

ON EDITING LONG FORGOTTEN HOME MOVIES

Second Thoughts

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Buried in a drawer in a bathroom were 3,000 feet of home movies plus a spring driven Keystone 8-mm movie camera along with countless color slides of our four children in their childhood years.

For more than 30 years these films rested in peace. Doubtless they still would be in their tomb but for the idea of these same children, now mostly middle age adults, who thought it would be fun to edit them and transcribe them to a video tape.

Son Jim from Memphis and Son Jack, who now lives in Lebanon, converged here Friday night along with 22-year-old Granddaughter Peri and her nine-year-old cousin Leigh, and, at times, various others of the family.

In the attic we uncovered the old Keystone movie projector which also had rested in peace for more than 30 years.

“The bulb won’t last through 3,000 feet of movies,” I warned the boys. “Furthermore, the old projector may not even crank up.”

So. From friend Vincent Simms we borrowed a back-up projector.

“I don’t know how long it will run or if it will run at all,” warned Vincent, adding, “I haven’t used it for 25 years.”

“If you need it in the next few days, I’ll return it,” I assured him.

He was of the opinion he wouldn’t need it during the next 30 years.

As it turned out, my old Keystone made it just fine through more than on-half mile of film except for reluctance in the rewind position.

The movies I shot during a decade of growing children were, well, somewhat uninspired. There were hundreds of feet of family walking toward the camera, of family dressed in their Sunday best and headed out the door to go to church, and of scenic views during various vacations.

I did employ a bit of trick photography, such as turning the camera upside down and shooting pictures of family walking, you guessed it, upside down. Needless to say, the Academy didn’t nominate me for a cinematography award.

The waterfall at Fall Creek Falls State Park was duly recorded on film. After cutting long lengths of waterfall footage from one reel, our sons had it to do over when we repeated a trip to the scenic park. On the third reel they gave up.

“At least there was water in this one,” said one son.

To say the least the scenic views were less than panoramic. The old Keystone camera had one fixed lens - - no zooms, no wide angles, no telephotos. Much of the footage was jerky, testimony to a poorly loaded camera. There were several views of my little finger extending over the lens, and there was some evidence I forgot to set the f-stop.

Nevertheless, we now have about 2,000 feet of film of a growing family, of hairstyles and hat styles of the 50s, and of a pretty young wife remarkably trim after four children. Perhaps it was the demands of the four that produced the trimness. And there were forgotten images of a young father with dark hair carefully plastered with Brylcreem.

“He looks a bit like a movie actor,” said one son as I beamed in the darkness. “You know, like the old black and white movie villain with his hair slicked back.

“He just needs a mustache to twirl,” added the son – the son who had just lost inheritance.

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