

Part Two

LOCK AND LOAD

"Gathering The News Story"

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Gathering The News Story

Good reporting and photography tells a story. The first order of business is making sure you know how to deal with the technical aspects of the job. After all, if you're not sure how to turn the camera on, you certainly won't come back with a story. Once you understand the equipment it is then the task of the photographer to capture the images and sounds that make up the story.

The reporter/photographer team should start basic--get the essentials first. Getting the action is the priority. The firemen putting the fire out is the story. Exteriors and static shots can be shot later.

We are paid to bring back gripping pictures. TV is a picture show. Photography is the cornerstone of the medium. The pictures must support what the reporter is talking about.

Ask yourself as you shoot, "Are the pictures supporting the story? Why am I at this location? Can I get better pictures somewhere else? Are there people here that could give good "sound bites" (interviews)?"

News is a wild business. It is exciting and fun. However, field photography and reporting is hard work. The deck and camera are heavy. Few people start their career by shooting with light weight Betacams. Add a tripod and battery belt and you may weigh in over eighty pounds heavier. News is not all glamour.

A lot of the events you will cover are not exciting. Many

types of meetings are excruciatingly boring--for hours. Here is the key--get involved with the story. Pay attention to details, and listen for prospective story ideas. Know or guess what you are looking for. If you know the background, even the dullest meetings can prove to be learning experiences.

A good photojournalist must be an eager student; not only of the craft but also the subject. If you have no idea why you are there you will never shoot the right material to support the story.

We shoot through a looking glass. Only the lens separates us from the action. Objectivity is our watchword. Make the story grab you. Bring it up close and personal. Good TV makes an impression on people. A well covered story can make the difference in the community.

I have covered many stories concerning people who had big problems. Some were burned out of their homes, others needed major surgery. The community saw the story and sent a flood of help to these people. The media makes a difference.

Any art form can be broken down into its basic elements. This is the purpose of the section. If you have a checklist of images you need to capture you will have a much better chance of getting back to the station with what you need.

Sweet Sixteen

The Prime Directives of News Gathering

What to shoot and how to act in the field are part of the news gathering directives. Keep these directives in mind and cover the story properly. These sixteen directives keep you on the right news track. If you go against these rules of action, you will run into problems. Follow the directives and be a winning photographer/reporter.

1. Tell the story.

This is so obvious, yet keep the fact in mind. What are you trying to show? Where are you going with the story? The directives will keep you going in the right direction.

Before you shoot a single frame of video, know where the package is headed. What is the point of the story? The video must reinforce the story line. Be alert to what is going on around you. This takes listening skills to do well.

I keep my ears open for ambulance sirens, screams, gun shots. I may shoot one interview and listen in on another conversation at the same time. It is amazing what can be overheard if you are in the right place at the right time.

When shooting, consciously think, "I will provide a beginning, middle and an end to this piece." A sign of successful story telling is if you can follow the story with the sound turned off. Do you show as well as tell what is going on in the story? The good reporter writes to the video. If you have something specific you want to say you had better make sure you have the pictures to back up the words.

A mismatch of the pictures and the voice over is called "wallpaper video." The video covers the sound, but has no relation to what is being talked about. It is a sign of poor editing. It also is bad story telling. The anchor may say "tonight on the South Side fires are raging out of control. These houses are totally engulfed by flames. . ." The pictures, however, show only fire trucks, no actual houses on fire. The voice over does not follow what you are seeing.

It is pointless to shoot something you know will not make any difference to the story. It is just a waste of tape. Be aware that images carry the bulk of the emotional content of the story. Close ups and unusual angles can make the story.

2. Shoot the action first.

This directive comes from experience with news scenes but is also a matter of common sense. What is going on? Where is the movement? I am amazed at photographers that cover crime scenes or fires and shoot primarily wide shots. Get close and shoot the action. The action will not be there for long. It is impossible to re-enact a burning house.

Always anticipate where the action will be and where it is going. When are the police planning to bring the criminal out? Where will the "walk down" happen? If you are not sure, ask the police or medics on the scene. Talk with people who saw what happened, or who have been in similar situations. Get the best spot. Be pushy, and get there early. Always show the viewer what they want to see.

An aggressive nature is very valuable in the news business. If you are easily intimidated you will never get the best pictures. The closer you are to the action the better the natural sound will be, and the more the tight shot will reveal.

Stand next to the police. Be pushy, but always follow what the police tell you to do.

3. Shoot steady.

Develop a shooter's stance: feet apart, knees bent. There are four pressure points the photographer should be aware of when they shoot. One hand grips the lens handle and squeezes, the other supports the lens. Your face wedges against the camera, one eye presses firmly against the viewfinder.

Plan your moves to follow the action. If you know the police car is moving across you to the right, swing your body so you end up in the direction they are going.

Use available objects to help you shoot steady video. Put the camera on the ground or on the deck. Lean up against a tree. Put the camera on a table. Best of all: use a tripod.

If you are worried about shaky shots the best advice is to stay wide. The more the camera is zoomed in the more noticeable every tiny shake will be. Get close to the object and zoom the camera all the way out. This will help steady the shot.

4. Cover the Essentials.

Make sure you have what you need to make the story work.

You always need wide establishing shots. Vary your framing to make the B-roll (the cover video for the audio) interesting. Do not worry about getting fancy until you have the basics. Do you have the interviews you need? Are there people who should be contacted in order to cover both sides of the story? Do you have the video to support the voice overs? Are the main portions of the story covered? Have you shot a variety of focal lengths? In other words, do you have close ups, medium shots and wide shots?

Most packages will need at least two or three sound bites (each will probably be around fifteen seconds long) a stand up (where the reporter goes on camera) and video to cover the voice overs. Are each of these elements covered?

5. Depend on static shots.

A static shot does not move. A series of static shots should be the bread and butter of the package. Let the editing process drive the piece forward. Vary your focal length to provide variety.

Make sure there are plenty of steady shots to choose from. Try different versions of the same object. An unusual angle can be very interesting visually. If the shots are static the editor can decide how long the shot should be in the package. If the shots are moving, it forces the editor to wait until the action stops to take the edit.

6. Move with a purpose.

If you do have camera movement, which you should, it must

always be for a reason. The camera should not be moved without a purpose. Movement implies a relationship. You are moving from one object to another. How are they related? If they are not related do not move from one to the other.

The same directive applies to stand ups. The reporter should not move unless there is a reason the action. A walking stand up is a good idea, if there is a purpose to it.

When tilting (moving the camera up or down) or panning (moving the camera from side to side), make sure what you move towards makes sense. Do not move the camera just to be moving. Movement infers a relationship.

7. Shoot from new perspectives.

Take the camera where the viewer's eye normally does not go. Memorize the "Seven ~~Dumbly~~ Shots" (later in this section of the Field Guide) and use them whenever you can. If you give the viewer a new perspective on the scene, they will be more interested in the story.

Again, a new perspective is where the viewer's eye normally does not go. This might be ground level, above eye level, next to a wall, from wherever you normally would not see the object.

New perspectives keep the cover video fresh and interesting. If every shot is done from normal eye level, shot off the shoulder, the video will quickly become mundane. The creative angle can make even the most boring shoot more interesting. Be creative. Try new shots and angles every day.

8. Get close.

Television is a close up medium. Getting close allows the shooter to get better natural sound. The closer you get, the wider you can shoot and still show close up action. If you get close physically and stay wide (zoomed out), the video will be much steadier.

Keep an attitude in your mind that the closer you are to the action the better. I covered a furniture store fire that involved over forty firemen. I was extremely close to the action. I got shots of these men's sweaty faces, natural sound such as, "It's hell in there, it's killing us." It is impossible to cover such dramatic material from the other side of the street.

There is another side to this directive. Don't be stupid. I've been caught up in stories too many times. I covered one open area fire. I was getting terrific shots, firemen chopping limbs, busting through underbrush. I kept close and continued to follow the action. I heard a cracking sound behind me, a tree had just fallen. I turned to shoot the blazing timber. Incredible video. I turned back around and my firemen was gone. I looked around and I am surrounded by fire, smoke so thick I can barely see. I heard a grinding sound to my right. I started heading towards it. A tractor broke through and I got out. Barely.

There are a lot of chemical companies in my area. Every once in a while they have spills. One company had a leak of

that is used several times in order to fill up the voice over, you did not shoot enough material.

10. Shoot in sequence.

As much as possible, shoot the story as if you were editing the piece in the camera. This includes shooting cut aways after sound bites. This saves a lot of time in the editing bay.

This directive is especially true when shooting spot news. Always shoot the action first, yet capture the action in chronological order. In order to edit the piece you will need cutaways (where you cut away from the action to show something else) of bystanders' faces. Shoot those people in the order you would edit the piece. The ability to shoot in sequence greatly enhances the editor's time in the edit bay.

11. Hold your shots.

This is so essential. It is so easy, yet so difficult to do when the pressure is on and the excitement is in the air. Time seems to compress in your head. It feels like an eternity, yet only three seconds have passed.

Count every time you roll tape. Learn to get at least eight seconds of steady video every time you shoot. If your shots are under four seconds, they are probably unuseable. Think of it this way. Most shots are around four or five seconds long in the finished product. It takes at least two seconds for the editing machine to properly lock on to the tape. This might be even longer (up to five or ten seconds) if the deck

was turned off. Therefore, if the shots are not held around eight seconds the video is extremely difficult to edit.

In the rush of the story, time seems to move more rapidly. You must discipline yourself to hold your shots. Not holding your shots long enough will get you in more trouble with editors and reporters than just about anything. .

12. Keep the camera moves short.

All the panning, tilting or zooming should be kept within four seconds. Lengthy camera moves are usually not used except under special circumstances. This again comes down to editing problems. If the camera is still moving after four seconds the shot is not editable. You should never cut from one scene to another when the camera is still moving.

13. Watch framing and composition.

Be careful to avoid hard profile shots. Show both eyes. Double check your head room (how much room is above the subject's head) and nose room (how much space is in front of the subject's nose).

Composition is an art. The framing of objects in a scene determines the relationship the audience gathers from the visual information. If a sign saying "road work" is placed in the shot with a subdivision, the thought is that there is work going on in that area. The placing of objects together in one shot implies that they have something to do with one another. Make sure this is the case.

Generally, the more important objects should take up the

foreground of the picture. This area is usually what the eye is drawn to first. Be aware that empty space is waste. Give the audience something to look at. Don't make them wonder what the point of the shot is. The Field Guide will cover composition in more detail in the next chapter.

14. Do not swap axis lines.

Establish a direction for shooting a scene and stick to it. If a car smashed into a telephone pole, and the car is on the left side of the screen with the pole on the right, keep the car on that side of the screen. The vehicle should face the same direction for the rest of the B-Roll.

An axis line divides the scene into half. Once you cross the line of the axis the object will suddenly be on the other side of the screen and face the opposite direction. Imagine, if you will, two people in the middle of a room facing each other. Mr. Jones is on the left, Mrs. Smith on the right. If you go to the opposite side of the room, Mr. Jones will appear to be on the right and Mrs. Smith on the left. They will also seem to be facing different direction. Spend some time thinking about this fact of contextual relationship. Objects change perspective depending on how they are shot.

If the subject is looking left towards the reporter during the interview, the reporter should be looking right on the two shot. A two shot shows the reporter and the subject looking and talking with each other. If the axis line is swapped, the reporter will be looking in the same direction as the subject.

The reporter will therefore appear to be looking away from the subject.

In action sequences, the movement should continue along the same direction. If a man is walking down the street, going towards the left side of the screen, do not have him walking towards screen right in the next shot. It does not make visual sense.

15. Monitor the product.

The real world takes nothing for granted. Do not assume that the camera is white balanced properly or that the audio sounds fine. Check, and recheck what you are doing.

There have been times when I was sure I had my shotgun microphone on. I would be rolling video and getting a great interview. Whenever I start getting something really good I start double checking my settings. Sure enough my microphone was turned off. I caught my mistake early and saved the shoot.

Spend time checking how your material is edited and ends up on the air. Is it something you would be proud to put your name on? Did they have everything they needed to make the package work? Did the sound come across clear, or was it distorted or too ambient (more room noise than voice)?

The edited piece should have the best of what was shot. This is not always the case. Confer with the editor. Tell them you care about what material is put on the air. Mention to them that you would have preferred to have used this certain

shot. The editor may be in a time crunch when they put the package together. At that point they will use whatever comes up first on the tape that works. This should tell you something, make sure everything you put on the field tape is worthy of going on the air. If you shoot a lot of junk, some of it will probably end up in the show.

Always double check the final product. See whether the audio was good, the white balance correct and the lighting set up correctly. Learn from your mistakes and successes. If something worked particularly well, such a certain way you used lighting in the shot, use it again. Try different methods of manual irisng the F Stop. See which shot looked the best. Be aware of the final product. Strive to improve your art every day.

16. Always do your best.

Only you know if you have done your best. We are capable of much more than others may think. Shooting great news stories involves hustle and guts. You have to be willing to go the extra mile to make sure everything looks and sounds right, every time. Leave the station with the attitude that, "Today I will produce my best work ever."

Good shooters are willing to do whatever is needed to get the shot. Be exceptional, people will notice and your work will always show improvement.

There seems to be a pervasive spirit of mediocrity in our business today. I've heard the phrase, "it filled the news

hole" hundreds of times. The story might not have been great, but it at least filled time in the newscast. What a sad thought. Pride yourself on your journalistic and photographic skills.

Be proud of your work and others will be proud to work with you. If you have this attitude the best reporters will ask to work with you. When it absolutely has to be done right the first time, without fail, they call on me. Every station has that type of individual. They are willing to do whatever it takes to get that shot or sound bite that will make the story. I've climbed to the top of buildings to get the rooftop shot of a major fire that destroyed a homeless shelter. I've slogged through swamps and been drained of what seemed like gallons of blood by merciless mosquitos to cover plane crashes. Do what it takes. Be a winner and always do your best. It will make a difference in your work and at your station.

Basic Training

Photography In The News Setting

Working news means working in the field. Environments change yet the type of images it takes to create a news story remains the same. In this chapter we will explore the nuts and bolts of what it takes to make a news story work visually.

In order to score a bullseye a marksman must have something to aim at. Every photographer should have a series of specific visual targets in mind. These targets tell the story. How well you frame up the pictures indicates whether or not you score a B-roll bullseye.

Before we go any further, you should have a clear picture in your mind as to the difference between A-Roll and B-Roll. A-Roll is any picture that includes a sound bite. The A-Roll in the story would be all the interviews and the stand up by the reporter. The A-Roll would also include the audio track or narration that the reporter lays down for their package.

The B-Roll is the video that visually shows what the audio describes. The cover video drives the piece forward. TV is a visual medium. This is the reason that news photography is so critical in this business. People watch pictures. The stronger the B-Roll, the better the piece. The pictures must tell the story.

You may have heard the term A-B-Roll editing. A-B-Roll editing has three machines tied together electronically. The editor can dissolve from one video source to another while the combined image is recorded on a third record deck. Most news

editing is "cuts only." This type of editing does not dissolve from one image to another. Cuts only editing takes one image and covers up the other completely. It refers to the newspaper term "cut and paste." The artist cuts one piece out and pastes it over another. The first image is completely covered up by the second.

Cuts only editing uses only two machines: a record and a player deck. The editor scans through the field tape on the player deck, finds the image they want and records that image on the master or record tape. The master tape then has a series of images that combined with narration tells the news story.

Consider the typical news show in a medium sized market. Out of ten stories, three would be thirty second Voice Overs (VO), three would be Voice Over Sound On Tapes (VOSOT), and four would be Packages. The VO material would be composed totally of B-Roll. The VO would be voiced over by the anchor on the set. This is true for both the VO and the VOSOT. The VOSOT would be half B-Roll and half interview, and the Package would also be around half B-Roll and half interview or stand up. B-Roll, therefore, usually accounts for around two thirds of the show. If the B-Roll is not shot properly the broadcast weakens. The stronger the supporting video the better the story will strike the public.

A common tendency for new people in this business is to shoot video with no real goal in mind. They swing the camera

around, rolling tape continuously, presenting a hodgepodge of images that are nearly impossible to edit. The beginner knows how to run the camera, but they do not know how to tell the story. If it was a perfect world, every news person would spend at least six months doing nothing but editing. After putting material together for that length of time they would realize the importance of shooting a series of images that tell the story.

The news photographer must provide a beginning to the piece. This is usually a wide or establishing shot which shows the audience where the story is taking place. The establishing shot sets the relationship between objects and people in the story. The wide shot also gives an overview of how many people there are, how bad the wreck is, and keeps the story in context visually.

The wide shot is an absolutely critical part of the B-Roll. The camera may not lie, it can however be extremely misleading. I have covered many protests. One was a group of students protesting apartheid. There were about twenty people present. If my wide shot was totally filled with people, would the public know how many protesters were present? No. In the public's mind there may have been several hundred angry students. It appears that way because all that they see are people. The wide shot keeps the story in perspective visually.

The middle of the story contains the bulk of the action.

This would include the interviews and the cover video of what happened. The end of the story shows the conclusion to the situation. The story should be easy to follow and make sense visually and verbally.

Let's look at a common spot news story as an example. I am riding in my truck listening to the scanner (the radio that monitors the various police and fire departments). The call comes over as a "Signal 18, two story residence, fully involved." I come to the scene and see smoke coming from the roof. I power up my gear and shoot the wide shot as the fire truck races up. The wide shot provides the beginning.

I then focus on the firemen. This provides the middle and bulk of the story. I shoot plenty of video of hoses unrolling, firemen busting down doors, water spraying, flames gorging on the dry wood. I am also thinking cutaways. Shots of people looking at the fire, close ups of women crying. Finally the fire is out, a few shots of sweaty firemen rolling up hoses and leaving in the fire truck and the story is complete.

While the fire is blazing I am also concerned with natural sound. I capture shots of the firemen talking with each other, the whoosh of the fire hose, the cracking of glass. Natural sound provides continuity and ambience to the story. Nothing tells the story of a fire better than the fire truck siren roaring into the scene, and women crying.

As you scan through the field tape you might notice that the

video I shot provides a choice of focal lengths. There are wide shots of the scene. Mid shots of firemen from their coats to their helmets. Tight shots of the families' eyes watching their home go up in smoke.

Break the picture into discrete elements. Look for the drama and shoot pieces of the scene. A wide shot of the burned out family gives a totally different feeling from a tight shot of just the mother and daughter's tear stained faces.

I watch competing stations coverage of stories I do. I notice what shots they captured, the natural sound they have. I learn from what they did and hopefully I feel like I did a better job. If it seems there story is better, I analyze what they did and try and use similar elements in the next story I work on. Learn from people around you. Learn from network coverage. My favorite show on TV is "Cops" on Fox. "Cops" is a total natural sound piece with no reporter shown. Learn from the best and apply what you learn to your work.

FRAMING:

Every picture shot on video is framed by the edges of the television set. Framing is a skill. It can be learned by watching your own and other's work. It must be understood or the video you shoot will not look right. It may be the correct color, and it may be lit well but it still may not look balanced. Framing balances the objects in the shot.

There are several terms related to framing that you need to understand. A TIGHT or CLOSE UP shot shows the subject's head and part of the collar bone. A MEDIUM or BUST shot reveals the head and most of the chest area. A WIDE shot shows the whole body. If anything really dramatic happens, (the subject starts to cry) go in for an EXTREME CLOSE UP which shows only the subject's eyes and mouth.

How tight the shots are depends on the market. Some stations demand only very tight shots during interviews. The close up shot has advantages. It shows intense emotion. It is easy to read how the person is feeling. It is not a very flattering shot, however. Every pimple and blemish looks huge.

There is also a problem with titles on the extreme close up. The person's name covers their mouth. We call that "eating the Chyron." Chyron is a type of character generator, the machine that types peoples names for the story. I personally feel that the extremely tight shot should only be used when the subject is very emotional, such as crying. Again, some markets use and insist on their photographers framing all the subjects very tight. Go with the flow. If the news director likes that look, use it.

Basic interview framing is around second or third shirt button low and about two inches above the head high. The shot should be around six inches below the chin. This keeps the

subject balanced in the screen and provides an area for person's name and title.

For basic interview framing the subject's nose should be near the center of the screen. There should be a slight bit of extra room in the direction the subject is looking. This is called "nose room." The area above the subject's head is referred to as "head room." Head and nose room are a matter of judgement and inches. Practice shooting interviews and critique what you shoot with what you see on TV.

The camera should see both of the subject's eyes. Watch out for the hard profile shot or the "talking ear." The best way to get the proper framing of the subject is by careful placement of the talent. The subject looks at the talent. Wherever you put the talent is the direction the subject faces.

The photographer must keep in mind which direction each subject is looking. In one interview the subject might be looking towards the right side of the screen. In the next interview have the reporter stand on the left side of the camera so the subject will be looking towards the left side of the screen. This keeps the video looking different and helps split up the interviews.

Framing changes depending on how tight or loosely the subject is shot. The wider the shot the more headroom the subject needs to be given. The harder the profile shot, the more nose room the subject needs in the direction he is

looking.

Watch broadcast and local TV news. Head room has changed over the years. Much less head room is used today than ten years ago. Get a feel for the framing used in the local market and try and follow it. Framing should be fairly standard throughout the nation.

It is important that you pay close attention to the background of your shot. Watch how the talent or subject is situated in regards to signs and logos. The eye naturally moves from left to right when reading. Make this tendency work for you. Put any sign or logo on the left side of the talent in the shot. The eye will read the sign and be led back to the talent.

Watch the background. Do not let poles grow out of the talent's head. I have seen shots where the talent was placed in front of fountains that appear to squirt out of their head. I have seen memorial flames licking at the reporter's ear. Separate these distractions from the shot. The audience needs to be drawn into not away from what the reporter is saying.

B-ROLL:

B-Roll is the "cover" video that tells the story without words. B-Roll is the backbone that holds the story together. TV is a visual medium. The pictures generate more raw emotion than the most well-crafted prose. We must get the video.

We are backing up stories. Know the angle of the piece. Understand what you need to make the package work. The

recognition of what it takes to edit the story is critical.

Common Ideas for All B-Roll:

1. Hold Your Shots

Get in the habit of counting every time you roll tape. Go for eight seconds of solid, steady video. Have someone time you. Count and tell them when you think eight seconds have elapsed. Learn how long it takes to count eight seconds. Always shoot at least six to eight seconds every time you roll tape. It is very frustrating to have a beautiful shot be unuseable because it was not held long enough. Some photographers prefer counting more numbers quickly, rather than to eight slowly. I count to sixteen rather quickly. It equals out around six to eight seconds. However you do it, make sure you hold your shots.

2. Limit Camera Movement

Keep in mind that in the edited version most shots will be held for only four to five seconds. Therefore, keep all pans or zooms to within this limit. It is bad form to cut from an edit point while the camera is still moving. If you need to move, keep it short.

3. Record Worthy Video Only

The editing process often occurs during the "crunch time"-- those minutes right before the show goes on the air. Keep in mind that the video that may be used will be the first shots on the tape. So--make every frame of video show worthy. It will save the show in the end.

4. Move With A Purpose

Ask yourself, "Why am I zooming?" or "Why am I panning?" Are you trying to show the relationship between objects? Camera movement infers a relationship. Pans are used when it is impossible for the wide shot to get the whole group in the picture.

5. Use A Tripod

Get in the habit of using a tripod whenever possible. Shaky video is unprofessional. If the tripod is not available lean against a tree or put the camera on the ground.

The photographer must reduce the scene into discrete elements. These elements make up the majority of the B-Roll found in the broadcast. Just as a marksman has a target, use these suggestions to capture the B-Roll in a systematic manner. There are basic B-Roll shots for different situations. Adapt these shots for new operations. Each of these shots must be held for around eight seconds.

MEETINGS:

The news reporter/photographer will cover hundreds of meetings during their career. The more you shoot, the faster you realize that there are certain types of shots you get over and over in every meeting.

Here is a list of these shots. Memorize and follow them. By shooting a series of targets you will guarantee you will have what you need to make the story work.

1. Wide shot of room. Includes audience and board members.
2. Wide shot of audience.
3. Wide shot of board members.
4. Single shots of each board member.
5. Two shots (shot of two people) and three shots (shot of three people) of different combinations of board members.
6. Single shots of many of the audience members.
7. Two and three shots of audience members.
8. Close ups of hands writing. This could be reporters or clerks writing.
9. Any logo shots. (State seals or Court seals for instance.)
10. Any specific sign shots. (Protest--"Save the Whales")
11. Any person speaking from the audience should also have an establishing wide shot of him at the podium.
12. Reversals of the wide shot. In other words a wide shot from the board member's perspective of the audience.
13. Side shot of the board members in a row.

This list covers the majority of the B-Roll opportunities for meetings. Use your creativity and come up with other ideas of your own. Think how many shots you would need to fill a thirty second VO. Each shot on the edited version of the show tape would be around four seconds long. That means you should have at least eight shots.

Take into account that most producers want at least fifteen seconds of "pad" video at the end of the tape. Pad video is shots that may not be used during the VO but keeps the tape

from going to black if the switcher does not take the tape off the air fast enough. Does that make sense? Have you ever watched a newscast and seen the video suddenly go to black? The editor did not put enough pad video.

The field photographer should have at least fifteen different shots to chose from in order to fill a thirty second VO. If you follow the list given in this chapter, you will be much closer to shooting what you need.

At most meetings there is usually time when nothing much is going on. This is when you should collect the basic B-Roll. Having all this video at the head of the tape also makes it easier to edit. You have all the cutaways in one spot. It is important that you memorize this list and get all or most of these shots--especially the single shots of each of the board members or special players.

If, for example, you know that the story you are interested in concerns four people in the audience affected by a landfill, make sure you get plenty of cut-aways of these people. This is especially true if they are having a strong reaction to what is going on. Watch for it. Being an intelligent reporter involves listening to what is going on in the meeting and anticipating reactions.

Some photographers actually go to sleep during long meetings. I've been close to passing out myself (school board committee meetings are the worse), but fight the feeling. You are bound to learn something if you pay attention long

enough.

Too much B-Roll is always better than not enough B-Roll. Make sure the shots are long enough, remember to count every time you roll tape. If you get caught short, or do not have what you need to make the story work it is a very bad feeling.

Know the angle of the story before getting into the meeting situation. You should not have to be told what to get every time. Pay attention to what is going on. If you hear something important, roll tape. If the reporter does not want to use it it is their option. You cannot use what has not been recorded.

SPOT NEWS:

This covers news that happens on the spot. It is not planned. It just occurs. There are are typical elements in each spot news scene which should be shot.

Always shoot the action first.

1. Wide establishing shot, showing the whole scene.
2. Individual shots of victims.
3. Shoot the action tight. "Fill the frame with flame."

Car Wrecks:

Each of these categories should have a variety of focal lengths for best effect. Shoot tight, medium and wide for each of these ideas.

1. Wide shot establishing relationships between cars.
2. Individual shots of each car.
3. Close ups of injured people.

4. Shoot sequence (a series of shots showing chronological action) for:

- a. Getting people out of the car.
- b. Rolling person to the ambulance.
- c. Ambulance leaving.

When sequencing, remember to let the subject go out of frame, or make sure you have a cut-away available to edit to. This might be a close up of the ambulance driver's face.

5. Shots of Police cars. Close ups of Police logos.

6. Shots of onlookers: Wide, Medium and Tight shots for variety.

7. Close up of impact spot includes:

- a. Skid marks (good use of panning the camera)
- b. Blood
- c. Glass in street.

8. Different angles on car. Focus on the most smashed up angle. Make it graphic.

CRIME SCENES:

Some stations never shoot car wrecks. Others cover every fender bender where a passenger is transported by ambulance. Almost all stations cover crime scenes. It is essential that you know what you are looking for and shoot it quickly. The police will do whatever they can to return the crime scene to normal as soon as possible.

Crime scenes mean crowds. Crowds can cause trouble, especially if a lot of the people knew the victim and do not

like the police. I have been punched and had bottles thrown at me because people at a crime scene did not want the press, or the police there.

Here is a list of video you should have. Shoot different variations of each of these ideas, including medium and tight shots. Look for different angles of each idea.

1. Take pictures of any weapon.
2. Shoot close ups of bullet holes and the corresponding wide shot showing what was hit. Remember, if you have time, shoot these tight shots off of a tripod. Hand held close ups are shaky. We call such shots "earthquake video." It looks like the camera operator was shooting during an earthquake.
3. Close up of blood stains or chalk marks around the body. It is poor taste to shoot an uncovered body. Wait till the police cover the body with a sheet. The public gets really upset when they see graphic blood and guts. Some markets seem to pander towards this type of video. Check with the news director as to what he is looking for.
4. Show the relationship between areas with a pan of the camera. If the victim came out of a store and was shot in the parking lot show static shots of the store, the parking lot, a pan from one to the other and perhaps a Point Of View shot (see: "7 Deadly Shots") walking out of the store.
5. Shoot the cops at work. This would include close ups of any ID cops taking pictures, cops questioning people, taking notes, or arresting people. Try and get as much natural sound

as possible of these procedures. Get the cops talking with each other. Hear the fire crackle, the sirens scream.

For the best B-Roll the good photographer will do his best to incorporate interesting shots into every story. Take the camera where the eye normally does not go.

Basic B-Roll also includes:

1. Two shots: Picture of the reporter listening to the subject talk. It is important to keep the same angle and lighting from the close up of the subject to the two shot. It is also critical to have at least five seconds where only the subject is talking. Ask the reporter to "ask them another question." If both reporter and subject are talking the two shot does not work. The two shot should match the interview framing as much as possible. If the reporter is talking on the two shot the video will not match up. Keep in mind if the microphone is in the shot during the interview, it must remain in the shot during the two shot.

2. Wide shot of subject at his desk. This can be used to establish the interview before cutting to the sound bite.

3. Reversal: This is the subject's view of the reporter. Remember not to swap the axis. In other words, if the subject is on the right hand side of the shot in the interview, he must be on the right hand side when you get the two shot over the subject's shoulder. A reversal should also include a single shot of the reporter, medium as well as tight.

B-Roll is such an important part of the news gathering

process that every photographer should do his best to capture great pictures. Study the lists in this chapter. Memorize them. It will save you time and anxiety when you wonder if you have enough video to make the story work. B-Roll is basic. The "7 ~~Basic~~ Shots" in the next chapter will show you how to move up to more advanced techniques of B-Roll gathering.

Seven Shots Seen 'Round The World

Planned Creative Video

News organizations put a high regard on creativity. I loved to watch one of our photographer's work. I was amazed at his creativity, the unusual angles he could find. His work was a cut above the pack. I decided to find out why. I analyzed his shots, his methodology. I discovered seven methods that he (and other top professionals) used to be creative.

These "Seven Shots" help photographers capture creative video. If used you will score a B-Roll "bullseye." How do you know if you score? The video you shot is riveting. The audience wonders, "how did they get that shot?" The normal news story suddenly becomes interesting. This is all because the photographer planned to capture creative video. The operative word is "planned."

Many photographers are naturally creative. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to "turn on" creativity at will. There are other photojournalists whose material always seems lackluster. They use the same shots over and over again. Every shot is from shoulder level.

This chapter is of immense value to photographers. It does not matter whether you consider yourself to be creative or not. You can plan to be creative merely by hunting for these types of shots. By searching for a particular type of image or sound your material will appear creative. In fact, by careful use of these "Seven Shots," you are creative.

The problem many shooters face is they want to be creative, but they are not sure how. They know good video when they see it, but they have a hard time coming up with it on their own.

At my station I organized a competition broken into a seven week cycle. Each week we focused on one particular shot, such as "Low." For that week each photographer on my staff came up with as many versions of that particular video type as they could. Suddenly, our whole news show became more creative. The photographers were looking for something different. And it showed.

Use these "Seven Shots" and see your creativity blossom. Search for these shots. Look for opportunities to adapt these categories to your situation. You have the keys to creativity. It is a matter of hustle and desire on your part to make them work for you and your station.

We shoot to be viewed. Useable video is very different from gripping video. The difference lies in creativity. Stories can be "spiced up" by solid use of the "Seven Shots."

Grab the viewer with your video. Thrust the viewer into the action. "Zoom them through" objects. Rack their focus. Make them ponder how we got the shot. They will enjoy watching the show and you can take pride in shooting quality material.

Camera optics are similar to the eye's vision. There are differences, however, which can be used to your advantage. The eye cannot zoom. Peripheral vision in the human eye prevents tightly focused shots. The TV camera can crop out

(block out) what the photographer does not want shown.

Shoot by the numbers. Go for as many of the "Seven Shots" in each story, then watch your stories attract and hold viewers.

Shot One: Low

Take the camera where the eye normally does not go. How many people view life from sidewalk level? We are not used to seeing from that angle, thus our interest is stimulated. Arousing viewer interest is what the "Seven Shots" are all about.

The Low shot is one of the easiest of the "Seven Shots" to master. Yet, it is such a flexible tool in your creative arsenal that it should not be dismissed easily. The low shot can also come in helpful if you are having to shoot without a tripod. After all, the ground is generally steady.

The low shot is well suited for foreground framing. Flowers, bushes, sidewalks all take on new character from ground level. The new angle really brings out the pattern in brick sidewalks as well as highlighting possible problems.

I covered one story concerning handicapped access to a shopping area in town. I had a low shot of a wheelchair wheel trying to get over the curbing. The wheel bumped into the cement, the camera on the ground capturing the moment. I then shot up at the woman from ground level, showing her consternation at the problem. The shot hammered the point

home. It was obviously impossible to get the wheelchair up on the sidewalk.

Traffic stories should include a few low shots. These shots show cars coming towards the camera (which can provide thrilling video) as well as shots of the tires going by. If your story concerns business, shots of feet passing by the camera illustrate lots of shoppers beautifully. It may sound crazy but creativity does not have to be logical. Creativity works. The low shot on feet should also be a standard image for covering parades as well as picket lines. These low shots provide great B-Roll.

The low shot gives an interesting perspective on wrecks, as well as aftermath video from storms or fires. Getting down with the camera increases interest in objects not normally noticed. Focus the camera on what the viewer would like to see.

Obviously, if the story demands low shots use them. Flood stories should be shot at ground level. The water lapping against the side of a car door illustrates the problem perfectly. Drought stories are the same. Get the camera on the ground and focus on the shriveled up grass. Watch the dust blow past the camera lens.

When shooting children it always pays to get on their level. Shots of toy cars rolling on the floor or balls being bounced look great from ground level. It is a basic axiom in photography to shoot the person from their eye level. The low

shot is a creative special effect. Use it and plan to be creative.

Shot Two: Natural Sound

The second shot of these special "Seven" relies on your ability to "see with your ears" and "hear with your eyes." Look for objects that make natural sound. Crunchy twigs and leaves are great sound producers. When you see something that sounds promising, shoot it. Today's television viewer watches hundreds of hours of TV a week. They know what they like, and they enjoy hearing good natural sound.

Audio and video are different. They are, however, intimately linked. Natural sound (sometimes called "Nat" or "Wild" sound) colors the video. Sounds evoke sights. We expect to hear the corresponding sounds with the video. Capture the sound of jack hammers crunching concrete. Monitor the video and match it with your ears.

Position the microphone close to the action. Look for chances to get natural sound. Listen for sounds that convey the ambience of what you are shooting. Every package usually includes at least one "nat sound break." This is a short section of the package, usually around three or four seconds long. It is a break from the narration and sound bites which highlights the natural sound of the story.

The natural sound captures the essence of the story if used properly. Most packages start with a few seconds of natural sound. The reporter lays down the sound of sirens and then begins the narration. Obtaining natural sound is an art that can drastically improve the quality of your packages.

Cities are full of natural sound opportunities. The streets offer sirens and car noises. I covered a story about truck traffic down one of our main streets. The sounds these trucks made as they geared down was tremendous. Citizens were concerned that tourists would be driven off by the intense traffic. The story opened with a shot of a series of trucks blaring down the street in front of City Hall. Whether there was a problem or not was a mute point. The viewer saw, and heard, the dilemma for themselves. The natural sound made the story come alive.

Spot news scenes are also great opportunities for gathering natural sound. I was listening to the scanner when a call came over the radio that "we have the suspect in sight, he has the stuff, move in. . ." I listened for the location and swung the truck around to get the bust. As I pulled up, the police had two young men spread eagled over the hood, searching for weapons. I turned on my shotgun microphone, rolled taped and walked up. The police officer turned the suspect around and put the handcuffs on. The clicking sound of the handcuff engaging around his wrists provided a graphic piece of natural sound. It had a finality to it similar to a prison door slamming shut.

Just as I thought the piece was complete five shots rang out. Everbody hits the dirt. The lieutenant I had been interviewing gets up and races around the corner. I'm right behind him, using him as a shield---I don't have body armor

on. The natural sound of labored breathing, breaking glass, and tromping up stairways was fantastic. The video was riveting, but the natural sound made the story work. By the way, we never caught the guy who shot at us.

Fire scenes are also excellent sources of natural sound. There is something about sirens that screams out, "Emergency, get out of my way." Watch for sounds getting ready to happen. The building is on fire. Firemen approach the front door. You know they are getting ready to bust it down. Get as close as you can (or as close as they will let you) and prepare for the busting of wood. Breaking glass also provides great sound.

Natural sound also includes banter between people. One fireman screamed, "The second floor is gutted. It's killing us in there." Off-the-cuff remarks between firemen provide the drama that interviews cannot hope to match. It is impossible to get this kind of intimate sound bite without being close to the action. Some people are afraid to be pushy. Don't be. Get as much as you can until they tell you to leave. With any luck, you'll get everything you need before you have to exit. Use your head and go for it.

The environment is big news today. Air and water pollution stories are seen nearly every day. Who can forget the dramatic pictures from Kuwait's oil spill or of the Exxon Alaskan tragedy? Natural sound can make the environmental story come alive. The sound of a bird flapping in the water

with oil smeared wings is poignant material.

I live on the Georgia coast. The viewers in my area are extremely sensitive to wetland issues. The sound of water birds squawking and crabs scrambling over the mud flats says "wetland." The addition of animal sounds puts the viewer into the story and gives the package a realistic edge. Insect and bird noise, the crunching of twigs, a light wind whispering through the trees, all these spell "nature." Listen for it. Get it.

Weather stories lend themselves to the use of natural sound. If the story angle covers how dry it is, get the brittle crunch of dry twigs. Get a close up of a hand squeezing dry foliage. It makes great natural sound. The sound of thunder and driving rain puts the viewer into the flood story.

Some stories cry out for natural sound to be used. I saw one of our newer reporters put a piece together on the Police firing range. Hundreds of rounds of ammo were shot off. Targets were blasted into shreds. Yet not one shot was heard in the package. The reporter used her narration without any type of natural sound. That package was bad TV.

Perhaps you are doing a story on the closing of a building. The echoing footfalls of one person going down a hall tells it all. The fact of the matter is good natural sound makes or breaks most packages.

Shot Three: Sequence

The third of the "Seven Shots" involves a series of shots edited together. It is perhaps the most difficult to master. A sequence involves a group of shots edited to show an unfolding action. It takes practice to direct and shoot a proper sequence. The ability to shoot a sequence separates the photo-journalist from the amateur.

A good sequence visually drives the story forward. Sequences tell a story with action. The viewer sees the story come together. Usually a sequence in the story has several shots around three or four seconds each. They show the beginning of the action, as the motion is unfolding, and how the action ends. It is important to think in terms of discrete elements in the action in order to make the sequence work.

When shooting sequences you must let the subject exit the frame. This means the camera should not see any part of the subject after around four seconds. A common mistake photographers make is to follow the subject's every move with the camera. This makes the video almost impossible to edit because the subject is always in the shot. This type of shooting creates the "jump shot." A jump shot is two edited shots that show the subject similar in size and location in each shot. The subject seems to "jump" because they are in one spot in one shot and in another in the next.

I covered the Army's 24th Mechanized Infantry leaving for

Saudi Arabia. A sequence from those packages included the troops lining up, boarding the plane, cruising down the runway, and then taking off. I had to let the plane roll out of frame so the next picture would match up. If two shots contain the same subject in similar circumstances it is a "jump cut." If the subject leaves the frame there is nothing to jump from. It is a mistake to keep the subject in the frame the whole time. Let the subject leave the frame and pick the action right back up.

Most sequences involve at least three phases or shots tied together. A good sequence might use seven or eight quick shots to back up a story. Sequences can be created but thought must be given to the process. The "Seven Shots" can help you plan to be creative by using sequences.

Sequences tell the story visually. They compress time. In other words, an action that might actually take twenty minutes can be shown in a sequence in thirty seconds. A common sequence involves ripping open the car to get the victim, strapping them to a gurney, rushing them to the ambulance, slamming the ambulance door, and watching the ambulance leave. The voice over must correspond to the video for a sequence to work properly. The anchor should not be talking about the difficulty of getting the victim out of the car if the video is showing the ambulance leaving.

Be consistent with your axis of motion. If the police officer leaves the frame screen left (the left side of the TV

screen), make sure that in the next shot he enters screen right. Axis of motion can only be changed if you cut to a neutral stationary object, such as an onlooker, or a logo shot. If the axis of motion (the direction the subject is traveling on the screen) is changed without cutting to a neutral object, the result jars the viewer. The sequence does not make visual sense. The viewer is confused by the lack of consistency.

Staging. Just the word raises the ire of many journalists. Some say it's "unethical" or that it "destroys our credibility." Perhaps this is true. I will say this, however, many photographers stage action. You can tell by the editing, the shots match too perfectly. In the real world action is missed. In a staged sequence nothing is missed because you tell the people when and what to do.

Let's examine the situation. Perhaps you are doing a story on nursing interns. They are making up a bed. They do the action hundreds of times of day. It is absolutely natural for them to do what we are taping. Is it unethical to get them to make the bed on cue? I do not think so.

What about this situation. There are a group of protesters outside a building. They are calmly picketing the store. The photographer comes along and thinks the video is too boring and asks them to start yelling and waving their fists. The protesters go crazy. The video looks great, but does not actually portray what was happening. Corrupting the scene's

action is staging and is absolutely unethical.

In my opinion, staging can be used very effectively to show common actions. Strive to use sequences as much as possible-- especially if the shoot is action related. The subject wants to look good on TV. He normally does the action anyway, and it's no trouble for him to wait till you are set up for the next shot. This gives the package a flavor of a multi-camera shoot. In Hollywood the subject might go through the motion one time but have three cameras on them shooting from separate locations. News does not have the luxury of positioning several cameras for one story.

For staged sequences to work properly the subject must be coached through the action. Again, do not tell them to do something they normally would not do. Tell the subject:

1. What you want them to do.
2. When to start. (Obviously after you are rolling tape.)
3. Where to stop.
4. Ask them not to look at the camera. After all, that would not be natural.

Here is how I might handle the situation. I would say, "Ok, here's what I want you to do. When I tell you come out of the door, walk past me, don't look at me, and stop right over there." Make sure you get them to stop where you want the next shot to continue.

I usually start out by saying this is "like Simon Sez." They cannot do anything until I tell them to. People do not

mind this type of exercise, especially if you tell them, "I want you to look good." Some photographers are embarrassed to tell people what to do, and when to do it. Take control of the situation. People generally want to look good and are genuinely grateful for any advice that will help them appear more confident.

Coaching or staging a subject's action causes some people a great deal of problem ethically. My advice is avoid any activity you have a question about. The real world is about making stories work. The fact is, under certain circumstances staging routine actions can help the story.

Many shoots cannot and should not be staged. Spot news can be shot in sequence, but may not be as easy to edit. It may be difficult to get close up cut-aways. A note on the close up. Use a tripod. Nothing is more irritating than a shaky shot. We are dealing with an audience that is increasingly more sophisticated. They recognize shaky video. It is very unprofessional.

It takes creativity to come up with good sequences. It gives you the opportunity to be "the director" or field producer. It may take more time, but it is definitely worth it. Television shows the viewer what happened. Sequences are the best way to show an unfolding action.

Shooting good sequences separates the average from the excellent photographer. A good sequence shows careful thought about the editing process, as well as creativity.

Here is an example of a sequence from a story I worked on recently concerning the police combating drunk driving in the community.

The edited sequence went like this:

1. Police officer enters frame leaving the police station on a wide shot. Exits frame left. He enters the frame from the right side of the screen and leaves it on the left side of the screen. There is no portion of the officer left in the frame.
2. Cut to a close up a low shot of shoes walking past the camera. Listen for natural sound. Let the shoes exit the screen.
3. Cut to a wide shot of officer approaching car.
4. Close up shot of hands on key in door.
5. Wide shot of cop getting into car.
6. Low shot of car leaving.

Sequences serve as great B-Roll substitutes, if the shots you need are not available. For instance, the police sequence described was used to illustrate how the police are cracking down on drunk driving. Even though there are no drunks caught, the audience gets the impression that they are in the process of catching them.

I try and shoot a sequence in every story I do. It takes creativity to come up with action sequences. Most of all it requires an awareness of what is happening. I covered a story about beating the heat in the summer. I visited an ice house and a store that made flavored snowballs. In the ice house I

shot a sequence of:

1. Wide shot of ice machine and operator.
2. Close up of operator's hand on ice machine pulley.
3. Close up of operator's eyes looking at the machine.
4. At this point I moved to where the ice would land when it was dumped out of the mold and shot another wide shot of the machine tipping the ice out.
5. Close up of ice in the mold.
6. Wide shot as the molds dumped the ice out.
7. Close up and medium shots of the ice on the floor.
8. Wide shot of operator with ice tongs.
9. Close up of tongs handling the ice.
10. Wide shot of operator stacking the ice.

When this sequence was edited only four of the ten shots were used. The pictures told the story, and the exact amount of time needed for the narration was filled. We used lots of natural sound to tie the sequence together. The sound of three hundred pound blocks of ice hitting the floor was astounding.

Sequences are also used a great deal when shooting spot news. Spot news should never be staged. With hustle you can capture all the elements of the story.

I covered a wreck between a log truck and a school bus recently. The school bus pulled in front of the truck causing the log truck driver to turn his rig into the ditch. The cab was crushed by the weight of the timber pinning the driver.

It was nearly a hundred degrees and it starts to rain. The helicopter waited patiently to take the victim to the hospital. Imagine for yourself the possible sequence shots available.

Here's how I handled the situation:

1. Wide shot of log truck and fire men working on the scene.
2. Medium shot of "jaws of life" prying the door open.
3. Extreme close up of firemen's sweaty faces working with the metal in the heat.
4. Medium shot of firemen breaking the man free.
5. Wide shot of men carrying the victim out of the truck.
6. Medium shot of stretcher being loaded into helicopter.
7. Tight shot of pilot's face.
8. Wide shot of helicopter lifting off.

I shot many different variations of these shots, especially different focal lengths. When editing it is important to give a variety of types of shots. In other words, not just close ups or wide shots.

Shooting sequences is the most demanding part of my job as a photo-journalist, yet also the most rewarding. A well shot package should include at least one sequence, especially if the story is action related. Think how you would break down sequences in common, every-day life. How would you shoot a sequence of a person getting a Coke out of the cooler and drinking it? If you can come up with sequences on mundane actions it will be easy to think sequentially in the field.

Shot Four: Point Of View

The fourth of the "Seven Shots" is perhaps the most exciting visually for the viewer. Have you ever been to an amusement park and watched a movie of a roller coaster or jet plane? Did your stomach do the "loop de loop?" You witnessed the power of the Point Of View shot. POV slams the viewer into the action. It is the literally the "closest thing to being there."

Point of View shows another persons' viewpoint. If the person happens to be a police officer chasing after a drug seller the video and natural sound can be sensational. POV video is used a great deal in crime re-enactments. You view the scene from the criminal or the victim's point of view. It is a very powerful technique.

Point of View refers primarily to a first person view. The camera's view reflects the subject's. I use POV shots a great deal in sequences. After the establishing wide shot of the action, I often get the subject's view point doing the action. I shoot over the subject's shoulder and catch what they are doing.

This shot is especially suited to moving video. Hollywood uses POV extensively in war movies. The viewer gets the impression that he is one of the troops walking through the bush. We see the branches glance past the lens and imagine what the jungle feels like.

POV gives a feeling of immediacy and intimacy. It is an

extremely important concept of photography to learn and use on a regular basis. Good POV makes the difference between a story that you watch and a piece that you experience.

The police offer some of the best POV material. I covered a crack bust where cops bust down door and threw people to the floor. Let me warn you, getting this type of video is dangerous. Let the police know what you are planning on doing and make sure your life insurance is paid up.

I chased the police up the stairs rolling tape the whole time. Get right beside them, the closer the better. The more intimate you are with the action and the more natural sound you can capture and the more realistic the first person POV is.

Start with a wide shot of the police rushing a building. Get behind them and run with them, shooting over their shoulders. The video will not be as smooth, because you are moving--but it will be twice as gripping. The viewer loves to be brought into the action. POV merges well with sequencing as well as natural sound.

Point of View video can also help out on your cutaways. You do not always have to use the generic two shot of the reporter and subject sitting in an office. Add interest to your two shots by having the talent and subject walk together as you walk behind them. Get in front of them and let them walk past you as a reversal.

Remember the Prime Directive of B-Roll: "Take the camera

where the eye normally does not go." We have all seen stories involving heavy machinery, bulldozers and trucks. Yet, how many times does the camera shoot from the perspective of the operator? The view from inside the cab of a front-end loader is something people usually do not see. What is new to the viewer creates interest and makes for a better show.

Of course, many people hesitate asking the bulldozer driver, "Would you mind if I rode in the cab with you?" Photo-journalists have to be intrepid. They must be fearless in their dealings with people. After all, the person can always say "no."

It is amazing how helpful most workers are. They love to show off their equipment. If they can help out the TV crew they feel even better. The bottom line is TV crews are treated differently. We are abused as well as given special treatment. Take advantage of the camera you carry on your shoulder. People want to help. The POV shot is what those people see.

POV is an attention grabbing shot. Use your brain--think where it might fit in. Bring the viewer into the action. Some of my best work has included POV video. Racing around with the police, busting in doors, flying in Coast Guard helicopters all made for outstanding Point of View material. The more you can think of POV opportunities, the better your show will be.

Shot Five: Zoom Through

Modern ENG equipment is blessed with the zoom lens. This amazing optical invention allows the camera to increase the magnification without changing lenses. The Zoom Through can provide truly startling video.

This is one of the few shots that does not imitate the eye's mechanisms. The human eye is not able to increase magnification. If we want to see the object more enlarged, we have to move closer to the object. Zoom Through is effective because the viewer is surprised by what is revealed when the camera zooms out.

Zoom Through is most effective when what your zooming through is related to the story. As mentioned in the Prime Directives of ENG, camera movement implies a relationship. This is true whether you pan from one object to another or zoom out from one object to another. Zoom Through shows a relationship in a surprising way. The sudden revelation is what is fun for the viewer to watch.

Here is how this shot works. Start tight (zoomed in) on an object and zoom out revealing another object. Sounds simple, yet it takes an aware eye to look for opportunities to use the shot. This is a recurring thought throughout the "Seven Shots." The photographer must plan to use them. They must be actively searching for opportunities to make the creative B-Roll come together.

I use Zoom Throughs often when shooting construction

stories. Building sites usually contain plenty of objects that have holes in them. These might be building blocks, rolls of wire, saw horses or big machines. The zoom through opportunity in construction equipment might be the space between the arm of the bulldozer, the machine and the ground. Zoom Through is often linked to the Low shot since many of these objects are on the ground.

A good Zoom Through might have the camera focused on a man hammering a nail. When the camera zooms out the audience sees that the photographer was shooting through a hole in the fence. It becomes apparent not only what the man was hammering but why: the fence needed repair.

Road work often provides opportunities to Zoom Through. Zoom in on the traffic, pull out to show a sign. It might say "Men Working," or "Road Work Ahead". This shot shows action in relationship to what is being shot. Zoom Through surprises and entertains the viewer.

Shooting Zoom Throughs is not always easy. It takes a willingness to get the unusual angle in order to shoot through the crack, or hole in the object. I covered the laying of wreaths on the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Savannah. Brightly colored flowers were in stark contrast to the marble monument. By positioning my camera I was able to shoot through the flower wreath getting a clear shot of the monument. When I zoomed out to the wide shot the flowers were revealed. It was a perfect ending for the piece.

Shot Six: Rack

Racking focus imitates a feature of the human eye. When you focus on something up close the objects in the distance become blurred. Your attention is drawn to whatever is in sharp focus. Rack is another way of showing a relationship between objects.

Racking focus refers to changing the focal point of the lens. If the focal point is close, whatever is close will be in focus. If the focal point is on infinity (the horizon), distant objects will be in focus.

Racking focus may be done in two ways:

1. Focus on one object, rack the focus ring bringing another object into focus.

This is a good shot for B-Roll, especially with audience two shots. Focus on the person in the front seat, rack (turn) the focus ring bringing the person sitting behind them into clear view.

Do you remember which way to turn the focus ring in order to bring more distant objects into focus? (Counter-clockwise) You must learn this in order to make Rack work. Generally it is better to start with the person sitting closest to the camera in focus. The eye is drawn to the dominant object in the screen. If this object is not in focus the video is seen as a mistake.

Racking focus works well for things in long lines or rows with a deep depth of field. This might be a corn field,

parked cars, or people in long rows. I have covered many stories on the drought in Georgia. A great shot focused on the withered corn stalks and then Racked down the row. It gave a feeling of the total despair the farmers in the area were feeling. All their crop was "dust in the wind."

Rack also works well for objects involving keyboards. This might be a music piece where the camera racks focus from one hand to the other. Rack also provides interesting video with computer keyboards. Shifting the focus from fingers to the letters makes for interesting B-Roll.

Another interesting effect uses Rack with reflective surfaces. I covered the happy conclusion to the drought where it had been raining heavily. Pools of water stood on the ground. I focused on the water, Racked the focus to reveal reflected plants in the water. There was an immediate relationship drawn between the plants and the water.

2. The second way to rack focus uses the zoom control. This Rack puts the object completely out of focus. It draws attention from an object to nothing. The nothing represents something mysterious or unknown. When the camera is on a wide shot the video will look in focus, even if the focal point is four feet. However, when the camera zooms in towards an object further than four feet away, the picture will be out of focus. Start with a wide shot, zoom in rendering the video out of focus. Obviously, the object you zoom in on must be out of focus before you start the zoom in. When you zoom out

the focus, even though soft, will appear sharp because of the wide angle.

Blurred focus is a good shot for mysterious, unknown objects or conclusions. Suppose you are covering a spill into the river. Authorities are not sure what the outcome will be. Start wide on the river, zooming in to a close up, out of focus shot of the water. This gives a feeling of the unknown in the water.

The Rack shot out of focus can also be used in drowning scenes. Start out on a wide shot of the water. Zoom in to a tight shot of the waves out of focus. This gives the audience the idea that no one knows for sure what happened.

The out of focus Rack shot can also be used for a good effect with flowers. Rack focus (with the focus ring) from one flower to a blur. Take the next flower out of focus and bring it into sharp focus. Edit the two shots together. The edited sequence shows one flower, a blur and the the next flower.

This type of rack focus provides a good transition. Always keep in mind the "four second" rule about editing. Keep all the camera moves within this time limit.

Shot Seven: Sun Dog

This is a specialty shot that should only be attempted by a CCD or "chip" camera. A tube camera should absolutely never be pointed at the sun, or any other bright object for any length of time as this will result in a "burn in" on the tube. Even the chip camera should only be pointed at lights for a few seconds.

The Sun Dog is a "star burst" or "flare" effect caused by streaking on the CCD. Streaking is a line in the video generated by bright objects. It is normally not considered good to have streaking in the video. It can be used for a nice effect, however, especially if the sun is partially hidden by the object.

The sun coming from behind flags, towers, monuments or buildings can create Sun Dogs and be used for an interesting effect. In every Memorial Day package I shoot I always try and include a Sun Dog coming from behind the American flag. The glittering streak emitted around the flag as it wafts in the breeze looks great.

I also try and shoot Sun Dogs around war memorials. There is something about the sunlight streaking through and around statues that looks patriotic. I'm not sure why it works, I just know it does. Use it.

Sun dogs can also be tied to stories on heat or drought with great effectiveness. A shot of a dried up corn stalk with the sun streaking behind it tells the whole story in one shot.

A warning about this shot. Plan to use the Sun Dog sparingly and for only a few seconds. It is not good for the chip. However, if the majority of the sun is blocked by the object, the shot can be used.

These are the "Seven Shots." Use them wisely and dramatically increase your ratio of award winning B-Roll. A wise photographer will keep his wits about him and invent new ways of getting creative effects. Do not be afraid to copy ideas from other photographers. These are not copyrighted techniques. Your ability to recognize other photographer's systems and incorporate them into your own arsenal of shots greatly enhances your worth to the station.

Here are a few other ideas to try:

1. Shooting with mirrors. Convex mirrors give a "bird's eye" or wide angle view that is very interesting. There are special wide angle or bird's eye lenses that can be used, but they are very expensive. Shooting into a convex mirror gives a similar effect.

2. The Macro function on the lens provides interesting video. Macro give you the opportunity to get extremely close to objects. The Macro knob is located next to the iris ring and is marked "macro." Simply pull the knob out and adjust it for the object. As you adjust this, zoom the lens in and out and adjust the focus ring for the precise spot you want to

shoot. Most lenses still have to be more than two feet away from the object to be in focus, even with the macro function engaged. A tripod is a necessity for these shots. The macro function can also serve as a quick rack focus, since the focus goes totally soft with very little zoom.

3. Shooting from a moving automobile provides what we call "rolling video." This type of video is in the same camp as POV. Get rolling video by shooting out of cars, golf carts or even grocery baskets.

4. Another shot sometimes seen as a transition is what I call the "Sky Tilt." The camera starts on an object and then tilts skyward. It is one method of getting from one object to another without an abrupt change. The sky is a neutral object.

With experience the "Seven Shots" will become more and more a part of your photographic mindset. You will think in terms of opportunities to shoot Low, Sequences or Zoom Throughs. You may have noticed that the "Seven Shots" are often linked together. To capture good Natural Sound the camera often has to be Low. To shoot a proper Sequence, Rack might be used with Zoom Through. Use combinations of these shots for an almost infinite amount of creative video.

You are limited only by your own creativity. Some photographers spend a lot of time griping about their equipment. They talk wishfully about "if only I had BetaCam"

or "if only I had digital effects." This school of photographers believes their creativity comes from the equipment. This is absolutely false. The video may look better with better equipment, but the only tool you must have to be creative is between your ears: your brain. Exercise it.

First Line of Defence

Maintaining The On-Air Image

The photojournalist is the reporter's mirror. The photographer is the first line of defence against the reporter looking or sounding bad on the air. As a photo-journalist, I believe the story is "our" story. He presents it, I show it. It is a partnership. It pays to be on good terms with every reporter in the station.

Being a good news photographer takes razor-sharp people skills. You must be able to work with anyone. This is not always an easy task. Some people are in love with themselves. They have a hard time believing your comments are constructive. Make sure that they are. Build people up. Helpful advice is always welcome.

Every reporter cares about how they look and sound on the air. If the photographer they work with cares that they look their absolute best they appreciate it. In fact, don't be surprised if reporters at your station start asking for your services personally. You might hear something like, "you're the only person who makes sure my tie and hair looks right."

Here are a few hints to help you maintain your and other reporter's on air image.

1. Care about how they LOOK.

If their hair is messed up, stop, fix it and then shoot. This goes for their whole wardrobe. Is their tie crooked? Are they frowning? Let them know. You are the first line of defence against bad standups.

There are times when I use a reflector on the reporters I work with. Some of them cannot bear the extremely bright light. They squint their eyes and look pained. Use your judgement as to whether the additional light is worth the reporter looking bad.

If you are shooting as a "one man band" (having to shoot for yourself), get a small hand mirror and use it! Most cameras have the return video function. With the return video button depressed the camera operator can see what was recorded. Do your stand up, go back and look at the video yourself. Would you want to watch this person on TV?

Many standups look bad because the reporter's hair is standing up or in their face. Many news photographers are afraid to make comments because they feel the reporter will get mad at them. It is far better to let the talent know how they look while they are doing the standup. When you get back to the station I guarantee they will find you and ask why you did not tell them how they looked. Reporters appreciate honesty. They want you to be careful with their appearance. They esteem attention to details to no end. Be sensitive about the small details. They add up.

2. Care about how they SOUND.

Audio is critical to the story. Unfortunately, many photographers get so carried away with the video that they forget to check the audio. Use headphones and monitor the product. You can change how it sounds in the field, but you

can't do a thing once you are at the station.

Use these criteria as to how the audio sounds: Is the audio too ambient? Did the microphone pick up only car or wind noise? Does the reporter need to hold the microphone closer to their mouth? Did the truck that drove by just drown them out? It is impossible to answer these questions unless you monitor your audio. As a professional, you absolutely must scrutinize the audio. If it sounds bad, let them know.

3. Care about what they SAY.

People get facts wrong. They think they said something, when in reality it came out totally different. The "heads up" photographer is a sounding board for the standup. If something sounds redundant--tell them. In a nice way of course.

If you suspect the facts may be wrong ask them to double check. Say something like "I could've sworn they said. . ." This again drives back to the point that you must be alert in all the meetings you go to. The old saying "Two heads are better than one," is true. Help out with the listening duties. Even the best reporters miss things.

I've gone to meetings and heard and recorded sound bites that the reporter had completely missed. I mentioned, did you catch that sound bite? They would say, "what sound bite?" It usually turns out that they were writing or thinking about something else. Believe me, they were happy I rolled tape. Many times I'll hear, "I really needed you on that story,

Tim." I'll ask why. "Because you're fast on the trigger, and don't have to be told to roll tape." Listen, be alert, pay attention to what is going on and what the story is about. Get into the story. Then capture it.

4. Care about HOW they say it.

We all get into ruts at times. Every stand up you do may start to sound the same. It is time to think creatively. Ask yourself, "how can I make this more interesting?"

Standups can be made appealing by adding motion. This can be done by walking into the frame. I've covered countless stories concerning the drug problem in our city. I started out on a known crack house. The reporter says, "This is where it began. Three young men, smoking crack, were surprised when police busted down the door and arrested them." The camera is focused on the house. The reporter walks in front of the camera as he starts to talk about the "three young men." The reporter walked into the picture.

If you are a shooting for yourself this technique can still work. Set the camera on the tripod. Mark the spot you need to stop on and start talking. You can check your framing by putting a light stand at your height at the spot you need to stop.

A similar move has the reporter walking towards the camera. They are in the frame the whole time, they just start about five steps back and walk forwards slowly. This movement looks casual. It gives the feeling that the reporter really knows

what he's talking about. If the neighborhood has had a rash of burglaries, walk towards the camera while referring to the crime problem.

Another way to add motion to a stand up is by panning or tilting the camera from the subject to the talent. Unfortunately, this is a move you must have help with in order to get it to work. I use this move whenever I'm covering a story about large objects.

I worked on a package about the B-52s flying into our area. I started the shot on the nose of the plane and panned to the reporter who had a row of the planes behind him. It showed the enormity of the aircraft beautifully.

I shot a piece about the sidewalks being in poor condition. I started on the ground where the reporter tapped her foot. I tilted up from the cracked sidewalk to her face where she continued the stand up.

Zooming out from the subject to the reporter can also add motion to the stand up. I've done stories on incriminating evidence, such as a letter from the defendant. I started tight on the letter and zoomed out to the reporter as he was talking about the evidence. The move works if what you are zooming out from is vital to the story.

The zoom out shot also works for spot news when the action is a long way off. I've covered chemical spills where the media was kept back for hundreds of yards. I shot the tanker belching black smoke then zoomed out to include the reporter

alternatives. It is up to them how they want to be portrayed. I consider myself a field producer. It is my responsibility to make the story look its absolute best. Of course if you are the reporter your goal should be the same. Therefore, as a team, coming up with different angles and ideas the reporter/photographer unit should be twice as productive.

6. When they do a good job--TELL THEM.

A good stand up or edit of the piece can really make the story shine. It is my opinion that people are rarely given positive feedback. If you are called into the bosses' office do you expect for them to tell you what a good job you did?

Most reporters want to hear what you thought about the story. Let them know if they did a good job. If you are not satisfied with what they did tell them. I hate people griping behind another person's back. It is terrible form and makes for bad working relationships. If you do have something negative to say about the reporter or the photographer, have clear cut examples as to why the work was lacking as well as the solution to the problem.

How the reporter looks on the air is up to the reporter-photographer team. If you want to go far in this business it is critical that you live by the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Would you like to say something stupid on the air? Would you like to go on camera with you hair looking ridiculous? Doing your best means taking care of business down to the smallest detail.

Attention and effort equals pride. Pay attention to what you are doing every time you fire up the camera. It is easy to get lazy. You are a field operative. No one is looking over your shoulder reminding you to "get that shot." It might be raining, or really hot and it is easy to say "It's not worth it." Be committed to your work. Extra effort pays mega-dividends. Your hustle on the job will be noticed. You may not have someone patting you on the back, but good work shows.

When you do your best you feel good about yourself. Pride in your work keeps job satisfaction high. Hang out with winners. Avoid people who constantly gripe. Winners have a great on air image, day after day. Strive to better your performance on a daily basis and you will win, too.

person from the identical angle is a jump cut and is bad TV. The image seems to jump in the screen. Cut to a neutral object first if you cannot get another angle on the individual.

When you shoot spot news, shoot to cut. Always keep the editing process in mind. Think: wide shot, medium shot, close up, reaction. Shoot in sequence as much as possible. This keeps the action flowing naturally. If you miss something, go back and shoot it. You can always edit it into the right spot, but it is much easier to use the shot where it naturally occurred chronologically.

Shooting always comes back to knowing your angle. What is the point of the shot? What are you trying to show? Look for the visuals that immediately tell the story. The more action the better. Television is a visual medium. If nothing is happening it is boring TV.

If you shoot anticipating editing the video, you will have the cover video needed. Trying to avoid jump cuts can make editing a nightmare. Make sure the subject walks out of frame, and roll tape for a few seconds longer. This gives the editor video "pad." Pad, or extra video, helps the editor make clean cuts and is the main reason for holding each shoot for eight seconds.

Sequences can help the editing process dramatically. Telling the story visually lends strength to the story's credibility. Editing sequences can be a challenge. If shot

properly it should not be difficult to match up the shots. If cutaways are scarce, such as tight shots of hands or eyes, then it becomes very difficult to avoid jump cuts. Make sure you shoot plenty of video and that the shots are held for eight seconds.

All camera moves should be kept within four seconds. It is bad form to edit while the camera is still zooming, panning or tilting. Always give the editor options. Before and after every camera move hold a static shot for at least six seconds. Anticipate the action and roll tape before the movement starts.

The best way to learn how to shoot editable video is to spend time in the edit bay. A few sessions with the editors will reinforce how important it is to hold your shots and let your subject go out of frame.

Every good photographer should be able to edit. In most large markets the photographer will edit most of the B-Roll on the packages. In smaller markets the reporter may edit the whole piece. It is critical for you to learn how to edit and be able to do it rapidly.

In order to edit properly you must remember one thing: what must I show in order to tell the story? A well edited piece can be watched with the sound off, and still be able to follow what is going on. A good reporter will write to the video. The narration must match the action.

The most simple way to edit is to start with a wide shot.

happened.

Make sure the subject goes out of frame when shooting the video. When you edit the sequence, it is not necessary for the subject to leave the screen completely. Pick the action back up when the subject has just barely entered the frame. Be careful that little is left of the subject on the screen to make sure you avoid the jump cut.

The best way to shoot action sequences is to have the subject in "positive motion." Positive action means the subject is moving towards the camera. It is always more exciting to see something coming at you rather than moving away. If you have a choice, always use positive action video.

Good television shows action. If there is nothing going on visually increase the editing pace. Suppose you are covering a meeting. Everyone is just sitting there. This is hardly dynamic video. Make sure to get a variety of focal lengths (wide, medium and close up). Instead of using each shot for four or five seconds, increase the pace to only three or four seconds each. The extra second makes the difference. Do not hold static shots for over four seconds. In fact, unless the video is riveting don't hold any shot for over five or six seconds.

Strive to use natural sound in the story. Break up the narration by a series of short natural sound pieces. These two or three second spots can re-establish the realism of the piece.

When editing sound bites try and keep them within twenty seconds. The reporter should be able to use the bite that distills the thought of what the person was trying to say. When you're shooting the story listen for possible bites. If the individual tends to ramble on and on it will be very difficult to edit. When they finally stop say something like, "That was very interesting, but we can't use all of it. Can you give me all that in one quick sentence?" Sometimes a little encouragement to being concise can do the trick.

Learning to edit is just like any other skill. It must be practiced. It helps to watch well edited material and match their style. The best editing always matches the audio and the video. The second the reporter says the "Bus ran headlong into the tree" the viewer sees it. TV is a split second medium. Always show what you are hearing about.

These basic guidelines will get you on the way to being a good editor. Always show the viewer what they want to see. Stick with the "stair step" approach to editing: wide, medium and close up. Spend time in the edit bay. Good photography depends on good editing.

Check Two

1. What should the final criteria be as to whether the photographer has done his job properly?
2. Describe a tight shot. How far above the head? How low?
3. What is head room?
4. What is nose room?
5. Describe a medium shot. When would this shot be used?
6. Describe a wide shot. Why are wide shots important?
7. Why should the photographer vary the types of shots?
8. What type of shot (wide, medium or close up) is television best suited for?
9. Describe a hard profile shot. When is this acceptable?
How can this shot be avoided?
10. The reporter is standing in front of a sign. Should they be screen right or left?
11. What is B-roll? Why is it important?
12. What is A-roll? What function does it serve?
13. Why is it important for the reporter to change sides between every other interview?
14. Why is it important to watch the background in the shot?
15. How long should each shot be held? Why is this important?
16. How long are most shots in the edited version?
17. Why is it important not to "over shoot?" or shoot too much video?
18. You are at a meeting. Describe ten critical shots you must have.

19. Why is it important to know the angle of the story? How will the angle of the story affect the B-Roll?
20. You are at a spot news story--a house fire. Describe five different shots you must have. Include a sequence, and describe how it would be shot.
21. You are at a crime scene--a shooting. Describe five different shots you must have. Describe a possible point of view shot.
22. Why is natural sound so important? Describe possible natural sound involved in these spot news events: A) Fire Scene B) Crime Scene C) Auto Wreck.
23. List the "Seven Shots." Describe each in detail, giving two examples in real world terms as to when each would be used.
24. Describe the "two shots" commonly used during interviews.
25. What is a "reversal?" What must the photographer be aware of when he gets this shot? Describe three possible reversal shots.
26. What is "swapping the axis?" What does it mean in the real world? When would the photographer need to be particularly sensitive to this?
27. List the "Sweet Sixteen" prime directives for photographers.
28. Why is telling the story in pictures so important?
29. Why must the photographer shoot the action first?
30. Why must the shooter use a tripod?

31. Why is it important to move with a purpose?
32. Who is on the first line of defence for the story? List items of concern. Why are each important?
33. Why is it important to shoot with the editing process in mind?
34. Why is it important to take the camera where the eye normally does not go?
35. Name five ways you can improve your photographic abilities. How will you implement these changes?
36. Describe "stair step" editing. Why is it important?
37. Why should you avoid putting a close up and a wide shot together in the editing room?
38. How long should most sound bites be?
39. What is the importance of natural sound breaks?
40. What should be the first shot in the story? What are characteristics of this first shot?
41. Why is it important to get close to the action?
42. Why should the photographer hold their shots? How long should they be held?
43. Describe a Wide shot, Medium shot, Tight shot and Extreme Close up. How are each used? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
44. Describe basic framing for an interview. What might be a reason for the framing to change during the interview?
45. Describe the two shot. How can POV video be used in relation to the two shot? Describe the walking two shot.

46. What is meant by "planned creative video?" How can you plan to be creative?
47. Give five example of natural sound. How would it be used in a story?
48. Describe a sequence of a common activity. List ten shots that would put the action into a video sequence. How could natural sound be incorporated into the story?
49. Staging is often used in shooting sequences. How can staging be used ethically? When should staging never be used?
50. Describe the two ways to rack the focus. How can Rack be used in a story?