



the gryphon



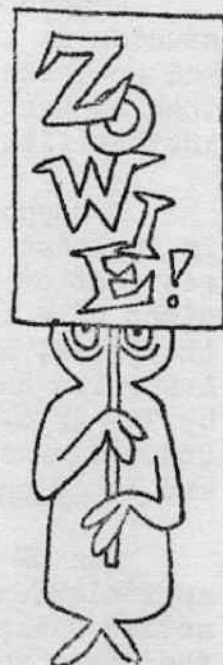


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Photographic details are on  
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In this issue you will find

w o r d s   &   p i c t u r e s   b y   l e e   h a r d i n g

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# STANLEY KRAMER

In the summer of 1958, Stanley Kramer brought his motion picture production company to Australia to make a film from Nevil Shute's novel ON THE BEACH.

This, now, was something new. In the past overseas companies had shot occasional location footage (which sometimes employed the actual stars of the films) in Australia, but the interiors, along with a number of faked back-projection scenes, were always filmed on "home" ground. The British Ealing company had made, over the years, several films utilising an Australian background; only a few months before the American unit arrived in Melbourne this company had been shooting location scenes for a movie called THE SIEGE OF PINCHGUT. What made Kramer's project so different from its predecessors was the startling announcement that he planned to film ON THE BEACH entirely on location in Melbourne. There would be no Hollywood interiors.

Australia has no film industry to speak of. There was a time during the twenties and early thirties when it produced several dozen features a year. By the forties this had dwindled to an occasional movie a year, then one every two years, and before we knew it our once-flourishing film industry had perished. The coming of television in 1956 revived it to some extent, but even our most modern studios are woefully inadequate when it comes to providing facilities for Hollywood producers.

Kramer overcame this initial problem by building his own temporary studios on the vast deserted acreage of the Royal Melbourne Showgrounds, and proceeded to improvise as he went along, although he publicly admitted that he was not happy with the venture and certainly wouldn't attempt another film under such makeshift conditions.

I suppose that in America and other parts of the civilised world, one is inclined to be a little blase about film making. For the average resident of Los Angeles I don't suppose there is much of interest in the sight of a location unit at work, unless, that is, one is interested in the stars, and is hopeful of catching a glimpse of one's idols. But we in Australia have not been exposed to such wonders, and are easily impressed by The Arts. Most of us wouldn't give two hoots for some hapless and under-financed local production, but if it's from overseas, and Imported, and Important, then we really go wild.

One of my perennial frustrations was an inability to get beyond an appreciation of movies as a medium and see the marvellous clockwork in action underneath each film. And for as long as I remained in Australia the magic world of cinema production would remain forever beyond my grasp.



But the arrival of Kramer and his unit changed all that. Here at last would be a major film producer, filming in our fair city. There would be four famous movie stars with him, and I was familiar with the book that was being transposed to the screen. The question was a simple one - how was I to make use of this sudden influx from the motion picture world?

From the moment they set foot on Australian soil Kramer and his stars were rewarded with a remarkable share of the daily papers. Each day's shooting was described in capsule form in the following morning's press. On Mondays there would be a centrepages spread of the weekend's shooting and a preview of forthcoming scenes. And Melbourne's snake-ladder society had never had it so good. They took Ava and Fred and Greg Peck and wined and dined them silly, and simply simmered in their company (Tony Perkins was always conspicuously absent from these festivities). An expensive restaurant in Toorak became their off-the-set home, and Ava made the headlines when she threw a glass of champagne in a reporter's face because he was "too damn nosy", and endeared herself to the hearts of all when she announced to the press that as the film dealt with the end of the world, she "couldn't think of a better place than Melbourne" for it to happen. Frank Sinatra was passing through on a professional Australian tour, playing the stadiums and similar places, and dropped in to say hullo to his ex-wife. The scandal rags pounced hungrily, and there was more gossip to push the cold war back to page three.

But I wasn't interested in gossip - or the stars. I was following the progress of the production carefully, waiting for what seemed an opportune time to gatecrash and get myself some interesting photographs as well as some first-hand experience with a motion picture company.

It would be difficult. The very nature of the script, utilising as it did such ultra-expensive props as warships and submarines and the heart of the city itself, necessitated strong security measures and very thorough policing of the crowds of spectators following the progress of the film.

For the first month Kramer concentrated on shooting interiors at his Showgrounds studios and exteriors at a farm near Berwick, some thirty miles from the city, and his second unit whiled away its time playing tag with an aircraft carrier and a British submarine somewhere out on the Bay.

Early in January 1959 the morning SUN printed photographs of the unit in action the previous Saturday. The locale was the heart of the city.

I wondered what security measures had been in operation and if there would be ways to circumvent them. I knew that the cameras rolled very early because they had to be out of the city by noon. The length of the shadows in the photographs indicated that they must have been taken about eight o'clock, and so early there would surely be little or no policing. I didn't stop to think that, the news being out, there would be some sort

of crowd the following Sunday, and more police to look after them. Kramer and his crew were Big News now, and the interest of inquisitive Melbournians was reaching epidemic proportions.

I was only playing a hunch when I drove into the city the following Sunday. From what I had heard film companies are notoriously unreliable - primarily because of the temperament of the actors they engage. Ava might have caught a cold and the unit could have stayed at the Showgrounds to shoot some more submarine interiors, or they might have sailed out into the Bay to make another rendezvous with the British craft masquerading as an atomic submarine of the United States Navy.

But my luck was good. I parked the car well out of the city area and made my way down Lonsdale Street. There were signs of activity ahead, and a lot of cars and trucks that wouldn't have ordinarily been there at this time in the morning.

The unit had been fortunate so far in that the notoriously uncertain Melbourne weather had been good to them, and they had enjoyed the luxury of eight weeks of almost continuous sunshine. But that morning there was a heavy cloud cover. The wind was cold and a chill breeze whipped through the city. I cast many an anxious eye at the clouds as I hurried down the street.

The time was nine-thirty. This was later than I had intended but, not feeling too sure of my venture, I had taken longer than I should to wake up and breakfast. I began to wish I'd had more faith in my intuition.

There were no signs of police. I mingled with a sparse collection of spectators spread about the unit, which was busy putting the finishing touches to some scenes outside the Queen Victoria hospital. There were several matronly women dressed in the familiar white garb of nurses, and they were standing behind a long low table stacked high with cartons. As I watched, the enormous mobile camera swung in for a close-up of one of the boxes. I saw stencilled on the outside of each the words DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - and presumed that this was the tail-end of a scene dealing with the handing out of euthanasia pills (not shown in the print released in Australia).

I made a few general shots with my 35mm camera and then watched the unit pack up, wondering what was going to happen next.

Now here I discovered an interesting fact. Members of the film crew always referred to each site as the "first location", or "second location", whatever the case might be. I suppose this not only helps the organisation of the scenes but also prevents people such as myself overhearing the destination of the unit and subsequently getting in the way.

I didn't have the faintest idea where the "second location" was. But  
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that wasn't much of a problem. I simply followed the unit down the next block to Elizabeth Street, where Kramer had his other camera set up opposite the GPO and two hundred extras had been rehearsing a big scene featuring Tony Perkins.

I had thought that the crew working at the hospital comprised the unit, and I was in for a shock. A vast number of trucks and vans was parked either side of the street for the length of two city blocks - for the life of me I couldn't figure out what all those vehicles were used for. Seeing so much luggage I began to understand why the cost of film making was so high. All this for three seconds of screen time.

By now the blue uniforms had begun to appear. Police cordons had cut off all traffic into Elizabeth Street for the distance of four city blocks and I was locked in with the unit. This was not as good as it sounds - spectators on foot were allowed to come within a few hundred yards of the scene, and there were several policemen on hand to make sure they didn't come any closer with more surrounding the unit itself so that no one could interfere with the production.

I mingled with some official photographers and tried not to get in anybody's way. There were so many guys dressed like me and wearing the same type of camera that I managed to pass as just another shutterbug.

The space separating the camera from the GPO (for the sake of the film re-christened DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY) was bustling with activity. There were some pretty weird vehicles too. As most of the action of the film takes place in a world deprived of vital fuel, the scriptwriter had dreamed up some ingenious conveyances. The bicycles and horses I had expected, but not the cars with their front wheels removed and harnessed up to draught horses, nor the motor-driven wheel-chairs and the hansom cabs. The scene was certainly outre - much more fanciful than the tinsel monsters dreamed up for some of the Hollywood SF epics. I had the feeling that this could really happen; that it wasn't just a flight of fancy.

I began taking pictures, discreetly, concentrating on Stanley Kramer and his athletic assistant director, Ivan Volkman. Volkman is a volcanic giant of a man whose job it was to pass on Kramer's orders in a fashion appreciated by all members of the unit. He hollers. Kramer, on the other hand, is not so powerful of physique. Mild mannered and soft-spoken, he never seemed impatient or about to lose his head. And I think he was somehow amused by the way the kids rushed up to the tall track-suited giant for his autograph, assuming by the way he got everybody moving that HE was the director.

The light was growing more abyssal every moment and Kramer was casting uncertain looks at the black sky. The position was that before him were more than two hundred extras who had patiently waited the morning out for this big shot. Should he risk the weather and go ahead with the  
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take, or abandon it until a more opportune time?

Postponement costs money. Lots of money.

He decided to go ahead and hope for the best.

A signal was transmitted by walkie-talkie to men planted at each intersection, and the trams, which had occasionally thundered on their accustomed way through the set, were made to bide their time while Kramer completed his first take.

Crouched low in the saddle of the bulky Mitchell camera, Kramer was lowered almost to street level by the long arm of the camera boom. One eye closed, he studied his opening shot for what must have been the tenth time.

A derelict car stood in the gutter, one door hanging out onto the sidewalk. An extra was to walk past and slam the door shut with a tap of his cane, whereupon the camera would swoop quickly overhead and resume the scene with a brief shot of the traffic and Tony Perkins would then make his three second dash across the street and up the steps of the DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY.

The car, a Vauxhall, had been jacked up and its front wheels removed and left in that position, hubs scraping against the roadway.

Kramer looked up. "Can we have that window down?"

An assistant stepped forward and wound frantically... but the window refused to disappear completely. An inch-wide strip remained visible above the sill.

"Can't you get it down anymore?" Kramer asked.

"Won't go any further. Pommie car."

"Well get a hammer and smash it then."

The window was wound up and somebody took a good whack at it with a hammer, several times. The glass splintered and showered onto the sidewalk.

"Hold it!" That was Kramer again.

A jagged piece of glass still remained.

"Get some tape" he said "and tape it up like that."

A grip man hurried to oblige. A wide strip of cellulose tape was run along the inside of the glass, facing away from the camera - and



Kramer was finally satisfied. He lined the camera up to peep through the broken window and then nodded his satisfaction. "Okay. Let's roll 'em."

It was now one thirty and the City Fathers would be upset. They had made particular mention of the fact that the unit should vacate the city area by noon, and already it was an hour and a half overdue.

Volkman took over the PA system and set the action in motion. Cameras rolled, extras walked, peddled and jogged towards the intersection - and from nowhere came a terrible jangling noise. Two vivid red fire engines surged through the location, scattering extras in all directions.

For one mad moment I thought that this was all part of the scene. Behind me a voice said, "That's the loudest ice-cream bell ah've ever heard."

Kramer stood up. A bemused look came over him and he scratched the back of his head. He didn't make a sound, but his expression proclaimed his exasperation: this couldn't be happening!

But it was. A block and a half away a dirty black column of smoke was climbing towards the sullen sky. A building in Little Collins Street was burning fiercely to the tune of £50000 and as if that wasn't enough it began to rain.

Oh so gently. Just enough to ring the curtain down on a dismal day's shooting. Kramer sighed, threw up his hands and let them slump back against his sides in an attitude of resignation. It was time to throw in the towel.

Someone handed him the PA mike and he addressed his audience. "I know that you've all been patient, and I thank you, but as this will be the first scene to show the city we naturally wish it to be seen to advantage. It is obvious that we cannot continue shooting today. I thank you one and all."

Somebody in the crowd muttered something about "not wanting it to look like Sydney". This wisecrack managed to drift audibly over Kramer's last words and brought some delight to the spectators. It even brought a smile to Kramer's face. The extras looked pleased for other reasons - another day's shooting at £3 per hour per head.

The cameras were dismantled and stowed away inside the trucks. With surprising efficiency the unit began to pack up and vacate the city. It was back to the Showgrounds for some afternoon interiors and perhaps some rushes of the week's work. In less than fifteen minutes the rain was lashing the pavement and a bitter wind was sweeping through the city.

Everything was back to normal again.

I hadn't much opportunity for taking good photographs. Most of the time the lighting was so poor as to be practically useless and this was made worse by the fact that our placement was underneath wide verandahs that lent an extra measure of darkness to our activities. But I did manage to get some interesting shots of Kramer and Volkman and some of the camera setups. I had hopes of doing better the following Sunday if the weather turned out to be more condescending.

And it did. The rain cleared early in the week and a blazing sun sizzled thereafter. At seven thirty Sunday morning there wasn't a cloud in the sky and everyone was walking about in open-necked sportshirts and cotton pants. I slipped in early, located myself with the unit, and once again got away with my pose.

The opening shot Kramer had been so painstaking with the previous Sunday had been effectively sabotaged during the week by some eager-beaver on the City Council. A neat row of brand-new parking meters had been installed along the south side of Elizabeth Street, and one sat exactly where the derelict car was supposed to be stationed. I watched them fool around trying to get rid of the damned thing for almost half an hour. They used everything they could think of, but the meter refused to budge. Kramer finally gave in and had the car and cameras moved forward fifty feet and went through the tedious process of lining up his shot all over again. From there on everything went smoothly enough.

The extras were already well-briefed with their parts. At 10am the cameras rolled and the whole tableau leapt into sudden life. People walked and peddled and hustled their horses across the intersection - upward bound traffic in Elizabeth Street making a U-turn behind the cameras and returning on the opposite side of the street, the same procedure being followed by the traffic passing up Bourke Street and across Elizabeth Street. So much for economy.

After three takes the scene was called "in the can" and now it was time for Tony Perkins to crawl out of his caravan and make his heroic dash across the busy street and up the steps of the GPO - sorry, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY.

All morning the young star had been swotting up on this vital scene. Accompanied by two policemen and squeals of delight from some of the younger spectators, he made his way across the street, shoulders drooped and sunglasses focussed steadily on where his feet were taking him. A quick conference with his director and then a rehearsal. The extras were called back and reassembled. Then: "Ready Stanley?"

Kramer nodded - and Tony was off, weaving his way across the street just like someone on an urgent errand.

"Okay." Kramer's quiet voice again. "Print it."

The time was ten past eleven - well ahead of schedule. Ten hours of time for three seconds of cinema. It made one feel a trifle dizzy.

The process of dismantling and packing up was begun and the sad-faced little man with the spade made his last tour of the street. I wondered whether he liked horses.

I began processing my films Monday morning. The results were better than I had hoped, and I immediately began thinking in terms of market potential. The newspapers and tabloids wouldn't be interested in the technical sort of photograph on which I had concentrated and they certainly would have access to as many pictures of the stars as they wanted. Kramer had a publicity manager and a team of three photographers to supply those markets. I was left with the photography magazines, those aimed at improving the mind of the amateur photographer.

Time was important. If I mailed the shots overseas they would take at least eight weeks to arrive on any prospective editor's desk and I didn't feel like taking a gamble and investing in airmail postage. That left the local publications, a total of two. One was a reprint of the American POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY and wasn't interested in local material, and there was a half-size monthly called PHOTO DIGEST, published in Sydney. This was a new venture, only eighteen months old, and dedicated to the publication of Australian work only. It didn't have the circulation of its rival but it made up in guts what it lacked in size. And a month : previously it had published an article on the filming of Ealing's SIEGE OF PINCHGUT in Sydney. I thought that it would be worth a try and at least I'd get a reasonably quick answer.

It was much quicker than I anticipated. On Tuesday I mailed off a half dozen of my best photographs, together with a covering letter explaining that I hoped to get more and better pics within the next few weeks, and would they be interested in these and a short article on the production? On Friday I received this telegram: INTERESTED YOUR ON THE BEACH PROPOSALS - ASTON.

On Sunday I was due in Frankston, a beach suburb some twenty miles from the city. While at the GPO location I had overheard two grip-men referring to this site as the location for the following week-end. For once the customary "second location, third location" precautions were forgotten, and I intended to be there with the rest of the crew and to see if I could manage to get away with my masquerade for a third time.

For a while I did. I arrived about half an hour after the unit. It was shortly after eight on another beautiful sunny day, Men were still lining up at the mobile canteen for their breakfast and I spent an hour or so just wandering about the location site, which was the Frankston railway station.

On Saturday I had received a following letter from editor Kevin Aston explaining in detail how interested he was in the project and how he hoped to receive further prints and an accompanying text as soon as possible. He also mentioned that one of his Melbourne representatives, Edward Rotherham, was working on a similar project with Wayne Miller, an American photo-journalist covering the shooting of the film for LIFE, and at the same time touring with the FAMILY OF MAN exhibition in Australia - perhaps we could team up and collaborate? This proved to be an embarrassing piece of misinformation, for when Kramer's publicity manager turned up the following afternoon and began throwing every unauthorized person off the set it wasn't worth a hoot. There was no sign of Rotherham, Aston's man in Melbourne, and Miller hadn't heard anything about it. The only advice he could offer was to "get as much as I could and get out of it". Presumably Aston's Melbourne rep had fallen down on the job - or had only been full of hot air in the first place. I only had time to grab a few quick shots of Tony Perkins and Wayne Miller before I was politely booted off the set. I hadn't met this publicity guy before, and now I understood why. Not only Perkins but two other stars were due to film later in the afternoon - and it was well known that Ava Gardner loathed journalists and could always be relied upon to throw a violent tantrum if an unfamiliar face wandered onto the set.

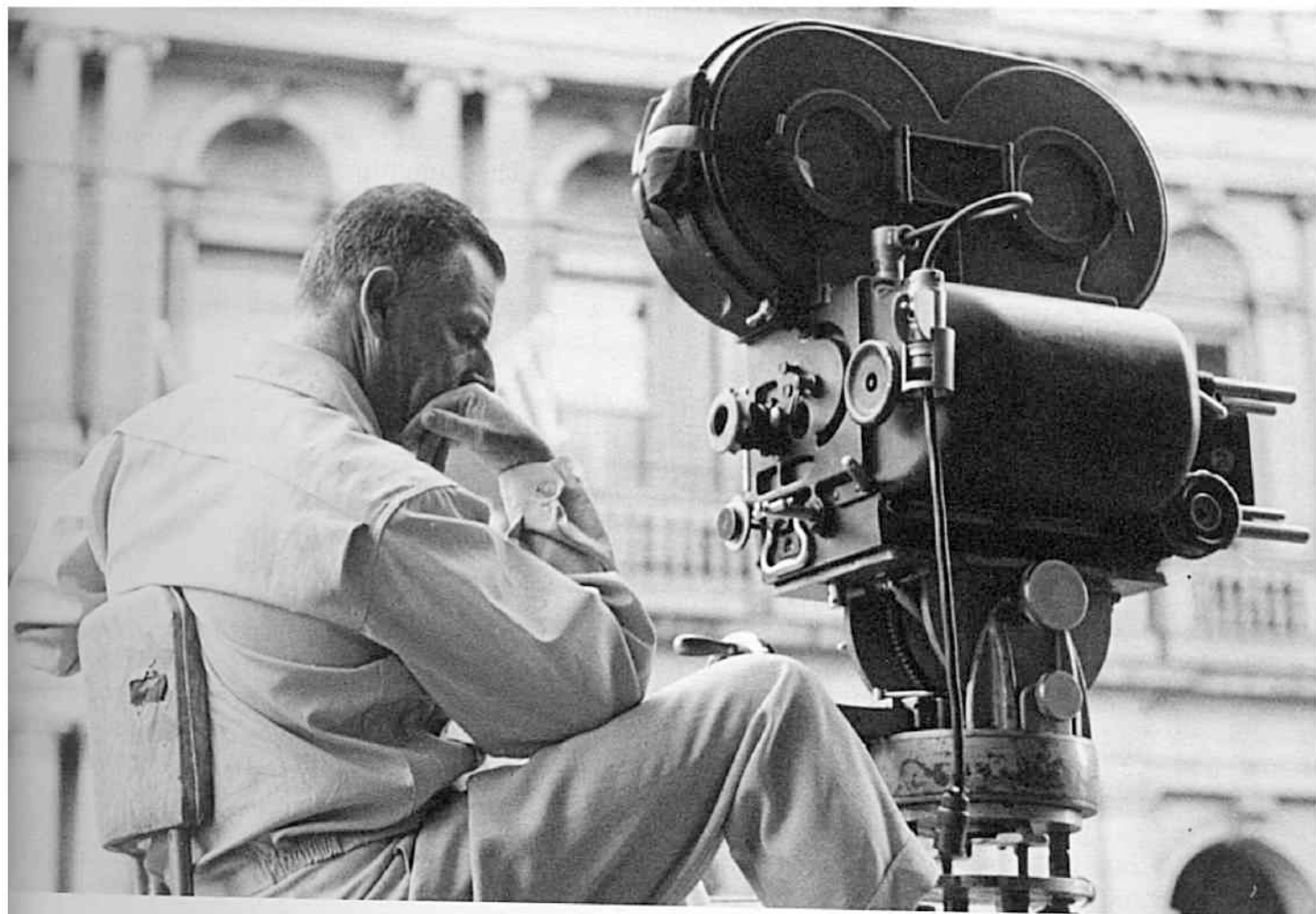
I spent the rest of the afternoon watching from a distance, along with several hundred other spectators. The sun was hot and there wasn't much shade but I held out for a shot of Ava. She didn't arrive until after three. There was a flurry of excited exclamations from outside the station and a gleaming Rolls nosed through the crowd. I made a hasty setting on my CANON and then had to back-peddle smartly as Ava swept through the startled faces towards me, flanked on either side by police, and guided up the steps by Mrs. Kramer. I had time for two quick shots and then it was all over. I remembered a vision in black slacks and a white jumper, and that was all.

I went back to my car and drove home, already working out the text of my covering article, turning it over in my head until I had the shape I wanted.

I spent the next three days processing and printing two dozen 10"x8" prints and another evening hammering out the text. There wasn't time for a careful re-write as Aston wanted everything for the April issue and the deadline for copy was the end of the week. I compromised by putting down everything pertinent and suggesting that he cut and splice to suit himself. Instead, he ran the 3000 words uncut, together with eight of the photos.

I received the galley proofs at the end of the following week and was satisfied with the result, although disappointed that a number of my best pictures had been put aside in favour of those with more 'mass' appeal, but such is the way of picture editors.

I had time for one small change. The leading page of the article



commemorating my first appearance in print ran the by-line "Pictures and Text by Leo J. Harding". I thought that looked rather clumsy, and not at all the sort of name that would stand out in company. I suggested to Aston that Lee Harding would look and sound better. He agreed and so the article was run under that by-line. (And I hope that explains everything to bewildered people like Dr. Jenssen!)

My previous experience with editors had left me unprepared for the jovial Mr. Aston. Over the previous few years I had run the gamut between cold rejection slips and the more encouraging notes of Mr. Carnell in London. Aston wrote like a fan and was as enthusiastic as all get-out. His letters always seemed to be typed out on a battered old typewriter and gave one the impression of a person in business for the fun as well as the fight. And he was certainly willing to lash out and be experimental, for my Kramer article had been more in the line of a picture story than the sort of article intended for the encouragement and intellectual enlightenment of timid amateur photographers. And the enthusiasm worked both ways. Between us we re-designed the cover logo, revamped the interior layout of the magazine and crossed letters frantically. This was my busiest, and most enthusiastic time in photo-journalism. Unfortunately it wasn't to last very long, but was destined to wear itself out like so many of my 'careers'. After a few months Aston commissioned me to write a monthly column of 600 words devoted to 35mm photography. For this I was paid the handsome sum of 2 guineas. (I had received 30/- per page for the Kramer coverage, pictures and text inclusive, but I had no complaints. Photo-journalism was something new and untried in Australia. A small circulation magazine such as PHOTO DIGEST couldn't afford to pay much to contributors. It was for love or nothing. The sad fact was that not even the mass circulation tabloids paid more than this struggling little magazine.)

The columns were the hardest writing I had ever done in my life. Of necessity I was recycling other people's work and presenting it in a different form, but I did try to break away from formulae and darkroom technique and establish a series of articles concentrating more on technique before the picture. I wanted to get people to think before they shot instead of monkeying around for hours in a darkroom.

I'll admit to acting the altruist. Aston printed all my stuff without a complaint, and although he never tired of pointing out that 90% of the people who frequented camera clubs and bought his magazine were idiots, I suppose he derived some pleasure from the thought that there were some people with an idea of the meaning of the photographic image. If he ever discovered that his hypothetical 10% didn't exist then his job would have hardly merited any further attention. From what I had gathered Aston had had a hard struggle to keep his magazine afloat during the first year of its existence, and it was comforting to see the circulation gradually rising over the next few months as fresh contributors began to



appear and more and more of the big advertisers were wooed and won over.

I had a second essay printed five months after the initial Kramer article. This time there was no text - several pages of pictures depicting a day in the life on an airport terminal, with captions by Aston. The column became an obligation, each month a little harder than the one before when it came to thinking of something fresh and interesting to write about, but it did keep my name before the public. I bought myself a second CANON and a Zele lens - and soon found that I had a lot of shiny new equipment that wasn't getting much use. I also owed a lot of money to the finance companies.

It was around the middle of the year that I came across the first mention in the local press of Fred Zinneman's plans to film THE SUNDOWNERS in Australia, and would be arriving with his location unit to begin shooting in New South Wales sometime in August.

I immediately wrote Aston asking if he was interested in another film coverage similar to the Kramer article, and if so could he try approaching the Sydney offices of Warner Bros. and arrange for me to be able to visit the unit as an officially assigned photographer, thus avoiding the frustration and unpleasantness I had risked in Melbourne? I was prepared to pay my own expenses for the trip and during the time I spent with the unit. It was out of the question to expect a magazine of such humble overhead to finance the project I had in mind. I hoped to use Aston's professional influence to provide me with a means of entry into the location unit and figured this would be a fair trade. What monies I received for the projected article would help to defray some of the expense, but I wasn't particularly concerned with the financial side of the venture. This would be for love.

Aston replied with enthusiasm and said he would look into the matter as soon as possible. In the meantime I followed the press for an announcement of the proposed location sites. I found out that these would be at Cooma, in the Snowy mountains just over the Victoria-NSW border, and at Port Augusta, far, far away in South Australia and quite out of the question with the limited amount of time I could safely take off from my regular job. It would have to be Cooma, three hundred and eighty miles from Melbourne.

And it was. I heard from Aston in late August, informing me that everything had been arranged and that I was to contact a Mr. Carl Coombs at the Alpine Hotel in Cooma as soon as I arrived - and that would have to be some time during the second week in September.

All very satisfactory indeed. I made a long distance call to the Alpine Hotel and tried to make a reservation for the four days I would be there, without success. Not only were most of the hotels booked out by the film unit, the manager sadly informed me, but the township was also

celebrating a festival of the snows, or something like that. I would be lucky to find any accomodation at all.

Rather crestfallen, I hung up. But I was prepared to sleep in the car if necessary, so I soon dismissed that setback, and concentrated on stocking up on film and making arrangements to take the necessary time off from work - and following the progress of Zinneman's location shooting.

I began the long trip late on a Thursday afternoon, and by nightfall had covered the first hundred miles. I stayed overnight at a bush pub and set out early the next morning to finish the remainder of the journey.

I had never been further than a hundred miles beyond the city and had quite frankly never contemplated so formidable a drive. For more than one hundred and fifty miles I drove through stark mountainous country, the road winding wearily, progressively higher into the alps, and the air becoming colder and colder as the miles slipped sluggishly by. The weather was uninspiring, for the already depressingly gloomy pall was accentuated by a heavy cloud cover, and I expected snow at any moment. For most of the journey the road was unmade, and a succession of graders was constantly at work keeping the surface navigable. The country itself was magnificent - great towering razorbacked mountains and sheer lush fields dropping away from the road. I had often heard of how breathtakingly beautiful our continent could be. I was now looking forward to a first hand confirmation of this remarkable truth, particularly to seeing snow in large quantities which would be something entirely new to me.



# the Sundowners

Somehow it never quite snowed. It didn't even rain. I arrived in Cooma at twilight and immediately scouted around in search of accomodation. Luckily, the first motel I approached had a VACANCY sign outside. I knocked discreetly on the office door and was rewarded with a smiling affable Pommie face.

"Yes?"

Well, I wanted a bed. At least until Monday.

"Sure, that'll be okay. Come inside for a moment."

While he made out a receipt and I paid in advance to his wife we exchanged the customary pleasantries: where I was from, what the weather was like and what great fun the Festival had been.

"I'll be working with the film unit for a few days" I mentioned, casually, feeling BIG.

A sudden hush enveloped the office. He stopped writing, halfway through the receipt and she just stared at me, suddenly alarmed.

"You're not...you're not one of them film people, are yuh?" my prospective host asked, eyes narrowing.

In some way I had made a blunder. I thought hastily and amended "no, I...ah, I'm not from the studio. I'm a free lance photographer." And went on to explain the purpose of my visit.

Gradually they both relaxed. "Oh, I see. For a moment I thought you were one of them." And proceed to finish making out the receipt.

"Have they been a...bit of a problem?" I ventured.

"PROBLEM?" he snorted. "We had to toss a bunch of them out last week. Noisiest bastards I've ever come across. Wouldn't have any of them again for QUIDS."

I took the receipt, wondering what sort of film people had been so offensive. It would have had to have been some of those obnoxious extras, I figured. Certainly not anyone from the production unit for they would have all been housed in the main hotels and not distributed so far from the

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centre of activity. I recalled the loud-mouthed crushing bores I had met during the Kramer filming - the glossy shallow women with their effete young men who had been scooped from the cess-pool of television commercials and Rothman's theatre ads. to perform their tiny functions as extras in street scenes. One could be excused for assuming that, on the basis of their behaviour, they were what one thought of as 'movie people', when in reality they were as far removed from the dedicated workers on the set as can possibly be imagined.

My host offered me a grim word of warning before showing me to my room. "Just so long as you don't bring any of them back here..."

I assured him that there would be no chance of that.

Once I had unpacked my things and settled in I drove back into town to the Alpine Hotel. The lobby was filled with people. I went over to the desk and delivered my message, which was immediately broadcast to all and sundry over the hotel's PA system.

"Paging Mr. Coombs, Mr. Carl Coombs."

I dutifully waited while butterflies wearing hobnailed boots beat a tattoo on my stomach.

And then this little sparrow of a guy came tripping through the crowded foyer, head swinging around in search of somebody. He had dark wavy hair and a visage Leigh Brackett would describe as "lean and hawk-like", and he wore skintight pants, a dark blue sports shirt and a pair of those high cowboy boots.

"Mr....Coombs?" I hinted.

He spun around, stopped, and smiled. "Yes?"

"My name is Harding, Lee Harding. I'm representing PHOTO DIGEST. Mr. Aston contacted you in Sydney..." Bearing in mind the Rotherham-Miller fiasco I made that last sound more like a question than a statement of fact.

Only for a moment did he seem non-plussed, his forehead furrowed in concentration, and then he brightened. "Oh yes. You're interested in covering the production side, aren't you?"

I agreed that I was.

"Well look, "he went on, "I'm at dinner at the moment, but could you come along to my office at seven in the morning and I'll explain the shooting schedule? Then we'll go out to Nimmitabel."

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I thanked him. "That would be fine, Mr. Coombs."

"Good." He explained quickly where his office was located, and then excused himself and hurried off towards the dining room. Only then did I begin to feel hungry.

Cooma is a tourist town. It is made up of motels, hotels and restaurants, and everything is expensive. It also boasts a genuine cosmopolitan population - something like forty different languages are spoken by the residents. In the heart of the Snowy mountains, it has become the centre of the vast construction programme that has been gnawing at the old mountains for more than twelve years, and will continue to do so for many more until the immense dams are completed and the miles upon miles of tunnel driven through massive rock are finished.

I found it quite unlike the country townships I had known, and I wandered down the main street in a sort of daze while I tried to locate familiar landmarks. I found the customary square with the wooden rotunda for the Sunday band, and the remains of festivities. Tattered streamers drooped forlornly upon the grass, the wind blew tiredly across the street. The once-a-year festival was over, and I still hadn't found a place to eat.

I had passed by a number of cafes because their prices put me off, besides I didn't feel like a steak.

Then I passed what looked like an Italian restaurant, turned back, and went inside.

The place was nearly empty. Only two other tables were occupied. The lighting was agreeably dim and I settled down at a table near the window and contemplated the delicious silence. This was more like a restaurant.

An immaculate waiter brought me a menu. My eyes almost bugged out of my head when I saw the prices, and noticed one of my neighbours opening a bottle of wine.

When the waiter came back I said, rather weakly, that I would like some spaghetti bolognese, and perhaps something else later on. He took the menu and made off. I settled back in my chair with an almost audible "whew!" Already I was up for nine bob - what sort of town was this anyway?

More to the point, what kind of restaurant was the CASBAH?

My spaghetti I took my time over. A few more people - jolly well-dressed people - came in and the sputter of gaiety began to percolate around the room. And I had a growing suspicion.

The waiter returned.

"Pancake" I muttered weakly, and added another four and six onto my bill. "And coffee -- black."

There was a curtained area down at the far end of the room. While I sipped my coffee reflectively and contemplated the forthcoming pancake, a great beefy character in a red tuxedo and a wide black moustache walked over and pulled back the curtains.

I gazed glumly at the bandstand thus revealed, and at the exotic decor behind.

My suspicions were therewith confirmed: the CASBAH was a night club, and I had stumbled upon it in all ignorance. I almost choked on the last of my coffee.

I finished the miserable pancake in record time, paid my bill and scurried out of the door while the early arrivals entered upon their night of sin and debauchery. And I went to sleep when it was obvious that the residents of Cooma were just waking up.

Coombs' office was a tiny room in a solicitor's building in the main street. I was there at seven, as directed, and this agreeable little PR man soon put my in the scene.

He began by handing me a call sheet for the day, and giving a brief rundown on the scenes to be shot.

"Then I presume you'll be wanting to meet Zinneman and Hildyard and people like that?"

"Er, yes. And I'd like to just generally wander around and follow the action of the unit," I said, and explained my previous experience with Kramer's unit.

A rather pained expression came over Coombs' face. "Ah, I wouldn't mention Mr. Kramer's name to Zinneman," he cautioned. My eyes said "oh?" "It's not a relationship of which Zee likes to be reminded."

"Oh," I said. "I..see. I gather then, that their relations were not harmonious in Kramer's days as a producer?"

He just gave an embarrassed sort of smile. "Well, let's just say that it would be tactful not to mention any of the films Zee made for Kramer."

I didn't pursue the matter. Instead we discussed Zinneman's OTHER movies, and would THE SUNDOWNERS be made in cinemascope?

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"Certainly not," Coombs explained "Zee doesn't like the wide screen."

No? I mentioned the recent OKLAHOMA...

"Not one of his favourite films. He prefers to forget it."

Um. Well, so much for the sensitive artist.

That morning the unit was located at Nimmitabel, a rather loosely-named 'township' some six miles from Cooma. They had set up shop at a nearby homestead, and to reach it we had to leave Coombs' Holden and walk several hundred yards on foot.

The day was dark and dismal, like those that had preceded it.

"We should have been through here weeks ago," the little man complained, "but the darned weather just won't let up."

There weren't as many cars and trucks around the unit as I had expected. There were a lot of people grouped around a large area of corrals to the rear of the homestead, and this was the direction in which Coombs was heading. Closer, and I began to make out individual figures: a couple of men with walkie-talkie sets strapped across their backs, two cameras, one a 16mm Arriflex of unknown function, several monstrous carbon arc lamps and a couple of photographers. The remainder merged into an homogenous group located around a blue kombiwagen. There was about the whole scene a marvelous air of indolence. This was explained by the fact that the cast and crew were indulging in their favourite pastime: waiting for the sun to come out. I noticed a couple of guys sprawled out in deckchairs, asleep. Or just dozing. But about the kombiwagen there was a general air of busy frivolity.



"...venereal smears" said Robert Mitchum, and roared with laughter.

I did a doubletake, but sure enough it was him. And entertaining some male members of the crew with a recitation from one of those typewritten 'jokes' held in one hand while he leaned against the van with the other. He was wonderfully made up to look the part of a typical(?) Australian drover, dressed in a dirty grey denim shirt, trousers and an old leather jacket. A dirty slouch hat completed the costume. I had to admit that he looked the part.

But Coombs was leading me in another direction, and before I realised  
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jack hildyard

director of photography

what was happening I was being introduced to a handsome man in his early forties. He wore a knitted cap and a heavy garbadine raincoat. He was Jack Hildyard.

Said Coombs "this is Lee Harding. He'll be covering the production side of the movie."

"How do you do" I stammered. I had never conducted a genuine interview in my life, but for the sake of appearances and also for Coombs' benefit I took a stab at it.

"And what do you think of our early morning sunlight?" I asked, just to get the conversation going.

He shrugged. "Nothing wrong with it. It just doesn't come out until midday."

He wore a special filter around his neck like a pince-nez, through which he could occasionally take a quick look at the sky, judging when the wan sunlight would reach a sufficiently high Kelvin temperature to allow the shooting of a few precious feet of colour film.

I stumbled into the breach I had made and tried to appear every inch the professional I was not. After a while the little PR man wandered off to conduct some more business elsewhere, and I began to relax a little. I walked a short distance away from the main group with Hildyard and we both paused and contemplated an approaching break in the dark clouds.

"It's been like this for weeks," he commented. But if he felt frustrated it didn't show, and there was something about this quietly-spoken, endlessly-patient and almost shy person that seemed to me to embody all that I imagined typified the conscientious film-maker.

I had become conscious of the lack of American accents about me, and realised that there was a vast difference between this unit and Kramer's. For one thing this was primarily a British unit, only the director and his personal staff hailing from the Hollywood capital. Then there was the lonely seclusion of the location and the lack of security precautions necessary in a film of Kramer's type, and there was the great difference in national temperament between British and American film-makers. There was a complete absence of tension on the set, and I got the immediate impression of a more personal and relaxed atmosphere that was no doubt a reflection of the director's personality as well.

Hobson's Choice — The Bridge on the River Kwai

— Summer Madness — The SUNDOWNERS

I managed to get Hildyard talking about THE BRIDGE ON THE

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RIVER KWAI, but only with difficulty. There was nothing of the verbose technician about him. Every reply I received seemed to come from his lip only with great reluctance. His general remark was that the Lean film had been "hell to work on" and that he wouldn't like to go through such a venture again. I formed the impression that, although troubled by the inclement Cooma weather, he found it a relaxation after the intense struggle of the Ceylonese jungles.

A shadow moved near my elbow - and there was Coombs again. "I'd like you to meet Mr. Zinneman, Lee" he announced, and I turned around to greet a demure little man clutching a script under one arm, a quaint Austrian-style hat perched on his head and dressed neatly in a zippered brown jacket and fawn pants. He smiled and extended his hand. "Very pleased to meet you, Mr. Harding. I understand you will be with us for a few days?"

I concurred, quite surprised by the gentle quality in this man's manner. He was quite unlike my preconceived ideas of a film director. Then and there I tossed out such ideas and left my mind open to this new and remarkably rich world I was moving in - unobstructed, at ease, and not hiding behind someone else's camera.

**fred**

**zinneman; director**

From Here to Eternity -- High Noon -- The Men  
-- The Nun's Story -- Oklahoma -- The SUNDOWNERS

At this moment Hildyard sneaked away to his cameramen, and Coombs again moved off, mumbling something about "leaving you to it."

Zinneman is a nervous man who doesn't like sitting down for any great length of time.

"It dulls the mind" he explained. We immediately started walking about the paddock, and while Zinneman stole anxious glances at the sky we discussed the production. He explained his dislike of cinemascope and how he felt that the ratio they were shooting THE SUNDOWNERS in was a satisfactory compromise between the traditional and the wide-screen 1 to 1.75 ratio.

"The letterbox screen just doesn't adapt to closeups," he went on, "and it's not a very personal medium. Just think of it - there was a scene in OKLAHOMA where you could have driven a jeep through Shirley Jones' nostril!"

After some discourse on the nature of the new techniques, he admitted sadly, that his most successful wide-screen shot had been "a view of the Brooklyn Bridge."

And then we bumped into Hildyard.

"I think we might try again, Zee," he announced, inclining his cap heavenwards.

"All right". Zinneman spun around and began calling out directions in a quiet unruffled tone. The unit, which had seemed indolent and half-asleep, sprang quickly into action. Carbons sizzled, walkie-talkies began to buzz and there was a general movement towards the fore of the cameras. Even the sheep seemed interested.

Yes, the sheep. There were twelve hundred of them grouped in the paddock and they were the most reactionary and stubborn actors I have ever seen.

With such activity going on around me I thought it was about time I took some pictures. I sidled over and discreetly took some closeups of Peter Ustinov. He was standing half-way up a step-ladder reading a copy of the Sydney OBSERVER. He raised one eyebrow curiously at my sudden appearance and then, my person identified, coded and filed away for future reference, he returned his attention to his paper.

I kept well away from Mitchum. I had formed the impression that he had no time for journalists and less for photographers. It was an impression amply supported by his lugubrious expression whenever I was around.

I discovered three other photographers working with the unit. Two were busy making stills during the rehearsals, but there was one other who was very much on his own. This, I discovered, was Sanford Roth, on assignment for LIFE. A little withered gnome of a man obsessed with photography as an Art. He wore jungle garb and had three NIKON cameras slung across his chest. And he was everywhere. While the stills boys contented themselves with standing by the main camera setup and grabbing their photographs quickly and unobtrusively during the run-throughs, Sanford called the paddock his oyster and was likely to pop up anywhere at the most unlikely moments. Several times that morning the cameras had to stop rolling while Zinneman called out "Sanford, get the hell out of there! You're on camera!"

His enthusiasm was striking and it wasn't long before I discovered that, unlike the only other photo-journalist I had briefly met (Wayne Miller), not only was Roth a dedicated artist but also one with very definite aims and ideals - and a determined manner of expressing them. He criticised the American photographers for being "in full flight from reality" but on the other hand admired the better photo-journalists. "I would not say that American photographers have no technical skill. On the contrary, I think they have great technical skill. What they also have is an ability to put this skill at the back of their minds (where it belongs) and concentrate on getting good pictures. To me this is more important than technique for the sake of technique. The Americans have

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learned to discard this when the picture is more important than the means. In this way I think they are producing work that is far more alive and vital than the restrictions of technique impose."

I tossed Wayne Miller's name into the discussion.

"Wayne? Oh sure, know him well."

And had he seen Wayne's recent book, THE WORLD IS YOUNG?

"Yeah, yeah, I've seen it..."

I showed my enthusiasm for what I thought was a truly remarkable essay in the field of photo-journalism. Over a period of years Miller had taken thousands of pictures of his four children in their various stages of growth and had assembled a very beautiful book from his files. It was left to the redoubtable Sanford to shatter some of my illusions.

"Oh, it was a fine enough book," he said, but there was an angry look in his eyes. "But it was all so precious," and he waved both hands in a vague effete gesture, suggesting that Miller's book had lacked a certain vigour. "Sure kids are sweet and lovely and likeable, but there comes a time when they turn mean and want to throw their weight around. They want to hurt you. They are, for a time, vicious little animals when they are not busy being sweet and nice. Miller failed to show this side of their nature, and I think this was a grave mistake. The result is a book with a one-sided and rosy look at childhood, and it's not correct."

I thought of Miller and how impressed I had been by a warm and compassionate young man, and was forced to concede that Roth's was a valid criticism of a book that, when all was said and done, was perhaps a trifle too precious.

But what of the much admired German school, I asked?

He dismissed it with a deprecatory wave of the hand. "That? It's clinical, so static, so very, very dead. The Germans are excellent technicians but unfortunately, I think, they take themselves too serious seriously. I think that their work is a prime example of the pursuit of technique at the expense of everything else. Everything is so stylised, so self-consciously composed. There is something more vital to photograph than this. And we have a similar approach in Japan - a duplication of nature but without the important concept of life. What is creative about that?"

Just for laughs, I asked his opinion of the American West Coast School of 'frozen life'.

And he shrugged. "There's no discounting the work of men like Edward  
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sanford  
roth

Weston, but we can't throw photography back thirty years. Michealangelo was a great painter in his day but now we have a new form of art to interpret this modern age. Photography must do the same. After all, any fool can stop a camera down to f. 64. This is Art?"

All this is a matter of minutes. And it was all very illuminating. But there was Peter Ustinov again and I excused myself and made off to make some more pictures.

The clouds parted and inundated the unit with wan sunlight. The first take focussed on Ustinov and his ladder, supposedly speaking some lines to Bob Mitchum while mounted on horseback.

"Detestable animals," he complained when he finally had to mount up for a long shot. "Ah well, in SPARTACUS they made me ride a donkey...."

He couldn't ride a horse either, and he managed to give the impression that each moment spent in the saddle was one of incalculable agony. A double did all of his riding, but Mitchum was a fine horseman and spent his spare time galloping happily around the paddocks, an enthusiasm engendered, no doubt, from his long association with horse opera.

With Ustinov in the saddle at last, another take was announced. Mitchum dismounted and took up a position in front of Ustinov's horse. A brief rehearsal, and the take went something like this:

MITCHUM: If you're going to act like a drover then you may as well look like one. Take off that silly flaming hat.

USTINOV: Let me tell you something about this 'hat', my good man...

MITCHUM: And don't call me your 'good man'.

USTINOV: Oh? What would you prefer then, 'boss'?

MITCHUM: It'll do. (turning around to mount up)

USTINOV: This hat, as you call it, once belonged to the captain of a China clipper.

MITCHUM: Oh? What happened to him?

USTINOV: Nothing happened to him. He's just not going to call you 'boss', that's all...

"After all, any fool can stop a camera down to f/64. This is art?"

They ran through this scene four times, shooting from a different position for each take. When Zinneman was satisfied with the scene the site was

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struck and the equipment moved a hundred yards further down the paddock where the 1200 sheep were patiently waiting for their cue.

Sheep are funny animals, wayward and stupid enough at any time, and not the sort of actors Disney would think of grandeurising. And they are not exactly given to obeying instructions.

The idea was to make a shot of the wagon moving off, followed by Bob Mitchum and Ustinov's double on horseback, and then the sheep. While the sun disappeared behind the clouds, assistant director Peter Bolton tried to organise the scene. Peter is a tall skinny Pommie with a voice so strident that he rarely, if ever, resorts to the use of the loud-hailer: he would have made an excellent sar'major. And on this particular day he sported a fantastic red hooter as evidence of the fierce ultra-violet that bathed the mountain ranges at that time of the year.

The sun came out again. The extras and doubles were all ready. Bob Mitchum galloped around impatiently and Ustinov sat beside the cameras staring disinterestedly at the sheep.

"All right everybody," Zinneman announced. "This is a take."

As the word "Action!" sprang from Bolton's lips the wagon and the horsemen moved off, and the sheep refused to budge. They just stood there staring into the cameras.

Bolton threw up his hands in disgust. "Cut it...cut it". Zinneman wore a pained expression - the first of the morning. A few of the grip men loaned a helping hand to the "technical advisors" (i.e. professional stockmen) in an effort to get the stubborn animals moving, but all to no avail. Jack Hildyard was turning despairing eyes sunwards and seemed just about ready to take a savage bite out of the Arriflex.

It looked like a stalemate - until Peter Bolton stalked past the cameras and tried some Peaceful Confrontation. He stood facing the foremost sheep for a few moments and then got down on his hands and knees and spread both of his arms wide. "Please, pretty sheep. Come on now, be good little sheep and just move over to the left a little bit, eh?"

The leading sheep stared back for a moment, and then hustled sideways obediently. Behind them, the rest of the empty-headed flock followed suit.

A terrible exultation leapt into the assistant director's weary eyes. He stood up, slowly, so as not to disturb them. "Oh, GOOD sheep! Now, just a little bit forward - that's right! Oh, that's very right!"

The sheep were now in the desired position to begin the take. A great cheer went up from the crew as Bolton turned around, smiling for the first time that morning.



The cameras rolled and this time the sheep moved off in the wake of the wagon.

"Hold it!"

Zinneman's voice. Loud and angry. His eyes were strained to make out a dim figure on the horizon, then: "Sanford, will you get the hell out of there - this is a take!"

More precious minutes were lost while our ubiquitous photo-journalist scurried off-camera and the scene was set up again, this time with really splendid cooperation from the sheep.

They completed three takes before noon and then the unit took time off for lunch.

I followed Sanford over to where the mobile kitchen was parked against a great open tent with tables and chairs underneath. I got in the line with the rest of the crew and managed to bluff my way into some food. Then I went back to the tables and sat down with the rest of the photographers. Sanford was on my right.

"Now you take those French photographers," he said (We had been having a sort of running discussion all morning, interrupted only when one of us broke off to take some pictures, and then Sanford would take up the discussion where he had left off as if there had been no intervening time whatever.), "they're the best in the world. Pick up any issue of PARIS MATCH, JOUR DE FRANCE, REALITES - why, they live. Those boys are always experimenting, always forging ahead in new directions..."

George Higgins, one of the two stills photographers, was on my left, and in between Sanford's outbursts I found him quite interesting to talk with. He had worked with film companies for many years and was as friendly and unassuming as the little American was dynamic and forceful. He liked to talk about the various films he had worked on, and in this instance I learned some very interesting things. For example, he explained how, in shooting John Huston's MOBY DICK, they had, in one instance, printed a black and white negative over a colour positive to give an eerie effect to some scenes in the open sea and

"It's not the fault of the photographers," Sanford was saying (referring to the current decline in American photo-journalism as printed in the major magazines such as LIFE), "it's the way the stuff gets edited. They get a lot of marvelous material from top notch photographers and then louse it up somewhere along the line. Take that recent feature on Audrey Hepburn in THE NUN'S STORY which I did for LIFE. They paid me a small fortune for a full essay - sent me halfway across the world to the Congo, and what happens? They ran a colour shot of Audrey on the cover and a

handful of pics on the inside pages. A "full essay"? I ask you...."

Just to cheer him up I mentioned the rates Australian photographers could expect. His mouth dropped open and he stared at me in silence for fully ten seconds.

"Thirty bob a page?"

I nodded. "That's the going rate. Of course, that's only the specialist magazines - I understand the tabloids and weeklies have a sliding scale. A guinea a pic or something like that."

He frowned. "Guinea....that's only about a pound, isn't it?"

"And one shilling. And they like babies and swans best."

A glazed expression came over him and he shook his head sadly from side to side. "Why, that's...that's less than two dollars per photograph..." And then his eyes narrowed shrewdly. "But you must be getting more than that?"

I took a quick look around me to make sure that Coombs was out of earshot, and then quickly whispered the truth to Sanford. That I was making this trip for the fun of it, not for money, and it would hardly have been worth my while for the latter. And then, just to drive the point home I told him the local prices of the NIKON and CANON cameras, some 300% up on what he would pay back home in the States. After that he went pale and fell to muttering under his breath and staring at the darkening sky.

I found myself pondering on the cameras that were around me. Sanford carried three NIKONS, one loaded with B & W and the other two with colour. He also carried three others. I found myself using my 100mm lens most of the time, whereas Stanford was using a wide-angle 35mm lens. He preferred the perspective of that lens. George Higgins and Ken Danvers (the other stills worker) used the 2 1/4" square format. And there were a couple of Polaroids in use, but only by Hildyard's camera crew to determine exposure and lighting set-ups. I have always maintained that this camera is an ideal instrument for such purposes, and was delighted to see it being put to use in this manner. And here was Sanford again...

"I like subtle colour. Colour that conveys mood and does not need to employ a red sweater on a blonde to become 'good' colour. Here in Australia I think mainly in terms of soft, neutral colours. That is the colour of your country. Anything else would be a misstatement." (See cover)

I think I said "um", and immediately grabbed the opportunity of Zinneman's being near to get some pictures of the director with his prize photo-journalist. And while Sanford demonstrated the intricacies of one of his NIKONS for Zinneman's benefit, Peter Ustinov joined the group.



**peter ustinov** To begin with, everything you have ever imagined about Ustinov as an actor, as a personality, on or off the screen, is absolutely correct, only more so. The man is a genius, a fountain of talent, what is often referred to as the twentieth century embodiment of the Renaissance Man. Not only has he distinguished himself as a playwright, stage and film director-producer and an actor of exceptional merit, but in between times he manages to manufacture an increasingly important image as a writer. Ustinov the actor is in the enviable position of being completely free to choose the roles that appeal to him, whether they be star parts or minor roles.

"There was one exception" he lamented. "That was a role in THE EGYPTIAN that I had to take because my contract said so. A terrible film. Fortunately I never saw it."

He also re-writes most of his own dialogue and some of his co-workers' if the occasion warrants, and in this regard I gathered that Zinneman gave him much more freedom than some directors he had worked with.

"Zee is an actor's director" he explained. "He leaves an awful lot to you. In a way I suppose he's my sort of director."

I took that to mean that they were both artists more concerned with the humanity of man and the exposition of character through the medium of the cinema screen than with the sheer thrill of technique.

But for those moments when they were captured in my viewfinder they were just two pleasant people clowning away like mad, because conversing with Ustinov is something of a game - a sort of blindman's buff tete a tete. You never know where your next sentence is going to lead you or what fresh sport you have provided for the sparkling wit of this giant, for although short in stature and broad of girth, Ustinov moved through the unit like a true giant among pigmies. I can recall a moment when, almost in the same breath, Ustinov manoeuvred the conversation from King Alfred's disastrous burning of the cakes to the subsequent decline in English culinary art.

Zinneman looked concerned. "Peter," he said, "you look too Russian."

Ustinov's face lengthened, his shoulders slumped, and he ambled away, most disconsolate. Presently he returned, the letters CCCP pasted on his cap. He was bright-faced, and wore the cap with obvious pleasure for the rest of the day.

And how did he react to photographers?

I can only illustrate this by citing an incident. Early that morning I had approached him, timidly, between takes, and enquired if he would object to posing for a few photographs.

"Certainly not, young man," he replied in the manner of an outraged the gryphon

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aunt. "Go right ahead."

How different this was from the reaction I had received from Tony Perkins, who had only given me a dirty look and complained "don't you ever get tired of taking pictures?"

Another discovery I made that afternoon was that the stars of the film are never referred to as such - they are the Principals. And shortly after lunch the Principals were whisked away from the set and back to whatever they had to do in Cooma for the rest of the day, along with most of the mechanical side of the unit. Zinneman, Hildyard, Bolton and a few others drove off in a small convoy to go through the processes of making a 'line-up' for the next day's shooting. It was now time for some obnoxious extras to make like they were the 'stars' of THE SUNDOWNERS.

I had given them passing notice earlier in the day, but now that they were cast out naked and exposed from the rest of the unit I found them nauseating and irritating in the extreme. Presumably these were the people who had caused such consternation to Cooma, and it wasn't difficult to see why. I had seen their type before in the twittering, gushing exhibitionist strutting around the perimeter of Kramer's Frankston set; the adolescent showoffs from the TV and advertising world. There was one young chap in particular who had become the object of malicious dislike from most members of the unit - a local lad of sixteen or so who was standing in for Micheal Anderson Jr. He strutted and preened and tossed out orders like a little Fauntleroy and generally made himself the most objectionable person around. I even caught Ustinov staring at him with studied venom a number of times, presumably anticipating some dreadful punishment for this detestable child.

If I learnt anything of importance during my trip it was that the artists, the people who are really at the top and are conscious of the task they have set themselves, are really only working. It is the might-have-beens, the would-bes and the no-hopers straddled not even half way up the ladder of fame who strut and pout and act as if they are genius incarnate.

The stand-in takes up the position of the Principal during the lengthy lighting and camera setups, and goes through this same routine in advance when the director and his cameramen are lining up a forthcoming shot before the heavy artillery is moved into place. This Miss Kerr's stand-in proceeded to do with as much wriggling and bust pouting as she could manage to attract attention. All day she had stalked boldly around the set in skin-tight riding britches and a scarlet sweater stretched tightly across two bulging prominent breasts. And she wriggled and she gesticulated and she made marvelous faces, but nobody cared. Hildyard studied her in his viewfinder and Zinneman cocked his head to one side and saw the scene as he envisioned it. She was just part of the background.

So much for the unpleasant features of the day. I had overheard a mention that there would be 'fire' scenes coming up and, choosing a moment

when Zinneman was alone and available, I approached him and broached the subject of future scenes.

"Oh, so you will be staying with us a while? That is good. We hope to be shooting the fire scene on Monday and that should be very interesting for you, although I must ask you not to take any pictures. We will be using some very special effects and we naturally wouldn't like to have these, ah, exposed. You understand?"

I did, and although I would have liked to have continued shooting the important thing was to remain with the unit. "Of course Mr Zinneman," I promised, "just as you say."

And then the line-up was completed and everybody went back to headquarters.

Sunday was a day off for all concerned. Bob Mitchum went fishing with the stills photographers, Zinneman studied up on his script and, presumably, Ustinov spent some time catching up on a few languages. (He found that one of the nicest things about Cooma - the great variety of languages spoken) I spent the morning sight-seeing in and around Cooma, soaking up some of the lethargic Spring sunshine and at times gloomily contemplating my impending departure. The more one becomes accustomed to artistic freedom the less one is attracted to the prosaic fumblings of a day-to-day existence. Given the necessary courage it is possible to shrug aside this burden and get on with it ... whatever it is. But at this moment and at this time ... not yet. Later, perhaps, when the time is right. But how does one know and what is the point of waiting?

After lunch I went driving through the hills, following the trail blazed by Zinneman's scouts and playing tag with the various location spots scattered through a thirty-five mile radius of the township. Sundry arrows painted on boards and mounted on stakes driven into the side of the road indicated "first location", "second location" and so on. For the benefit of the fire sequences it would be necessary to move further on after each take to a similar locale and re-shoot what was necessary. I had no idea of what sort of effects would be used, but it was evident that, whatever means were employed, the result would be a burnt-out area.

That night it snowed, but by seven o'clock the next morning there was nothing to indicate this. The savage morning sunlight had soon sucked up any moisture from the hard soil and when I arrived at the first location it was just another sunny day - but it was the unit's first in many, many weeks.

There was only a caravan and some 'technical advisors' getting some horses and dogs ready for the day's shooting when I arrived. It was biting-cold despite the sun, and I kept walking about just to keep warm. The  
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car park was located a good quarter mile from the location site and separated from the unit by several turns and dips through a densely timbered highway. I had left my car there and was wandering idly through some of the trees high up on the hillside when I heard the growl of heavy trucks and voices in the distance. And then the first footsteps making their way up the dirt road towards the location.

Zinneman was the first to appear, nattily dressed and with script tucked under his arm as always. He saw me and waved a greeting. Some of the sunlight seemed to have entered this smiling man and there was a warmth and purpose about him and his assistants that seemed to presage a successful day's shooting.

The time was seven forty-five. Two large trucks trundled up the road and pulled up at the location site a few hundred yards ahead and began to disgorge technicians and equipment. Cameras were rolled out and set up (the Arriflex that filmed alongside the bulkier Mitchell was, I discovered, strictly a 'rushes' camera. The colour film had to be flown back to the USA for processing at the end of each day's shooting. Zinneman and his team studied the B & W rushes provided by the Arriflex to determine the quality of the scenes bereft of colour. If there were any mistakes in lighting or interpretation they could be corrected immediately instead of waiting for the colour rushes to arrive back from the States.) While Zinneman lined up his opening shot with Hildyard the 'extras' appeared.

1200 sheep.

The scene would turn out like this: there would be a wagon in the foreground with Miss Kerr and Mike Anderson Jr. seated up front. Behind them the sheep and around them the beginnings of smoke from a forest fire. Mitchum was to gallop up from the rear and pull alongside the wagon and holder "danger!" to Miss Kerr and Co., directing them to get a bloody move on and saying that he would meet them further on.

It wasn't quite so simple - the sheep saw to that. The problem of moving them successfully in an open paddock had been child's play compared to making them behave sensibly on a narrow mountain road bounded on either side by distracting and enticing scenery.

Mr. Sid Bedig and his bag of special effects arrived and began operations. He directed a dozen or more men to the outlying fringe of the scene carrying instruments remarkably like blowtorches, only they exuded a dense purple smoke. While the scene rolled on they wandered up and down out of range waving their smoke-makers gracefully in the air while behind them a wind-machine hummed quietly at minimum velocity - sufficient to waft the smoke delicately across the foreground and no more.

By eleven o'clock they had been in action for two and a half hours

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had only completed two takes. The sheep were completely unpredictable and unmanagable. When they weren't darting off the road down the hillside they were jamming together and making Mitchum's gallop wagonwards impossible. He swore and he yelled and he sailed right into those damned sheep and they couldn't have cared less. I have never seen such irresponsible actors in my life.

I saw little hope of witnessing any big fire scenes. With four takes in the can Zinneman was far from satisfied. I had learnt enough in my few days to realise that this sort of thing could continue indefinitely. There was little for me to do but amble around the unit taking the odd photograph and keeping well away from the special effects lest I incur the wrath of Zinneman.

Roth and wrath was what we got. Patience had been pushed to the limit that morning and tempers were beginning to simmer. At the moment in question Zinneman had moved in for a closeup of Miss Kerr and young Mike Anderson on the wagon. Sanford, mistaking a take for a rehearsal - or simply forgetting himself in his enthusiasm - clicked off some quick frames. Unfortunately right under the directors nose. I have never heard a camera shutter sound so monstrously loud as it did at that moment.

Zinneman looked around. "Sanford," he exploded, exasperated, "will you get the hell out of there and go hide yourself somewhere?" And to underline the utter seriousness of his request he demanded that ALL photographers leave the scene of operations for a distance of thirty feet. Of course this meant me as well, but perhaps Zinneman wouldn't have been quite so upset if it hadn't been for the fact that ever since the charming Miss Kerr had appeared on the set a bewildering array of hand-cameras had appeared from nowhere. And an omnibus had just pulled up on the highway and disgorged a number of spectators - also with cameras.

Rather disgruntled and with his nose obviously out-of-joint, Sanford retreated muttering under his breath. "Goddamn jerks," he grunted - referring no doubt to the sudden influx of shutterbugs.

I felt pretty miserable myself, so I turned about and went over and sat down on a burnt-out log next to Peter Ustinov. We all had nothing to do for hours yet as Zinneman patiently, but with increasing strain, put his Principals and his sheep through their paces. There were 14 takes.

Ustinov didn't seem at all bothered and was utterly at peace with the world. I think that the quality that most impressed me about him was his complete lack of snobbery and that icy professionalism that seems to characterize so many involved in The Arts. As we sat together and talked from one hour to another I felt that we could have, without any effort, exchanged places, so completely free was our conversation. Whether I was a seasoned photographer or just a clever confidence man - I don't think it really mattered. We just...talked. And glanced occasionally in the



direction of Hildyard's cameras just to see how things were making out.

I learnt that Ustinov was of Russian-English parentage, and that he spoke 'at least twelve' languages with a reasonable degree of fluency. When I enquired of his reasons for accepting the role of Venneker in THE SUNDOWNERS he replied that it was mainly because the part was completely unlike anything he had done before. "And of course, to work with Zee," he added, making that seem more important than the role or the trip to Australia. It was obvious that he had a very high regard for Zinneman and his methods. "Rather different from Kubrick, you know."

He had only just completed his final scenes in SPARTACUS before leaving for Australia, and I got the impression that his relations with the wonder-boy of Hollywood had not been so harmonious.

Well, how did he feel about Stanley Kubrick as a director?

"Ah...". He appeared to think about the matter for a moment. "I suppose you could say that he's seen an awful lot of films. Anyone so obsessed with technique must have."

And only a few months previously Kubrick had paid \$150000 for the film rights to Nabokov's LOLITA.

"He approached me about the possibility of doing a script," Ustinov said, "but I declined. Frankly I couldn't see a way to do it without doing an injustice to a remarkable book. As a matter of fact I think he's just about given the idea away."

But he didn't, and we have had the movie version of LOLITA that couldn't possibly do an injustice to a book it hardly resembled but was, instead, a brilliant move in its own right.

I found out that his most recent work, prior to arriving in Australia, had been some location shooting in Turkey, of all places. He assumed a worried visage and commented "I couldn't get out of the place quick enough."

"Oh? Why was that?"

"Too many people looking like me."

And while we sat letting the sun scorch our backs and were becoming deliciously drowsy, Ustinov's stand-in walked over and joined us. The scrunch, scrunch of his booted feet merged indistinctly with the uncertain sounds of the unit that now seemed to come from far far away.

Seeing the two Peters together I fumbled for my camera and took a few quick shots of them. Ustinov's eyes sparkled. "Ah...huh! I get it - a

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sort of "which twin has the Toni?" eh?"

I had just let go of the camera and settled back on the log when two enthusiastic young chaps with a tape recorder and Australian Broadcasting Commission accents swooped down upon us and began readying Ustinov for a radio interview. He disposed of them very efficiently. Instead of asking questions they were left gasping for air most of the time as the rapier-like wit of their subject neatly pierced and dissected their good intentions. They packed up and left with dazed expressions, wondering perhaps what had happened to the well-organised interview they had planned?

They were still having fun with the sheep thirty feet away. Ken Danvers drifted our way, obviously bored with the whole lengthy business. His eyes lit on Ustinov and his stand-in and he was soon whirling his MAMIYAFLEX into action. He hunkered down in front of the log and peered into his finder. Ustinov smiled sweetly at his double.

"Do something," Danvers wailed.

"Such as?" Ustinov inquired.

Without looking up, the stills photographer gestured with his free hand. "Oh - have a conversation or something."

"Good." Ustinov turned to his double and said innocently "Do you play tennis old chap?"

"Yes."

"Jolly good. We must play some doubles some time."

Ustinov shares with Zinneman a lack of affinity with the cinemascope screen, although he was intrigued with the possibilities of the new medium. "I have often toyed with the idea" he explained "of turning the cinemascope screen upright and filming a life of el Greco....or a film of the conquest of the Matterhorn." And we both agreed that that supreme application of wide-screen technique had so far been ignored by all of the top directors.

"Can you think of anything more insidious" he asked (his face took a sinister cast) "than a withered, trembling hand inserting a poison-pen letter into a mail-box slot...?"

In the early days of the mammoth screen he had had some peculiar experiences. In those days directors and their cameramen had to make up completely new rules as they went along to accomodate the incredible distortions of the giant screen.

"There was one time when we were filming with Micheal Curtiz. The  
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picture was WE'RE NO ANGELS, and it was being made in VISTA-VISION, Paramount's own personal brand of giganticism..."

Assuming the German-born director's accent, he continued...

"I vuold like you to visper in madam's ear," said Curtiz, madam being a forgotten dame of the screen by name of Joan Bennett.

"What will I whisper?" asked Ustinov.

"Anything. Doesn't matter. Just visper."

So Ustinov did as directed, leaning forward and whispering something appropriate into Joan Bennett's ear.

"No! No!" cried Curtiz in despair. "Ven you visper in madam's ear you must please stand back four feet!"

But time was getting on and my all-too-brief visit was drawing to a close. And Zinneman was still fooling around with those damned sheep...

~~Twelve~~-thirty. Lunch call.

"We'll try again" said Zinneman wearily, as they all climbed down from their ladders and their ramps. The principals thankfully took their break and the crew broke up for an hour's rest. Ustinov vanished into his caravan, presumably to continue working on a short story.

Deborah Kerr immediately grabbed a bottle of soft drink and proceeded to down it in record time. This caused quite a disturbance. There was a flurry from nowhere and then there were George Higgins and Ken Danvers on their knees and taking photographs like mad - of Deborah and her soda pop.

"Just look at them" Sanford muttered testily. "Chasing the crap. Always chasing the crap."

~~Always~~ the fatalist, I too wandered over and partook of the crap. But Miss Kerr is a charming woman, every bit as sweet and intelligent as I had imagined.

In fact, the only illusion shattered during my visit was that of Mr. Mitchum. I had somehow got the impression that he was the embodiment of all that was 'grand' and 'bad' in a movie star. I came prepared to be put off and left with a strong and favourable and - damnit - likable impression of a studious and serious actor - unapproachable from my point of view. That idea had been demolished the very first morning. For unlike an artist of Ustinov's stature Mitchum regards his work as just a job. He detests all forms and shapes of journalists and photographers - except those who

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are his personal friends. He refuses to talk shop and regards his moments when called upon to act as a chore to be completed as quickly as possible. When not engaged in a take or galloping his horse around he would retire quietly to a deckchair and either stare broodingly out at the horizon or pull his hat down over his eyes and take a short nap.

I had a bite of lunch and then prepared to take my leave. I rounded up Hildyard and Zinneman and Ustinov and Deborah Kerr and had them scrawl their 'best wishes' and all that rubbish on the blank side of a call sheet. And then, nervously, I approached Mr. Mitchum. He was seated in a chair staring glumly at the horizon.

"Mr. Mitchum?" I began. "Would you...would you be so kind as to sign this for me?" Or perhaps it was some other equally childish question.

He said nothing. He took the folded call sheet, and the pen I offered, stared straight ahead for a moment, and then wrote - but you can find it inside the back cover.

And that was all. The magic was already fading. I said goodbye to Sanford and promised to send him copies of the pictures I had taken of him. "They're to send back to the wife and kids..." he explained, so very, very humanly.

"It's a pity you can't stay to see the fire scenes," Zinneman said. "We had hoped to have started them this morning, but " he spread his hands in a gesture of defeat he was long familiar with "you know how these things go."

Yes, I thought, they go baaaaaaaaa.

And I went home. The first stage trudging slowly and sadly back to the car, listening to the sounds I had become accustomed to. They faded away. The second stage: a two hundred mile drive to Orbost, that afternoon. I slept overnight and drove the last leg the next morning. And all the time Melbourne was coming nearer the big important part of me was still back in Cooma with all those wonderful people. I knew this feeling would remain with me, and that when I returned to my normal life it would seem even more ordinary, mor prosaic than before. Perhaps, perhaps I could dream of something grand, on the other side of the world. But time changed that, as time always does unravel our weakly woven dreams, and within a week I was engrossed in my own petty cares, and Peter Ustinov and Zinneman and Sanford Roth and all the other Sundowners seemed very far away.

Some of this preoccupation with my subject matter must have influenced the work I produced for Aston. Admittedly the weather had been abyssal for the first day, and the second was singularly unexciting, picture-wise, but perhaps I could have been a little more attentive to my supposed task

and a little less involved with the personalities around me.

"Your text reads well," Aston wrote. "Much better than the pics. In fact I am beginning to wonder whether you are a photographer or a journalist.

He had come close to the horrible truth. But I received a lordly presentation in the December issue of PHOTO DIGEST. 15 pages of text and photographs. Aston gave a further boost to the Harding image by running my name as an 'associate editor' (for 35mm) on the masthead of the contents page from the following issue onwards and, a month or so later presented me with the offer of a post as full assistant editor - if I chose to move to Sydney.

"I can't promise you security - who can? But I can promise you an interesting job and lots of fun. The ball is now in your corner of the court..."

Once I would have jumped at such an offer. What held me back? Full-time assistant editor on the staff of a magazine - wasn't this sufficient reward for a few years hacking with a camera?

Several times before when faced with a major decision of career I had hesitated...and fumbled...and changed my mind for the best. But what could possibly be better than this?

There were two things. My life underwent a sudden emotional upheaval that might be familiar to some of you, and overnight my thoughts, feelings and desires underwent a drastic and cataclysmic change. No longer was the world as fixed and irrevocable as I had imagined. I met the woman I was destined to marry twelve months later, and once you have taken that particular step you are no longer the person you were a few months, a few weeks, even a few hours ago. And my car caught fire. Now you may well ask what is there that can be Cosmic about a car catching fire?

As a result of being without a car for a week while the entire electrical system was re-wired, I was reduced to travelling to work by train and bus. In order to fill in some time for the hour and a half it took to arrive at my destination I bought a note-book and wrote the first draft of a story that had been wandering around in my head for a while. It was the first piece of fiction I had written in more than two years - and Ted Carnell was capricious enough to buy the finished manuscript I posted to him a few weeks later.

And somehow things have never ever been the same since, a fact for which I shall be eternally grateful, and all was forgotten - o wretched crime! - until John commissioned me to write this. And even then it only comes back slowly, partially.

For time erodes those precious images of the past, acidly eating away all those memories that we most cherish, leaving only the rough, shapeless fragments of our most deeply impressed experiences. The Sundowners' faces have become vague and indistinct: Jack Hildyard is nothing but a very serious, very English figure in a scruffy woollen cap. Deborah Kerr and Bob Mitchum have become their screen identities. I know that Stanley Kramer is a motion picture director. I have some photographs of him to remind me that I once worked within a few feet of him.

But I remember Sanford. I can remember Sanford as though it were yesterday. He trudges determinedly across the set, muttering now and again under his breath - "Goddamn jerks!" - and it requires no imagination, no imagination at all to look up and see Peter Ustinov looking over my shoulder as I write this; big Peter, the giant among men, the Peter who shared so much of himself, Peter with the warm eyes and rugged determination, the Peter who is not changed by time. I have known a great man. And for myself, and from those two days with the Sundowners there can be no finer memory.

- Lee Harding  
January 1965



p h o t o g r a p h i c      i d e n t i f i c a t i o n

facing page

- 2 ..... Stanley Kramer behind Mitchell camera
- 6 ..... Top: Unused scene outside Queen Victoria Hospital  
Bottom: Ava Gardner at Frankston
- 10 ..... Top: Stanley Kramer  
Bottom: Ivan Volkman
- 14 ..... Top: Robert Mitchum at ease  
Bottom: Peter Ustinov and Fred Zinneman
- 18 ..... Top: Fred Zinneman learns from Sanford Roth  
Bottom: Sanford Roth and sheep
- 22 ..... Top: Jack Hildyard, Robert Mitchum and Fred Zinneman  
Bottom: Peter Ustinov, Deborah Kerr, Robert Mitchum  
and Fred Zinneman
- 26 ..... Robert Mitchum
- 30 ..... Deborah Kerr

COVER ..... PETER USTINOV



**lee harding**

a l l   p h o t o g r a p h s

C O V E R   P R O C E S S E D   B Y   V E R Y C O L O U R ,   M E L B O U R N E

A L L   O T H E R   P H O T O G R A P H S   P R O C E S S E D   B Y

l e e   h a r d i n g

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There is no place!  
B. G.  
Witcham