day events distributed to equestrians actively involved with the sport. These films had never cost much more than \$5,000 or so, and Neil Ayer did not expect the film of the 1976 Olympics to cost much more than this. Anyone who has budgeted a one hour sync sound film of an event or activity as complicated as an Olympic competition or, for that matter, anyone who has ever budgeted any film knows I had a problem. Only with the success of the team and advance ticket sales managed profitably by U.S.C.T.A. did funding on an order commensurate with task become available. This, however, did not take place until the Olympics had ended and shooting was

complete.

Independent producers are used to working on slim budgets. Early on, I adopted an attitude of wait and hope. However, throughout production money continually hampered the ultimate reach of the film. If the team had not succeeded in winning the Olympics, or if the funds had not been available to finish the film, I would have been stuck with the job of surviving on what we had. As the rushes came in and Neil Ayer saw them, he convinced U.S.C.T.A. to advance more money. The film started in June 1976 with a budget of between \$7,000 and \$8,000. When it was finally completed in May 1977 and ten prints placed in distribution, the cost to U.S.C.T.A. was in excess of \$33,000. In between, four budgets had been prepared and presented to U.S.C.T.A., sometimes being rejected and reworked over again. This kind of hand-to-mouth financing put pressure on me to simplify and economize. In the process I made several costly mistakes. Unable to make the first budget come out right, I substituted black and white workprint for color. Later on, this made identification of the many different international riders difficult and meant lost time cataloguing and organizing the footage. Worse by far was the experience of viewing the first answer print in color and discovering half a dozen flares. Because of the quality of the black and white print, they had been invisible in the editing. After recon-

forming and a second answer print, costs easily wiped out any saving on the original workprint.

Lack of funds initially influenced the treatment for the film I ultimately decided upon. More than anything, I wanted to integrate my belief that equestrian work is an interesting and essentially human activity with cinema verite documentary filming techniques. Several factors kept me from doing this: first, the lack of funds to shoot enough film; and, second, the problems I had gaining the confidence of the Olympic coach and riders, and later in getting access to the team at the Olympic games.

There were seven shooting days and 4,500 feet of film to cover team selection and training before the games. I divided this into a shoot at the final Olympic team selection trial and time at the training center in Unionville, Pennsylvania. I limited my shooting to things that were exciting to watch and that could be explained with very little film, namely, riding and training sessions. I filmed interviews, monologues really, no more than three or four minutes long, with each rider on the team. These quick encounters put no strain on the shooting ratio. They afforded a brief on-screen presence in the film before the Olympics of the personalities involved. This material was later refined in the editing process and constitutes, with minor additions, the first twenty-five

minutes of the film. It is presented as orientation toward the sport, an explanation for the uninitiated, and as background material relating to the Olympics.

"Jack is Under Pressure"

At some point, documentary filmmakers should be exposed to hostile subjects or characters to film. My own nightmarish experience involved filming Jack Le Goeff and the Olympic team in training a few weeks before the games. Whenever I called U.S.C.T.A. in Boston during shooting to plead for money and liaison with the team, I got a line played back to me. "Jack" is Jack Le Goeff, coach of the American Olympic team, and he was under pressure. I was not to bother him. It is a time I would like to forget. I am now on good terms with Jack, but for a few days it looked as if he fully intended to stop us filming through most any means available.

Jack and his riders are amateur athletes. International amateur athletics have more capacity for personal destruction and wrongdoing than most activities I can think of. Competition for team berths is cutthroat. Emotional strain on the young athletes is brutal. Friends and family do not always improve the situation. They are sometimes occupied (like Mrs. Eddie Sachs) in basking around the glow thrown off by the athletes and the career possibilities a successful performance

can create. Coaches face a dismal and pressure-laden prospect. They are underpaid. Their fragile job security depends upon success in a few competitions against opposition they may only see every few years.

At some point in the past, Jack had a bad experience with a film crew. He explained this to me as we went over guidelines for filming the team during training after I arrived in Unionville. This I could understand, but it did not prepare me to act as whipping boy for his other problems, which is ultimately what happened. Two of his riders were having an affair he could not handle. One of the best horses was unsound until the last few days of training. Jack had no administrative help. He coached and ran the team of six riders, eight horses, and four grooms on his own.

Kirk Simon and I arrived with our cameras at the precise point when all of Jack Le Goeff's problems were coming to a head. As a result, despite his smiling welcome, I discovered that any attempt to make an inside story out of training the team was out of the question. Jack orchestrated horses away from our cameras. He refused to allow filming most training sessions, saying that the Nagra inhibited his coaching. At the end of the second day of filming, he stopped our access to training altogether. He got sick with a bad cold, and we all holed in for twenty-four hours, while the rented equipment sat

in the trunk of my car, and I cursed Jack and his mealy-mouthed blueblood brats with their fancy nags.

When we all came out of hiding and met again, Jack had steadied down, and I was prepared to act as a carpet if this would get the footage we needed. He apologized, and I grabbed him in this mood and took him out for an on-camera monologue. This film is what holds the training footage together. For about two minutes, he let go and spoke of horsemanship with affection. This renewed my own enthusiasm. Although he returned shortly after to being secretive and inhospitable, I knew we had something to edit with the endless horses going around in circles over training fences.

The Olympic Games

Coverage of modern sports events by the media is reaching an intensity that may bring on spectator disillusionment and disgust. The Olympic games, sacred cow of all athletic events, may eventually suffer such a fate if commercialism and nationalism continue to increase their grip on the event.

Television rights to the modern Olympic Games are the most sought-after prize in broadcasting. Even though combined training is an obscure Olympic sport, it prompted the same kind of media scramble more evident in the popular sports. The competition in combined training was located sixty-five

miles southeast of Montreal at Bromont, Quebec. Despite its isolation from the rest of the games, there were usually 500 to 1,000 press people on hand to follow the action. Serving them in the festive hospitality tents were legions of many-tongued uniformed hostesses. We all had access to wire services, telephones, transportation, and individual color monitors in the press box at the stadium.

Long before the games we had tried to get press credentials for myself and a crew. I got one. Despite phone calls and letters to the Canadian Olympic Journalism Committee pleading for additional access for our crews, volunteer equestrians and film students, we received just one pass. I ended up filming alone inside the lines and relying on camera positions in the stands for the rest. This was no accident, as I soon discovered. The games press officer on site at Bromont had been paid off by a British company making a big budget film, and it was his job to hinder anyone else from making a film. He did this by selling camera positions. I was always assigned spots facing into the sun at the maximum range he could find from what it was I wished to shoot. At security checkpoints there were lists of press passes getting special privileges. This meant endless delays for me while they checked me out on the radio to find out why I hadn't made the list. Sometimes I wasn't cleared at all and would sit in the car watching other

crews sail by the checkpoint without stopping. This happened despite efforts I made to be visible and familiar to the guards, so there can be no mistake about the source of the treatment. It was coming from the press officer at the press tent on the other end of the walkie-talkie.

Being effectively sealed off from a comprehensive coverage inside the lines meant that my crews had to work out of touch and in spectator areas. I picked likely camera positions each day and hoped they could make it into those seats. On cross country day I dropped each camera part way along the course and instructed them on the best fences to shoot. I emphasized the type of cinematography needed: always treating each jumping horse as a mini-event; always staying wide on take-off through suspension over the fence and into landing; trying to avoid the turning syndrome, a camera movement that is endless left to right or right to left; being conscious of the terrain and how this relates to the setting and the jump in question; and always connecting the action on the course with the action in the crowd. Of course, everyone was instructed to do these things with very little film! There were nine cameras shooting for us on cross country day, and they were spread out over five miles of countryside. I was not allowed into the only area with interesting sync sound action, the start-finish line. Only the British group could film there and ABC Television.

By the end of the games, I had lost seven pounds and any vestige of respect for amateur sports. The British played politics with Princess Anne and their team, running two horses with unsoundness histories that broke down after the cross country. The Russians actually substituted a different rider on one horse surreptitiously as it began cross country. When the pair fell at the second fence, pinning the bogus competitor and breaking his arm, the course medics were prohibited from treating him. The Russian veterinarian was summoned from the stable to set the rider's arm, and he was then spirited off to Montreal before the course stewards could verify his identity. Half the French team arrived with their horses illegally drugged. Of course, the Taiwanese entry, yes, there was one, never competed at all. He went home with the rest of his country's team.

Our footage of the event proves that with a well-planned stadium, enough confusion, and an understanding of the material being filmed, special camera privileges and bulky equipment don't always mean better footage. Some of the best cross country footage we have was shot hand held in the crowd. Our best stadium jumping film was shot by cameras at ground level without clear sight lines on the action. Basic long running shots on tripods are a staple of sorts but do not come alive without the efforts of many other cameras trying different

things all the time without a set pattern or centralized direction. A rational scheme assuring coverage all the time is necessary; but the cameraman and his own ingenuity is the single most important element in ultimately gathering enough material to make running action interesting.

Editing (Oh, My God)

I can't remember being quite as worried by a mass of film as I was when confronted by the rushes for "Three Day Gold." Although it was the largest project I had attempted and should have been easier than other films I had made, it became more and more apparent that a tremendous number of important elements had to be completely fabricated in editing that did not as yet exist.

There was sound for only thirty percent of the footage. Most of the cross country and all the stadium jumping would have to be carefully dubbed. There were no real people, no characters in the film--just some awkward interviews of the team and a snatch of Jack Le Goeff in team training. At the Olympics the team vanished behind their riding clothes, 250,000 spectators, and 20,000 Canadian Army course guards. There were almost no shooting logs. Most of the riding footage in black and white was difficult to identify. Footage for each rider had to be gathered from the four to nine cameras shooting a

particular performance and assembled in a continuous time line before any cutting could begin.

A narrator, preferably a team member, was required. Although I was encouraged to consider an able and articulate horseman, General Jonathan Burton, he appeared in exactly one shot of the film. I decided on the team captain, Mike Plumb. Although Mike is not articulate, he was the best insider to represent the team, and he had a pleasing voice. I had only made one other very dismal film with narration and was apprehensive about my ability to write copy that anyone could read. Happily, I have destroyed my script notes, and no one will ever know just how corny my first efforts were! There are some hints left in the film. At the end of the cross country, Mike's exhausted horse pulls up and Mike says, "Better knows he will be taken care of here." Better and Better looks up and whinnies on cue.

My brief flirtation with music was instructive but unnecessary and expensive. I went to New York. Kirk Simon had lined up several places that sold music, and we went to audition some. There were four of us: Kirk, Terry Hopkins, my assistant editor, Richard Barber, who is a musician, and me. Each audition had a sort of Marx Brothers madness. I sat there while the librarian played tacky background music or "action stuff." We would look at each other:

"Did you like it?"

"Well, it certainly was better than the last one."

"We're on the right track."

And, finally:

"Yeah, that's good, we'll call you" (Let's get out of here.)

There was no interesting canned music for our purposes. We did end up with one piece of music, the National Anthem, and two hundred dollars worth of audition time for our trouble.

About two months into editing, I produced a reworked budget for Neil Ayer and U.S.C.T.A. and held my breath. As expected, it did not go over well. It did not go over at all. Neil Ayer stopped work on the film and demanded that I lower the figure (\$28,000 without contingency or narration fees or the unknown second answer print) and produce a budget he could live with. I made the mistake of doing this, dropping the total to \$18,000 and hoping again that he would come around. I regret this now because it just postponed the problem for Neil until production was complete.

About the same time a windfall appeared. Through William Steinkraus, President of the U.S.E.T. and ABC Television's expert commentator for the equestrian events, I got access to everything ABC had shot of the combined training competition. This expanded our cross country coverage, the single most

important element in the Olympic material to fourteen cameras, two of which were super slow motion units. There were compatibility problems; they had shot 7240 and we had shot negative. EFX in New York, a very expensive optical house, married the two stocks beautifully and also produced some great looking slow motion and stop motion footage of the Unionville training session. The ABC footage, a press conference with Princess Anne and the British team, and the cross country competition, filled many holes in our own footage.

Treatment and Budget

One day after I delivered the ill-fated real budget to Neil Ayer, I was told about a meeting the following week of the U.S.C.T.A. committee set up to deal with the film. A budget and complete script of the film was needed for the meeting, in advance of the meeting. I was very adverse to setting down my plan for the film but somehow produced a treatment for the occasion. It was a successful aid to committee members with little knowledge of film. It also helped clear my thoughts. Not everything planned in the treatment ultimately made it into the film. It is reproduced in full at the end of this text (Appendices I and II).

Review at M.I.T.

The film was screened several times at M.I.T. First rushes were shown to Ed Pincus, who politely suggested that there was a lot left to do. Subsequently, I have learned Ed was really shaken by what he saw and could not tell me how concerned he actually was by the footage. There is no doubt that I shared this foreboding but, tempered with knowledge of how the riding footage could come together, I did not see the problem as unsolvable; just monumental.

Parts of the Olympic sequence came together--the dressage and stadium jumping first, then cross country. Tiny links between the larger sections of riding materialized as complete sequences of each riding performance were finished. The difficulty lay in gluing together so much riding with no narrative structure available to maintain interest. The narration had to patch up most of these holes.

I showed the material several times to Ricky Leacock during the winter of 1977. The single most useful piece of advice came from Ricky at one screening toward the end: he stated the importance of generating tension. He did not offer specific ways to "tense it up a bit," as he put it, but the idea was something I had been practicing without consistently paying attention to its importance. Often I tended to overlay sequences with soft illustrative passages that took the edge

off the action. This critique removed any weakness I had toward sequences that were marginally interesting. They came out.

Release

The film is presently distributed by the United States Combined Training Association as a non-profit non-theatrical rental. Until very recently it had not been publicized at all. A three minute section has been aired in New England on public television, but efforts to interest anyone in national broadcast have so far not succeeded.

U.S.C.T.A. has adopted a curious attitude toward "Three Day Gold." The board of governors has passed a resolution prohibiting film production again as an activity of the organization.

This kind of situation addresses several problems independent filmmakers face. The value of independent films is not understood by the clients for whom they offer the largest gain and biggest savings.

Most efforts to produce films by small organizations like U.S.C.T.A. are primarily exercises in self-reflection. Because of the expense--most films for such groups are one shot or special purpose efforts--a lot of attention and worry focuses on the project. The point of the exercise can move away from

true production value: producing the film cheaply, for the widest audience if this is appropriate, and then moving it where it can be seen to do the most good.

Using this definition of production value (a concept apart from the personal concerns of independent filmmakers working on their own movies), "Three Day Gold" was an economical film delivering an exciting and informative experience for its viewers and serving a wide variety of needs.

Viewed from the organization's standpoint, the film was scandalously expensive and handled too much in isolation from the constituency and leadership of U.S.C.T.A. As a result, the film has not been promoted properly or aggressively peddled to broadcasters. I have worked to assure U.S.C.T.A. understood each step of production but apparently have failed to assist in the return of enough initial investment in the release phase. In fairness to myself, I have had no encouragement or assistance extended to me in this process and have been isolated from all aspects of distribution and release. In the future, before making a film, I will make certain both parties are genuinely committed to the project and know what this means, each to the other. Such an understanding, constantly reinforced, can minimize the risks of failure from undercapitalized productions, aesthetic pretensions, and costly revisions.

Independent filmmakers must pay attention to these issues

or be prepared to give up the freedom and aesthetic energy that comes with total control of the production process. It will be a difficult set of problems to overcome as long as the activity of filmmaking is mystified beyond its true complexity.

A film client unwilling to recognize the skills and value the independent can offer should be avoided. Business has always been a treacherous activity, especially in undefined professions, but the fact remains that many films need to be made. Society's increasing reliance upon audio-visual communication will demand that they be made. It is up to the filmmaker to insist on the tools and definition of work that returns the most to himself and serves this need responsibly.

Image and Narrative

Portable talking pictures. For the first generation of sync sound documentary filmmakers this prodigal child opened up new territory. The camera went everywhere, looking and listening at everyone. Documentary film got real.

Documentary filmmaking in the jet age has been dominated by the sync sound dynamic and its natural affinity toward narrative situations. The power of narrative film lies in the literal form it builds from experience. Narrative or story film and non-fiction documentary intensifies and distills experiences that seem essentially human, giving it continuity

and meaning. The sync sound dimension is most often a continuous time line, not genuine but deceptively close to real.

The temptation is to wield this tool for exploratory purposes. Increasingly, filmmakers are culture's new metaphor for exploration and identity. Filmmakers working in documentary search for situations, cultures, personalities, and self-reflections that are defined in the open before the cameras and recorders, and not created through a juxtaposition of image, montage, music, and narration.

Before there was sync sound there was image: a series of wonderful, exotic monochromatic images laid back to back. Before you could have the real thing (knife-edged audio visual cinema verite), you created a world by looking. It was both embraced by and released from literal meaning and the constraints of narrative and dramatic forms. This is what the first documentary cameramen did. In addition, they took this power and added montage in the editing room.

There is an established conflict between image and narrative (or cinema verite, if you prefer). Ricky Leacock related the fears of the first sync sound documentary filmmakers, one central one being the power of the fledgling medium to coopt image and subordinate the rich technique and tradition that had grown around its central position in documentary film. Indeed, although the early films of the Drew group and its members

attest to a tentative merger of the two, a transformation since then has taken place. Image and the galaxy of tricks that go with it, most notably montage, are out of favor. Television journalism is positively myopic. Independent avant garde filmmakers, wrapped up in film as a manipulator of time, or color, or autobiography have stopped looking as hard as they are thinking about rationalizing the visual arts and making them attractive and accessible.

Without the resources to run film through the camera for a sync sound documentary, I used image wherever possible in "Three Day Gold." The intensive editing of riding sequences and whatever success these sequences have are due to simple montage and patchwork narration. Although there was no time or money to explore further, I hope to try again in other films to marry image and narrative. Conventional moviemaking has always been the successful act of making the two harmonic.

Conclusion

The experience of making "Three Day Gold" encompassed tests of my attitudes as a filmmaker, my skills as a business negotiator, and exploration into the equestrian world I was part of while growing up. I must write that many disappointments and illusions were encountered along the way. Also, I felt great most of the time dealing with the problems of pro-

duction and later at the first screenings of the film, when it was enthusiastically received.

In the planning stages, the most common fantasy that drifted about the dingiest corners of my mind involved the great foresight I was showing in making a film of this sport. I would reason that, of course, the United States would win the Olympic games, my film would be swept up by a major television network, and I would be established as the only capable filmmaker working in the field. The United States did win the Olympics, but this sort of thing had nothing to do with the realities of a small scale production like "Three Day Gold." Major networks did show interest in the film. The interest revolved around suppressing the film or stealing it or using small parts of it or copying it. So much for fantasy and ambition.

The activity of making "Three Day Gold" was an important catalyst in my development as a filmmaker. It has allowed me to weigh the different techniques and resources open to filmmakers: large multi-camera shooting situations, optical printing, business practices, and aesthetics. It has even allowed me a measure of self-expression in an area I have knowledge in and could make an original contribution to by putting my equestrian experience to some use.

If other filmmakers should question the wisdom of students making films on commission for advanced study, I would probably

agree. There are a few students who will get the opportunity to experiment on their own, and they are entitled to this experience. My undergraduate work in film involved making movies for myself. For awhile it seemed important to preserve my education in film from infringement by outside factors like a client or a particularly strict course of study not in tune with my sensibilities.

I believe that finally there is always a coopting force operating on the creative process. It is a combination of personal prejudice or demands placed by clients, the limitations of the medium, and the ultimate creative reach of the filmmaker. Consequently, it is ludicrous to suggest that a course of study in independent film should be isolated completely from the demands and limitations of producing independent films that are accountable to the marketplace, mass audiences, or nationwide business practices for their success or failure. Only by dealing with problems the world sets in front of independents will they be recognized and resolved.

I want to thank my instructors and colleagues at M.I.T., Neil Ayer and the U.S.C.T.A., Kirk Simon and Richard Barber, and the many volunteer cameramen who worked on "Three Day Gold." There is no doubt that without their help and encouragement I would have gone crazy long ago.

APPENDIX I

Subject Treatment

There is 26,000 ft. of material. This will be edited in stages to a 54 minute film. Some material will be cut for technical reasons--scratched footage, fogged or poorly exposed shots, shots with distracting camera movements, vibration, film from cameras that malfunctioned. So far about 4,000 ft. of the worst of this material has been eliminated.

The film structure and content can be broken down into three sections or smaller films that represent the film shot at three locations: Blue Ridge, Virginia, Unionville, Penn., and Bromont.

1.

The first section of the film, an estimated 4-5 minutes of actual screen time, shows the Blue Ridge Selection Trial. Film of each riding phase will be screened as a narration describes the selection process--how horses and riders are chosen for the team, the trials that have been held in 1976, etc.

There will be a brief explanation of three day event competition--what are the skills, standards, and present status quo of event riding in America. This will familiarize the mass audience or uninformed enthusiast with what he or she is seeing.

Some of the footage we have includes officials--timers, vets, course officials, jump crews--and a simple statement on the organizational effort made with each three day competition will be made over this material.

Horse care after the cross country, an area we do not have much of at Bromont, will be covered. There were no injuries or horses in bad distress at Blue Ridge despite the heat and hard going. This is mentioned by timer in charge and the team vet in attendance.

2.

This section, 15-18 minutes on screen, will cover team training at Unionville, introduce the coach and team individually, and give some insight into the time and activity at Unionville.

In an interview, principally a monologue, Jack Le Goeff speaks about the selection process, the training of young riders and horses, and backtracks to his arrival in the United States early in this decade. He describes the "talent," the intangible abilities of the great three day rider and horse and discusses the Ledyard 77 and World Championship events and how the team will prepare for them.

Each rider will speak briefly about their partnership with each horse, their view of the sport, who encouraged and supported their personal efforts to compete, the international experience they have, and their hopes for the future. There will be brief sequences from movies and stills taken throughout their careers.

Each riding phase will be shown in training. Jack working on Dressage with Bruce and Irish Cap, Mike on conditioning, Tad, Beth and Denny on Stadium jumping, Mary Anne on Cross Country and so on as the best footage indicates this should be arranged. In each training session Jack works with the horses and riders--talking them through the courses, setting tasks, etc.

There is a short section of cross country training done at the Radnor Hunt Club. The sequence includes the loading of the horses, slow motion photography, and horse care shots.

Throughout the footage the narration assumes an observer role allowing where possible the footage to stand on the obvious activity presented. Near the close of this section the condition of horses and riders and the strategy of the US effort is elaborated in preparation for the next sequences at Bromont.

3.

The main body of the film is the competition at Bromont. Screen time will be 30-38 minutes and will cover the events as they happen on a day-to-day basis.

July 21 Course Walk and Vet Check, 3-5 min.

A basic description of the CC course, footage of competitors walking the course, the obstacles.

The presentation of each team's horses at the vet check, with descriptions of each horse's experience where appropriate. This is a "scene setting"--a

chance to see the horses, the teams, and to see the American team present its six horses.

July 22 The first two American dressage rides, 7-8 min.

The most footage will be devoted to Tad's ride, the arrival of the Queen, Princess Anne's ride, and Mary Anne's ride. There will be commentary with each rider, preferably Jack Le Goeff and the rider.

July 23 The second day of dressage, 5-6 min.

A brief sequence in the stables precedes Mike's and Bruce's rides. Again there will be rider-coach commentary on both the performance being shown and upon the rides of other nations, and the standards and goals of a good three day dressage.

July 24 Cross Country Day, 9-13 min.

The rides of each American will be shown in as complete a form as is possible with footage available, usually in chronological order of fences around the course. The narration will recount the progress of each team and identify riders of other teams. Course conditions, including occasional crowd scenes will be documented.

July 25 Vet check, Stadium Jumping, award ceremony, victory celebration, 8-11 min.

The day's events--sun up to sunrise will be documented. First, the presentation of four American horses and a summing up of the events and standings from July 24. Next the four American stadium rides, climaxing with Carl Schultz's ride, followed by the award ceremony, playing of the anthem, and the victory celebration: the opening of champagne and a look ahead to Ledyard 77 and the World Championships.

Overall the film will speak to the interested equestrian and from time to time, when it is appropriate, to a larger audience. When it is possible, I believe a film should speak to the widest audience available. This increases the financial and promotional return and in this case, with such a victory and the story of its accomplishment, does much to educate and inform.

Appendix II

Costs

A 54 Minute Sound Film, 16mm Color, Eastman 7247 Negative

These costs will provide a 54 minute synchronous sound film with a minimum of special effects. Using MIT facilities to mix and transfer sound and free lance laboratory services in Western Massachusetts to conform and print the finished film has cut materials, services, and equipment services to an absolute minimum.

U.S.C.T.A. will receive an answer print and a color inter-negative. The purpose of the internegative is to prevent damage to camera original. In numbers of prints beyond three it also decreases the cost of additional prints. The cost of additional prints is approximately 14¢ a foot for the first, 12¢ for the second, and 10¢ for any number over three. With a 54 minute film 1800 feet long, including shipping, carton, and 2 reels, each print should cost \$230. 54 minutes is the maximum time length that will fit on a single reel. (All sound projectors now accommodate 2,000' reels.) This is also the proper length for telecasting the film uninterrupted. (Should commercial breaks be added, 45 minutes would be an appropriate length.)

Materials and Production Services

Raw stock: 25,600 feet Eastman 7247 Negative. Prices throughout production have varied. When large orders were anticipated a price of 9.75¢ a foot to 10.125¢ a foot was possible. The bulk of footage, 20,800 feet, was purchased at this price. An additional 4,000 feet was purchased at 11.625¢ on the eve of the Bromont competition, as authorized by U.S.C.T.A.

A black and white workprint at 6.5¢ a foot was made for all footage delivered to the lab before August 1, totalling 20,900 feet. The remaining 3,900 feet processed after this date was processed with a color workprint being made at 10.3¢ a foot upon approval of U.S.C.T.A. to hasten cataloguing and identification of riders.

The remaining materials and production costs needed to finish the film with a sound track, titles, color correction, and

conforming have been reduced to the minimum possible.

Equipment Rental

All cameras and accessories for shooting by Morgan Wesson and his crews at Blue Ridge, Unionville, and Bromont were rented from Hampshire Films, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA. At Blue Ridge and Unionville, equipment used included two 16mm motion picture cameras, 1 sound, and accessories. At Bromont four cameras, two sound, and accessories were used.

Editing equipment was rented from Elaine Mayes, a free lance filmmaker in Florence, MA, and included a six-plate console editing machine, a synchronizer, two splicers, a projector, and accessories.

In Boston Morgan will rent a six plate console editor for a fixed fee to complete editing. Additional editing facilities will be available at MIT. All mixing and sound production will be completed at MIT.

Expenses and Professional Services

Expenses for Blue Ridge and Unionville include travel and meals for crews. At Bromont accommodation as well was provided. Expenses to complete production may include travel to lab services in Western Massachusetts, travel to team members' homes, travel and accommodation of team members to record narration, and secretarial supplies and services not available from U.S.C.T.A.

40 hours of work at \$4 an hour for 9 weeks commencing Sept. 20 to assist in editing in Boston are provided. To date editing has been done by two assistant editors working 20 and 40 hours a week, respectively, for 4 weeks.

Producer-Director Morgan Wesson will receive a fee, half of which is due upon acceptance of a budget and production schedule. The remaining half is due upon acceptance of the completed film by U.S.C.T.A. If U.S.C.T.A. recovers the total cost of production then one third of any additional revenues will be paid to the producer. All rights for sale, distribution, and rental shall be retained by U.S.C.T.A. The producer has agreed to assist in negotiations with broadcasters and to advise and assist U.S.C.T.A. in producing a longer equestrian oriented film of riding at Bromont. (I do not anticipate this costing more than \$3,500--the minimum expense to reconfirm and print footage.)

Costs for a 54 minute film

Target completion: January 14, 1977

Materials and Production Services

raw stock: 25,600' EK 7247 Negative	\$ 2,750
process and workprint	3,250
CRI internegative \$.60/ft. (1,800)	1,080
titles, optical work (est.)	700
1 answer print \$.15/ft. plus shipping	295
1 release print \$.14/ft. plus shipping	267
2 optical sound tracks: A wind, B wind	440
sound stock, editing supplies (mag film, tape, leader)	510
conforming (R. Tibbitts, Westfield)	<u>350</u>
Subtotal	9,642

Equipment Rental

shooting equipment	800
sound transfer	100
editing machine, Florence, MA, 1 month	350
editing machine, Boston, remaining production time	<u>1,500</u>
Subtotal	12,392

Expenses and Professional Services

travel, hotel, phone, office supplies, postage, shooting expenses, filters, supplies	1,500
editors, Florence, MA	925
editors, Boston	1,440
fee, Morgan Wesson	<u>2,500</u>
Final Total	\$18,761

Note: U.S.C.T.A. may return from rentals and sales enough to offset the second half of the producer's fee, \$1,250.00, and a payment schedule for this would be acceptable. Consequently, the delivered cost in January to U.S.C.T.A. would be \$17,511.00.