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Video Notes

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It's hardly that I think there is no place for fact journalism, but simply that I've lost interest in it as something for me to do. After working as a reporter for a few years, it began to strike me that what was interesting about the assignments--about the people or the events or the situations--could not be put into words without becoming something other than what a reporter was supposed to be. At the same time, it seemed to me that I understood the stories I covered not so much on the basis of the facts I gathered, but on observation of many subtle interactions outside the scope of formal news. And it also seemed clear that if anyone else could be at the event that I, as a reporter, could attend, he, too, would be able to read these same signs.

In thinking back to those days, it seems to me that the first time this sort of thing was really brought home to me was during a Daley press conference in City Hall. I'm not sure I remember the exact issue of the day--corruption in tax assessments of one kind or another--but I do remember the scene. Before the press conference began--i.e., before the television cameras were turned on--the Mayor and the reporters engaged in some of their usual banter. The reporters, I thought, almost stepped on each other in their eagerness to show their "in-ness" by being the ones to catch the Mayor's attention. Who would be singled out for a personal greeting? Who would exchange a joke or two with him? It was so chummy and exclusive--from the point of view of a lowly City News type anyway, from the point of view of a definite outsider. Then, when the press conference started for real, one of the reporters dared to ask a semi-tough question about the current scandal. Daley looked him over and told him to ask the question again--but only after he asked his paper's publisher about the newspaper's tax assessment--was he happy with the rate and with the way it was negotiated. It's too bad that I don't remember the exact words because they were very direct. All the other reporters laughed knowingly and the matter was dropped once Daley gave his version of the facts for the record.

Being at that press conference was a revelation to me about the workings of the press and the relations of the press with the Mayor. I told all my friends the story, but, of course, those details did not belong in the story I turned in

to City News. Now, I knew at the time that these small observations were not a big deal, but all the same it seemed to me that there should be some way of getting more of that kind of news across to people as a matter of course. An occasional analysis--lengthy and weighty or perhaps witty--of the press and the people it is supposed to cover--did not seem enough. There should be room in the definition of what was news to include those kinds of details on a regular basis and there should be techniques developed to bring a more expanded version of news to people. That feeling eventually brought me into video.

Not every story needs a video treatment. Many stories are fact stories pure and simple, but in many cases it seems important to know something more about the principals as people and about how they interact with each other outside the formal news event. I would think that you could understand more about the formal events if you had a chance to see the newsmaker and their subsidiaries in situations where spontaneous reactions were taking place. Insiders of various types--including reporters--have a chance to do this, but there should be techniques to bring these insights to others as well. Such insights can't be put into words, because the moment it becomes words, it becomes subjective and so untrustworthy and unfitting as journalism. People tried to do it with the "new journalism," but it takes an artist to do it right--and besides, who is to believe it if he does not want to. But visually it could be done--if you learn to become a journalist who goes after moments that reveal the situation in the natural process of its unfolding and learn to record those moments with minimal interference, or very direct interference, with the event.

In looking for examples of this kind of reporting, I think of the Republican Convention tape. Mind you, the tape had lots of faults, but overall I think it captured more of what the Convention was and meant than any other coverage except after-the-fact commentary/analysis in print--which, if you don't already agree with the point of view expressed, can easily be dismissed as not objective.

If we could have gotten into Nixon's staff meetings and so on, what a tape that would have been. As it was, we, like virtually everyone else, had access only to the news the officials wanted us to have. Most of the reporters--I'm essentially

talking about television reporters now--were pretty much satisfied with the situation. News conferences were called, press releases handed out, interviews arranged and the official business of the Convention was there to record. Very few thought there was anything else to cover.

To Mike Wallace: "What have you covered tonight?" "Well, you see, CBS 'quadrants' the floor and most of the action is in those states over there and in the celebrity box. And Dan Rather's got that." "If you could cover this event differently, how would you do it?" "I'd rather be at home watching it on television. Honest." "What do you think of the Young Voters for the President?" "I don't know. That's such a general question, isn't it?" "If you could, would you do more 'advocacy' reporting?" "Advocacy reporting? No, I don't believe in advocacy reporting. My job is to get the facts, maybe analyze a little and that's that."

Or, Douglas Kiker: "The story here is the story of the big state Republicans vs. the small state Republicans. But that's a story for later. What's happening here is that the Republicans are trying to show that the Democrats aren't the only ones for reform." (This was a reference to a minor fight that the Ripon Society tried to put up to change delegate selection rules for the next Convention.) Continuing: "There's not that much going on. I've only been on once tonight. Nobody else has been on more than that." (I'd have to go over the tape to get the wording just right, but the sense of the quotations is right.)

Even if some of the questions we put to the reporters were awkward and we didn't quite know what was going wrong with the regular coverage, the reporters' answers still betray how trapped they were by the profession's definition of what was good reporting and what was fitting material for news--and how unquestioning they were of that system. They totally missed the story of that Convention, which, in hindsight was one of the few events which at least hinted at the total control that the Nixon people wanted to achieve over all the independent elements of government. I certainly don't want to get into any analysis of the Nixon years, but it seems to me that the Republican Convention tape presented at least some indications of the kind of mentality at work at the Convention and the Party's acquiescence to it.

Some examples: The Young Voters for the President on a bus taking them to the Hall: "Does anyone tell you when to cheer and what to say?" No, no, not at all. Why, just this morning I noticed that one group on X street was chanting 'Four More Years,' while another group on the corner of X and X was yelling 'Nixon Now.' See? We all do what we want."

Or, an adult organizer talking to some YVP girls in preparation for some reception or another: "You pass out the cookies, Danish etc. You must remember that this is going to be FUN. You can tell by the decorations alone that this is going to be fun...they'll give us the fun we need."

Or Tricia at a reception: "I think the young people in the park (demonstrators) are for something negative, while the people here are for something positive. I think it takes so much more courage to stand up for something positive and I admire that."

Or, a delegate inside the Hall who arrived on a bus that was rushed by demonstrators: "They're animals. They were attacking everyone--women and children. We were in fear for our lives. Who knows that will happen when we have to leave here tonight."

Or, a young aide in the Hall at that same time: "I say 'Call out the National Guard and turn them loose.' It might be worse than Kent State, but it would be worth it." (I could go on like this, but the thing to do would be to go through the tape once more to look for the most telling pieces of tape that we got--looking at them in terms of what we now know about what was going on, about the ways the Nixon people incited the delegates, planted provocateurs and so on.

The Republican Convention tape was definitely not hard news and hard news about what was really happening behind the scenes would have been the most valuable kind of journalism at the Convention, but, as it was, the tape at least gave some insight into a complex and hidden event--at least tried to present some of the details that seemed revealing to us by recording them in such a way that the person viewing the tape had half a chance to judge for himself in the same intuitive way we could judge as direct spectators.

When I showed the tape to freinds who were reporters shortly after the Convention, the usual reaction was to criticize its lack of substance--what about this issue and that issue? But people who were not in the profession did not seem to care about knowing all the facts about the event. They were happy to get a "sense" of it.

Access is a key to this kind of video reporting. You have to be there as it is happending. You can't rely on finding out what happened once it's over via the usual channels of a press conference, an interview or a release. That seems a straight journalistic task--to decide what will be important and to figure out how to be there to see it in person. But if you want to record the event as well as observe it, the task becomes more difficult.

Print reporters have little trouble getting in almost anywhere. If you have cultivated your sources and made friends, have a good reputation and work for a powerful organization, you can usually work it out. It might not be for the record, but it's a backgrounder to keep the reporter up to date, to help him understand the situation. Seeing whatever goes on does not matter, taking notes does not matter--it's all manageable through such devices as "not for attribution" or a "high placed source noted last week" and so on. Once you want to record, however, the game changes.

I'm not sure if it is a matter of simple habit or because the television people actually prefer to go on in the standard ways--relying on stand-up piece summations, etc.--or because the people concerned realize the power of the image, but while doing the Washington tapes we had constant trouble in getting in to shoot anything but the standard formal news. When we would say, "But there are other reporters in there and they are taking notes, so why not let us in?", the answer would always be, "We can't let you in because television is too disruptive--what with all the lights and the equipment and the crews. We'll let you in for the toasts or for the end of the speech." Even when we showed the equipment to the person in charge of the press and explained that we needed no lights and, if necessary, a single person could do the shooting and that person would just shoot what was going on, instead of taking people aside for interviews, the answer was still no.

At the White House, after three weeks of explaining that we needed to shoot natural occurrences for our kind of reporting and demonstrating the equipment, Mrs. Ford's press secretary said she would arrange for the special access we would need. (Now, mind you, it wasn't access to special stories that would scoop the regular reporters--something the press secretary initially feared. She had her favorites to protect and the balance to maintain among the press corps.) When the day came, her assistant met us at the gate to take us in. Our special access was: a five minute interview with the man who plans dinner menus and seating at dinners, two minutes in the room where tables were being set for a state dinner that night, a walk through the front lobby and two minutes in the side hall where the band which was to entertain that night was rehearsing.

Now, I suppose that for a production of the standard type, this would have been good material for cut-aways--to be tied together with narration and interspersed with interviews. For us, it was useless because we were trying to capture natural interaction that would reveal something about the day-to-day functioning of the White House. To find and shoot something on this order in two minutes would have needed God's intervention--and God was definitely not smiling on us in D.C. When we tried to explain that we couldn't just point the camera and shoot a general scene, the PR people were quite offended: "After all we've done for you...."

Given the kind of access problems we had at the White House, we had a hard time getting worthwhile tape. There were bits and pieces, however, that indicated what situations might be rich. Some examples: We quickly saw that all the people who were "servants" at the White House were black, to catch them at their work was almost to look into the past at a southern plantation. In one short piece of tape that we got, an old black man--in very formal "servant's dress"--carefully and slowly placed gold bound programs on the seats arranged for a concert later that night in one of the side halls at the White House. In another piece of tape, an equally dignified old black man served drinks to a group of dignitaries in a basement reception room. When we talked to him, it turned out that he was a retired railroad worker who could not live on his pension. His wife had been a maid to Mamie Eisenhower and now he served at the White House too. It would have been interesting to shoot the arrival of these people at the gate at the start of their shift and at the end of the day to go home with some of them. Wouldn't the old man's observations

about his problems in his life--economic and social--been news in the same way as President Ford's signing of some declaration or another. And, isn't the fact that all the non-professionals who worked at the White House are black and all the professionals white, be news to people to concerned with questions of race and shouldn't those facts show up as part of the regular news of the White House as long as that situation exists.

Some other pieces of tape: Representatives of the Italian press--publishers and editors, important people--ushered into a basement reception room to stand around with drinks while toasts between President Leoni and President Ford were pumped into the room via some sort of intercom.

Or: the ladies of the press attending all the various night time functions at the White House--dressed to the teeth--trying to hide their press badges so as better to mingle with the guests.

Or: the pomp surrounding any appearance by the President--the Marine band tuning up, the trumpets getting ready--the guards getting pushy with the press.

Or: the press secretary and social secretary buzzing into each other's ear, hoping that all would go off well with some social function or another that night--speaking with accents so classy that they could barely be understood.

To say all this in words, means little, but being there I kept wondering who do these people think they are? Why do they think they are so important? It's just a job. We noticed that all the professionals who worked at the White House kept talking about the grandeur of the White House and all tried to show how close they were with the President or Mrs. Ford.

We kept wondering again and again why there was such resistance to our taping the kinds of things we were interested in. Certainly, there were a number of sensible reasons, but overall, it just seemed to reflect a pride and a sense of grandeur that did not seem fitting. An old press photographer--after being told by some aide or another to stay in his designated place, and not to move until he was told that the two minutes allowed for picture taking were about to start--told us disgustingly that it didn't used to be this way. "When I was here in

Truman's day, Harry would come over himself and make sure we had a drink and were comfortable. He knew we had a job to do and showed us a little respect." It's not a matter of security. You are checked and double-checked before you even get into the gate.

Naturally, the White House can't have people roaming through the place with cameras at will and naturally the story might have been different if we had worked for some powerful organization, but still, I think the matter is very complex--involving a determination not to allow news coverage that is unpredictable and above all, not to allow news coverage that could speak for itself.

This kind of illusionary access to people and events seemed to satisfy most of the press. It just seems that the way it works now is easier for everyone concerned. It's interesting that the most bitter access battles in D.C. were with the press itself. For example, the people shooting the press tape thought that the press briefings at the White House press room would be revealing of the ways news is disseminated. But the press briefings can't be recorded and the press was adamant on this point, even when the White House PR said it would be okay with them (when it came down to it, though, the PR was against it as much as the press.) Part of the reason for this, it seemed to me, was the print reporter's scorn for television, but another reason was a kind of arrogance and clubbyness.

In shooting the social tape, we had quite a confrontation with the ladies of the press. We wanted to shoot the press corps on the plane taking Mrs. Ford to Chicago for a speech at the "You've come a long way, baby" banquet for Republican women office holders in Illinois. We wanted to capture an idea of what it was like to follow around the First Lady (as everyone refers to her) on these kinds of political tours. The press corps would be aware of the shooting--afterall, you can see the cameras--and we would hardly be eavesdropping on them without their knowledge--although that is what the print press does as a matter of good reporting, takes pride in it, in fact. The difference was that we were including the press as part of our story.

The reaction to us was intensely negative and finally we dropped the idea of shooting the situation naturally and asked whether anyone of the reporters would talk to us on tape about their feelings about press coverage of the press itself--was it valuable for the public to know how the press works, what kind of people they were, what they thought of their work. Everyone refused to be interviewed, but in the conversation that followed, the women agreed that the press should not be covered--except in analytic pieces in appropriate journals--because coverage of the press would destroy their credibility with the public. In other words, if the public knew that the press had opinions about the events or people they covered, the public would not be able to trust the objectivity of their reports. But the press does have opinions, we said. But these opinions never show up in our work, they said.

The women went on to say that they would lose their jobs if their editors found out they had given interviews without special permission. They also said that they could not trust us in editing what they said. It was as if they didn't trust the process of journalism--once applied to them. (In retrospect, I keep thinking about something that happened during the Republican Convention: a well-known New York journalist was standing in the sidelines watching a group of Republican delegate wives arrive at the hotel for some sort of reception. The wives were decked out in hick high fashion. The reporter found it hilarious and talked about the kind of story she could write about these boobs. It would have been a good piece of tape.)

At any rate, I wish I had turned on the equipment without shooting just so that I could record the sound of that argument--that lasted from Chicago all the way to D.C. I could have written a print story that would have been fairly interesting, but I could never have described in any trustworthy way the viciousness and tightness of that small circle of reporters. I know some of that paranoia might have come from the general atmosphere at the White House for the last several years, still, there was something in the situation that reminded me of bureaucrats than reporters.

Our attempt to include the press as news was a complex matter overall. A lot of the problems had to do with the confusion about who we were in terms of the work we were doing. In the White House press room there is a clear division between the reporters and the techies. They sit on opposite ends of the room and socialize only with each other. You had to choose your side, it seemed to me, and when we didn't--because all of us shoot as well as talk and plan or at least we regularly exchanged roles--there were misunderstandings about where we belonged. The tech people thought we were snooty not to take up with them exclusively and the reporters thought we were unworthy techies.

There was also confusion because we did not have to rely on the favor of the experienced hands to do our work. Nobody had to clue us in on the daily workings of the press room--when releases would be handed down, who was the person to talk to about advance notice of a press statement from some official and so on--because we were not after the same kind of news that the regulars had to depend on. And we could not be understood as a documentary crew either, because we were after some sort of redefinition of what regular news at the White House ought to be (in our terms), rather than after material to illustrate some particular idea about the White House, etc. At it's best (and we certainly were often not at our best in D.C.), we were trying to use tape to investigate what was going on in the areas we had chosen to examine, as opposed to using tape to record a pre-conceived thesis.

Our personalities and looks had something to do with the resistance to our coverage, to be sure--Hudson's red and black sequined sneakers raised an eyebrow or two. And since we didn't know press etiquette, and usually didn't care to, we offended people--sometimes knowingly, sometimes unwittingly. Ominously, the union question kept coming up. But we were not the only ones to have difficulties with access. The CBS mini-cam D.C. crew, it turned out, had been asking for access to shoot the press briefings for some time and had been refused. Their point was that the rules about where you could shoot were set up in the days when most equipment was indeed cumbersome and disruptive. The mini-cam was neither (relatively speaking) and the crew wanted the rules changed. The request to shoot the press briefings, they said, was only a warm-up to requests to shoot other White House functions now barred to television cameras, but not barred to print reporters. I'm not sure how it all turned out, but the crew was determined to shoot and see what happens.

It's clear that television will soon be demanding greater access to events as the equipment is increasingly miniaturized. But who knows--the people we met who wanted greater access were not reporters. They were the techies. This particular crew had been the one to develop the mini-cam for CBS in the first place and they were almost passionate in their interest in its applications. One of the two--the one most responsible for the technical development of the camera--was planning a project that would "finally show what tape can do--show the quality of tape and put film to shame." What was in the tape was important to the guy only in that it could illustrate what the mini-cam can do. Still, we did not come across any reporters who were interested in how equipment can change reporting--who had any ideas for the mini-cam, for instance, past the shooting of news conferences or accidents or stand-ups on the scene. You gotta know your tools, I guess.

The people shooting the Congress tape had the greatest problems with access. There were very few places, indeed, that were open to television cameras. Again, the rationale was that TV disrupted the proceedings and cameras were allowed only in designated interview areas and in the offices of senators or representatives--with their permission, of course, and at times when no official business was going on.

The people who were working on that tape had arranged for special permission to shoot a few minutes of the social chit-chat taking place before a meeting of the House leadership planning to discuss the CIA involvement in the middle-east. The permission had been arranged through a particular senator whose informal activities were being covered in an attempt to come up with a personal portrait. The crew was supposed to leave as soon as the discussion began. But it turned out that the discussion started unexpectedly because one of the group members was impassioned on the issue and started to talk before the coffee cups and rolls were put away. The discussion was so heated so quickly and the equipment so small and the crew so inobtrusive that the leadership totally forgot about them and the entire meeting was recorded. The people shooting the meeting said afterwards that they expected to be tossed out at any minute, but kept shooting anyway and somehow the group never "referenced" them as television news and never noticed their presence--even at the end. (What caused a chuckle or two among us was the fact that when the doors were opened at the end of the meeting to let in the reporters for their briefing, the first

thing they saw was our camera pointed at them--when they knew no cameras had ever been allowed at such a meeting. And an even more personal note: the person shooting was Skip; the first person in the room was Roger Mudd. Skip was the one who tried in vain to get Roger Mudd to talk to him at the Republican and Democratic Conventions. Mudd was truly unpleasant, seemingly for no reason except a dislike for our group. He refused to even say why he would not talk to Skip and Nancy and is shown on the tape that way. For some reason, it is a favorite piece of tape of a lot of people.)

In any case, it would seem to me that the rules for what can be recorded and what can't be, will have to be revised soon--especially in Congress which is supposed to be the most open to public scrutiny and so on. There is bound to be a major legal battle over this right. To some degree the fight has officially begun in that the Administrative Law Conference, a governmental body which sets certain kinds of policy for administrative agencies in the government, recently passed a rule allowing recording of the proceedings of such agencies as the Atomic Energy Commission. The person who shepherded the rule through the Conference was Bob Bennett of Chicago. It is interesting to hear him describe how vigorously the change in the rule was opposed by the government and by the bar and how narrowly his position won out. (Again, it seems to me that at the Conference, just as at the White House and in Congress, there is a lot of ego at stake here.) At this point, the change in the rules seems to be a technical victory, but still it can be seen as an important precedent in the battle to come.

So, once you get in, what do you choose to shoot and how do you go about it? The general inobtrusiveness of the equipment is half the battle, but---as can be seen from what's going on at WTTW's PublicNewsCenter, for example---the equipment alone will not guarantee "live" tape, the kind that speaks for itself.

1) First of all, you don't shoot what they want you to shoot. Avoid the situations set up for the press and the people who are designated as "important" or as spokesmen. There's an old piece of tape famous in the video world for bringing this point home. In it Mayor Alioto of San Francisco is shown getting ready for an interview by some local half-inch people. The crew, naturally, shot the whole scene, starting when they walked into the Mayor's office instead of waiting to begin shooting at the "proper" time. On the tape you can see the moment when the Mayor transformed himself from a regular guy into an "official" who was ready to be important.

2) Next, you shoot a lot. Why not, with tape so cheap and battery power available. The process is a little like taking notes about everything that strikes you as important or interesting, then reviewing the notes---in this case, taped notes---afterward to figure out what happened or to figure out what to make of what happened. This kind of process has been the sole prerogative of the print reporter until now because film is very expensive and other kinds of recording equipment very cumbersome---and because only the technical staff could shoot and they were supposed not to think so much as to wait to be told what to do by a director or a reporter. It's as if Norman Mailer, say, had to explain to an assistant what to observe and how to set it down. It's also good to shoot a lot because people forget that you're there and because they lose track of what you're doing---can't figure out what you're after---and so give up trying to out-guess you to keep control of the situation.

3) Shoot by yourself if possible, or at least with no more than one other person (usually to switch off on doing sound). In this way you don't impose your own scene onto the scene you're trying to capture. Directors and assistants and elaborate crews aren't necessary with this kind of equipment---and with this kind of attitude. You're all those people yourself---thinking for yourself and doing for yourself. After all, what you're trying to do is record your own intuitions about the situation, not record a blow-by-blow account of the event or a series of illustrations for some pre-conceived notion of what it means---which is to be tied together and explained by a narrator or whatever later. A one-person "crew" often gets the best tape. If you're shooting a situation, you're obviously the least obtrusive that way and if you're talking to people in the situation, you're the most direct that way. People look at you through the camera, talk straight with you---and so look straight at the viewer and talk straight to him.

4) Shoot human interactions, trying to find times when the situation is fluid and changing. Much of television news is essentially a moving "still" photography, shots that have to be put into context verbally or that are meant to stand for a symbolic statement about the event---you know the kind: a broken doll on the pavement on the scene of an accident.

5) Shoot the scene as it unfolds naturally, but know how to keep it moving and developing with questions or comments as necessary. Also, know how to step back and let the event take over again when you've had your effect. In doing this, ask the "human" question, not the "professional" question. In practice, this often means that you ask the obvious, not the good, question and that you are as likely to make a comment as to ask a question. The reporter is supposed, in theory, to ask the question that the common man would ask if he could---that's what Mr. Dornfeld used to say, anyway. But the reporter has been on the scene so often that he no longer is interested in repeating the same questions over and over again. For example, I remember a little public relations event the WH put on at Halloween. A group of little kids---all black---had been shipped in to "trick-or-treat" Mrs. Ford for UNICEF. It came off in reality as a fairly condescending ploy and the reporters there were very cynical about the whole affair, making little jokes, moaning about having to cover it and so on. They treated the story straight, however, asking all the right questions---names, ages, schools, how much UNICEF collects each year etc. Their professionalism took over their common sense. They knew better, but their readers didn't. Skip, who was shooting, was outraged and began to ask the press why they covered these kinds of events and what they thought about the way Mrs. Ford was used and the way the kids were used. The press people were outraged at the disruption in their routine and at the stupidity of the questioning. (Too bad the only example of this kind of process that comes to me at the moment involves UNICEF---a good cause, one that you have to be for even if the process is a cynical one.)

6) To keep the common sense and human questions in mind, you have to be clear about your role and you have to be at ease with yourself and your video image. If it's important to you to be someone special in the scene, you won't be effective. And if you try to present some sort of front, it shows on tape. The result is awkward and unreal and people respond similarly. As an aside, I found that the more I forgot what I had learned as a professional reporter, the better I became as a video reporter. I had to learn how not to ask the significant question, the kind that would impress my reporter friends with my skills. Video turned out to be something like therapy for me. The more I saw of myself on tape, the more I was able to spot my fears and resulting pretenses---and the more I was able to drop those pretenses of competence and control, the better my video became. A simple example of this is the person who consistently t

tries to move into a flattering light or strike an important pose.

7) It's also important to express your own presence in the scene in the most direct way possible. This is a process that takes a strong personality with a developed sense of the theater. This, to say the least, is a difficult skill and the one that's most open to charges of self-indulgence. But when it works, it results in the best kind of video. One of my favorite pieces of this kind of tape is in the Republican Convention tape--the segment in which Skip, weary of the Convention and puzzled by all the security--begins to play his harmonica on the floor. "It's the Republican Convention...drag." The security man comes up to him, checks his credentials, almost smiles, and Skip, once finished with the phrase, immediately becomes the reporter again: "How did you like my music?" "I'm not a music critic." Another example is in the Guru tape--the point in which the shooter begins to argue with the Jesus freak: "But lady, all I'm saying is that you can't shout at people that way and expect to be understood, get your point across." The evangelist answers, "Yes, you do have to shout. These people are trained to trip into their meditation. Do you think if I didn't believe that they could be helped that I'd be here making a fool of myself?" (I can't recall the exact quote at the moment---it's better than that.) Detachment, the standard professional stance, doesn't work in this kind of reporting.

8) This kind of shooting seems to work best as a group effort. There's so much to do that one person can't be in control. And once all that tape is shot, no one person could, or would want to, view it all and edit it all. The way it seems to work best is if the entire group discusses how to approach the situation, then breaks up into areas of particular interest. Those smaller groups are then responsible for planning and shooting tape in that area. At the end of each day, as much as energy and scheduling permits, people outside the smaller group view each other's tape and help identify which segments seem to stand out as "live." Those live segments are then shown to as many of the whole group as possible in order to further gauge their strength. The segments that people agree are strong are then considered for the final edit. In a way, the tape suggests its own form because the strong segments are then woven together in a sort of collage, edited segment to segment, as opposed to juxtaposition for the sake of making a point. Because the volume of tape that is usually shot, the final edit is done in segments, usually---or ideally---by the people who shot the tape. Those segments are then woven together by a smaller editing crew.

To give an indication of the amount of tape that you shoot when you're trying to capture natural moments: To make an hour-long tape on the Republican Convention, over 120 hours was shot

(although a great deal of the reason for this was the fact that people shot a lot of bad tape).

The people who wound up doing this kind of video journalism came to it naturally. When the equipment became available, it was of no interest to the professionals, who called it "Mickey Mouse" and predicted that no one would be able to use it for anything but home movies. But the equipment was of great interest to artists and to people involved in a variety of social organizing. These people had never worked in journalism before, had never worked on any structured job, for that fact. The result was that they had no stake in applying the rules of the profession to video. They didn't even know the rules, much less care about them.

This gets hard to talk about, so I'll revert to personalizing the issue. One of the reasons I felt I could no longer work in the profession was because I felt I was mistreated as a woman. Another was because I felt that I could not increase my skills--- I couldn't learn anything new, I could only rise in the job I had. If I tried to learn how to edit myself, the union objected etc. When I began to get into video, I found that everyone was determined to start on the same level and that everyone learn to do everything---as opposed to compartmentalizing skills. Roles would be deliberately switched and the "best" person would not necessarily be the one consistently favored. One person would shoot for a while, then switch to sound---until everyone had at least the chance to learn it all. At the beginning, at least, it was thought that it was more important that everyone learn than that one person could be relied upon to bring back consistently good tape. It was also felt to be vital that everyone examine and re-examine their own relationship with the "subject"--- in order that no one began to feel that their special position as media people made them "superior" to others. It was also felt that to be a decent person was more important than to bring back good tape. You were free to decide not to shoot a situation if to shoot it would have been manipulative or exploitative---even if the tape promised to be good. As it was, it was the insistence on these kinds of considerations that resulted in the best tape and the people who were the hardest on themselves in these terms became the best tapemakers.