

Magazine of the  
University of Oregon  
Alumni Association

# Oregon

MAY  
JUNE  
1968

## Outposts of a New Revolution

See page 9 for a special  
17-page report on a  
dramatic new educational  
enterprise at the U.O.

- ☐ The Girl in Ward 83
- ☐ A "Soshe" among the  
Delinquents
- ☐ A Young Man's  
Siege of City Hall
- ☐ "It Takes a Gut-Level  
Commitment"



## Old Oregon

*Magazine of the University of Oregon  
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VOLUME 47, NUMBER 6

May-June 1968

### CONTENTS

Outposts of a New Revolution 9  
*By Lucile Vaughan Payne*

The Many Faces of  
Hollywood's Lovable Rogue 26  
*By Belva Finlay*

James Blue/Documentary 32  
*By Robert LaRue*

### DEPARTMENTS

Roundup 6	News Briefs 48
Alumni News 41	Books 49
Faculty News 47	Sports 50

### COVER

Joan Spaulding, 21-year-old psychology major, gazes out the third-floor window of Ward 83, medium security ward for male mental patients, mostly sex offenders, at the State Hospital. For the full story on Joan and the exciting work-study program of the new School of Community Service and Public Affairs, turn to special supplement, page 9. Photo by Oscar W. Palmquist.

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Copyright © 1968 by University of Oregon  
Alumni Association. Published in January,  
March, May, July, September and November.  
Editorial Offices: Room 211, Susan Campbell Hall,  
University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403.  
Second-class postage paid at Eugene, Oregon.  
Mailed free to University of Oregon alumni.  
Non-alumni may subscribe through contribution to  
the University of Oregon Development Fund.  
Change of address: send both old and  
new address to Circulation Manager, Old Oregon.

## Mr. Flemming's six and one-half years at Oregon

The Arthur S. Flemming years at the University of Oregon are about to end. Mr. Flemming announced in March that he has accepted the presidency of Macalester College in Minneapolis, a small liberal arts college with ambitious plans to develop innovative programs in college teaching and research.

The Flemming years have been controversial ones. The *Eugene Register-Guard* editorialized that Mr. Flemming is "probably the most controversial" U. of O. president of this century.

We asked him recently how he felt about such comments. The president's face broke into a wide grin. Controversy is nothing new to Arthur S. Flemming.

"In every position I've served in," he replied, "it seems I've been in the middle of controversy. To some extent you get conditioned to controversy in public life. Just the other day I mentioned the 'cranberry incident' in a class I teach, and I got a tremendous reaction, even though that incident occurred in 1959." He referred, of course, to his order, as secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, destroying tons of cranberries allegedly polluted by a chemical weed killer.

He has been equally controversial at the University of Oregon starting with his decision to permit Communist Gus Hall to speak and continuing through a series of decisions on such touchy issues as freedom of the student press, academic freedom, controversial speakers, expansion into fields of "non-academic" education such as the Job Corps and Upward Bound, and changes in codes of student conduct. Flemming, of course, has not been the only university president to rub raw the nerve endings of alumni; businessmen, parents, and little old ladies in tennis shoes. The Flemming years have run parallel to similar troubled times on other campuses. These troubles have precipitated massive student demonstrations on at least 100 campuses since the famous Berkeley riots. By contrast, the University of Oregon has remained remarkably free of such disorders. This is probably because Mr. Flemming and his aides have instituted more liberalized policies on student life that have enabled the students to achieve peacefully what they have gained by "force" elsewhere.

At the U. of O. the controversy has tended to focus more on Mr. Flemming



*Arthur S. Flemming*

as a personality. He had achieved national stature long before coming to the University. That he would remain a public figure, rather than an aloof, ivory tower kind of academician, was obvious from the beginning. His reasoning seems quite laudable. A president has to pay more than lip service to citizen involvement in public affairs. What kind of example does he set for students if he encourages their involvement, yet excuses himself because of the risk of undermining support for the institution?

"You can go right down the list of people in various kinds of endeavor," says Mr. Flemming. "Businessmen say they don't want to be involved in public issues because it might adversely affect

*Continued on page 40*

## James Blue / Documentary

*Jim Blue '53 is a free-lance documentary film-maker whose work has won many awards at international film festivals. Right now he's apprehensive, however, and for good reason. Two years of his life are up for approval.* By Robert LaRue



A CLEAR THURSDAY in February, dry and crisp, in Washington, D.C. You're trying to interview James Barkley Blue, a 1953 graduate of the University of Oregon, now a free-lance documentary film-maker. Blue's first feature film, *The Olive Trees of Justice*, won a Critics' Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1962, and his films have been winning prizes ever since.

But Jim Blue is nervous. His latest film, a documentary

Photo: Phil Wolcott



commissioned by the United States Information Agency, is to be viewed this afternoon for approval by the USIA policy chiefs.

The film is called, tentatively, *Food*. Blue and his associates have been sweating all morning over the final touches of the film's sound track. The cutting room reverberates with the sounds of whistles, bells, engines; the *chuk chuk chuk* of big agricultural sprinklers and the roar of a crowd of hungry people waiting for a drawbridge to be let down, *ker-CHUNK*.

"The hell with it," Blue says, shooting up out of his chair. "Let's go eat."

Several of us leave the cavernous Gothic Revival halls and arches of the old postoffice building at 12th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue where USIA has its motion picture and television facilities, and head for the Ratskeller, a basement cafe about a block away.

The wind eddies around us while we wait out a light at a crossing. Blue's brown hair and sideburns are long. But his hair is stiff and curly as wire, resisting the breeze. His profile is a stage actor's delight: strong jaw and a nose like half a hatchet. Blue eyes and a wide, quick smile.

"You look like a young lion," says a woman in our group.

So he does, but right now he doesn't feel like one.

At the Ratskeller, Blue orders a small T-bone—and suddenly he is nearly doubled over with stomach cramps.

He grins painfully. "I don't know when these started," he says. "But I get them every time I get near a deadline."

"Relax, Jim," says Lee Alexander, a free-lance editor who is working for Blue. But as a former owner of an independent film-producing company, Alexander knows that it's impossible to relax when two years of your life are up for approval.

And that's what it amounts to. *Food* has taken Blue two years to produce. It's a documentary about the disastrous confluence of two factors—the exploding population and the pitifully inadequate agriculture of the world's underdeveloped countries. First there were several months of research—extensive reading, and interviewing such luminaries as John Kenneth Galbraith and Margaret Mead ("Just to become partly knowledgeable of the problem"). Then came seven months of shooting in Taiwan, Brazil, India, and several countries in Africa. He returned with more than 17 hours of film which, for the past 11 months,

*With the closing sequence of his new film on the screen, James Blue phones the control room. "Run that sequence again, please."*

he has been editing into a coherent statement that will run around 40 minutes on the screen.

Blue has finished his lunch. The stomach cramps seem to have disappeared. Maybe it was just hunger, you imagine, because he acts and looks like a man who might forget to eat regularly.

"I've never learned to take a vacation," he says. "I mean, I take a month or so off and I think about one thing—work. I wish I were working. That's the only time I really feel good."

Lunch over, we are up and out into the lunchtime crowd, heading back. Later this afternoon, in the old postoffice building at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue, Blue presents his film to the policy people at USIA. The screening is closed to outsiders, so you wait.

The postoffice building stands in a condition that can be described as a few notches below genteel poverty. The building might be condemned were it not needed so badly. Its hallways are dark and nearly empty. Shadowy figures move at the periphery of light thrown down by the lamps in the center of the hallway ceilings, and from alcoves and deep doorways one sometimes hears voices but cannot see the speakers. Like many of the public buildings in Washington, the old postoffice is for some a place to work, and for others a place to come in out of the cold or rain. Or simply a place. There is a combination lock on the men's restroom, regarding which a Washington resident suggests: "Not all the citizens of our nation's capital are statesmen."

Out of these less-than-ideal surroundings comes an avalanche of propaganda. Operating on an annual budget of around \$156 million and employing 12,000 people, USIA undertakes the Herculean task of presenting America to the world. Perhaps, as some have suggested, the task is not so Herculean as it is Quixotic, since to present a coherent image of a country as diversified and, at times, as contradictory as the United States is in some ways impossible.

But USIA cannot afford to entertain defeatist notions. Its mission is clear. As George Stevens Jr., former head of the agency's motion picture service, has said, the purpose of USIA is "to make known our aims and ideals, so that all in the world who seek a better life in peace may feel that the United States stands with them."

Much of the burden of presenting these aims and ideals to the rest of the world is borne by endless spools of celluloid—a minute portion of the most influential medium of communication since Gutenberg's printing press, the film.

According to Leonard Marks, USIA's present director, "USIA makes more films a year than Harry Warner ever did—more than four hundred a year."

Well over half these films are documentaries; the remainder are newsreels and instructional films.

To the layman, any non-story film whose subject is

actuality is a documentary. But within the broad category of "films of fact," as one authority calls the documentary and its subgenres (the travel film, the instructional film, the newsreel), the documentary itself has a very special niche.

And it is with the documentary that Jim Blue is concerned. Documentary's where the art is, where the filmmaker's attitude of mind can be expressed.

A newsreel, for instance, shoots an authentic action with a minimum of direction and presents it in its finished form with a minimum of manipulative editing. There is no thesis to a newsreel, no chance for the artist to express his own feelings. And an instructional film, except for a possible inventive flourish at the beginning to catch the audience's attention, is mostly nuts and bolts—the *Mechanics Illustrated* article of the world of film.

In the documentary film, however, the film-maker deliberately sets out to make a statement about actuality.

"The essence of the documentary method," writes British documentary pioneer Paul Rotha, "lies in its dramatization of actual material. The very act of dramatizing causes a film statement to be false to actuality. We must remember that most documentary is only truthful in that it represents an attitude of mind."

Jim Blue's short film (10 minutes) *The School at Rincon Santo*, one of three documentaries he shot for the Alliance for Progress, is a good example of "dramatization of actual material."

In Blue's film we see that the village of Rincon Santo, lying forgotten by the 20th Century in a valley in the mountains of Colombia, has never had a school. The village children tumble and play on the rolling meadows of their valley, like children anywhere. But when play is done, what then? The wide-eyed little boy who wants to be an aviator will never realize his aspiration so long as Rincon Santo has no school.

Fortunately, the people of Rincon Santo discover that the Colombian government will furnish materials for the construction of the school if the villagers will provide the land and the water and the labor.

Through a series of poignant images and scenes, Blue's film shows the people acting on this opportunity: the village meeting where an ancient woman gives her land for the school-site; the arrival of the building materials; the steady progress of the school's construction; and finally the finished school itself. Then, driving home his point, Blue shows the first day of classes in the new school: the eager but nervously wary children; the firm but understanding teacher; and the parents, the ones for whom school was never possible but for whose children it is now a reality.

But about the art of documentary as practiced by James Blue. At Rincon Santo, the solemnly conducted town meeting and those touching scenes of the little children on their first day of school were staged. The parents who



came as softly and as timidly as deer to press their noses to the windows and watch Juano or Pepe or Concepción on the first day of school had to be coaxed to appear—had to be directed.

For the first day of school at Rincon Santo had taken place before Jim Blue arrived in the village. But when he did arrive, the story of the school gave him, as he says, "the impulse to develop the script. So I went about reconstructing the story of the actual event, using the actual people in their actual roles."

His documentary film, then, is art writ *in* authentic materials and *with* authentic materials. And Blue manipulates these materials in order to present a statement about his subject. The non-thesis film, the Andy Warhol pop art essay in meaninglessness, holds no attraction for him.

But how Blue manages to phrase his thesis is not easy.

It begins with the research. Once he has learned all he can about his subject and his general theme is clearly in mind, he heads for the field. There, more research, in the form of poking around the country in search of likely images to illustrate his theme. Finding the image that will trigger that "impulse to develop the script," he begins to film.

In many instances the "script" develops with each day's shooting. *Rincon Santo*, for example, was more carefully structured beforehand than Blue's latest film (*Food*), because in the former the essential unities of time and place were simple and easily envisioned. *Food's* scope and thesis are at once broader and more subtle, its unity deriving for the most part from theme, and thus shooting on the film was considerably more flexible than on *Rincon Santo*.

Shooting completed, the film-maker embarks for the cutting room, where, as it has been said many times, the film is found or lost. Although the director of a documentary must prepare his shooting schedule as best he can, keeping constantly in mind the necessity of getting his "establishing shots" (shots which set up a sequence or a central image) and staying alert to the imperatives of movement and action within a scene, he shoots within such a montage of variables that the cutting room becomes, figuratively at least, the place where his shot-by-shot scenario is written. (The editing of a story-film, with its detailed scenario, its professional actors, and its studio, will normally be less complicated.)

Any artist takes raw material, whether experienced or imagined, and shapes it to a form which will contain a statement, a theme. With film, this problem is sometimes formidable indeed. Since film is by nature a fluid medium, it is, in the unedited raw, very much like a stream. There



*Jim Blue is enroute to "sell" his film to U.S. Information Office officials. The film, Food, has taken him two years to produce.*

are sequences, of course, which have been determined by the director and which have a shape of their own. They are like the twists and bends in a meandering river. Meanwhile, the river continues to flow. The editor—and Blue, like most of his contemporaries, is an editor (and sometime cameraman, soundman, etc.) as well as a director—must dam and channel the flow to control the meaning.

Whatever the manner in which it was made, *The School at Rincon Santo* is moving indeed. There is sentiment, no doubt, but the sentiment is honest. Blue says that his French friends who make films admire *Rincon Santo* the least of all his work. Yet he is proud of it.

"I know it's simple and that there's a great deal of sentiment in it," he says. "But the film was made for the peasantry. In a way it's Promethean. It shows the people being given fire, and it shows what they can do with it when they get it."

*The School at Rincon Santo* received first prize for human relations at the 1963 Venice Documentary Film Festival, but no award could compliment the film's impact as clearly as the people of Rincon Santo did themselves. Hearing that the film was completed and was available to them, the villagers again mustered their forces and built a theater—Rincon Santo's first—in which to view the film.

Some responses to Blue's documentary efforts are not always that gratifying. His documentary of the 1963 civil rights march on Washington ran into political hot water when Senator Ellender (Louisiana) objected to the film for "airing America's dirty linen in public."

*The March*, filmed by 13 camera crews who came up with 85,000 feet of negatives that Blue edited into a half-hour film (about 3,000 feet), shows the convergence of thousands of Negro and white Americans on the nation's capital. There they demonstrated peacefully for the civil rights of the Negro minority.

Dirty linen?

Sample scene from *The March*: Marian Anderson on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial singing *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*. The crowd is thick around Miss Anderson, and as the camera moves slowly up, we see that the crowd has flowed up behind her and is massed around and upon the Lincoln statue. Many of the people have taken seats on Lincoln's arms. The full shot—Negro and white Americans apparently being held in Lincoln's arms and lap—is held while Miss Anderson's rich voice continues: "He's got you and me, brother, in his hands. . . ."

Ah, yes. Dirty linen.

Apparently the Documentary Festival at Bilbao, Spain, the Cannes Youth Festival, and The Netherlands Film Festival admired such dirty linen—*The March* took a first prize at each of them in 1964.

Of course, the specter of sponsor control haunts all freelance film-makers. The sponsor/patron always has the

purse strings, and thus he does have a say, should he choose to exercise it, in what is produced under his patronage. The release of *The March* was delayed for more than six months, but otherwise Blue has found the government to be a pretty flexible employer. This is partly a result of Blue's own care in accepting only those assignments which, spelled out clearly, are compatible with his own political and artistic principles.

"I've never done anything I didn't like or want to do," he says. "I don't make films just to make films. I've made bad films, but never one that didn't mean something to me personally."

The fact is that unless the free-lance film-maker is independently wealthy or can muster private financing, he will always be responsible to some producing agency—the government, an advertising firm, industry, or Hollywood.

Blue's only work for Hollywood was an assignment to take a crew to Tahiti and film the scenic sequence that eventually provided the first four and one-half minutes of the feature film *Hawaii*.

"They needed somebody cheap," Blue grins. "I was available."

He and his crew spent a month in Tahiti. From the outset the assignment proved a test of Blue's patience and sense of humor.

"Lunch!" he says, slapping his palm to his forehead. "When it's lunchtime the Hollywood crews stop dead in their tracks. They want hot chow, and they want it right now."

Film-makers like Blue, the young cinematic nomads who, when filming, will do just about anything at any time to get a shot they want, are not used to such genteel refinements as a punctual lunch hour.

But as a member of Blue's crew told him: "When you're done shooting here you'll go back and edit a while or go work up a script somewhere else. What do we do? We go right back out on location again. If we don't insist on lunch hours, you guys'd *never* let us eat."

Although Blue was sympathetic to the cameraman's side of things, he never got used to it. Whatever the needs of the film, Lunchtime was observed. If you need a shot of a storm and it stormed only during Lunchtime, then you cajole or threaten your crew into breaking its noon ritual (as Blue did) and shoot. If the tide is right for a particular shot and it has the unblushing temerity to be right only at Lunchtime, then you either starve your crew or hope that Charlton Heston will come along later and roll back the waters for you.

Blue also discovered that the regular ASC (American Society of Cinematographers; by invitation only) cameramen were skeptical of his sometimes unorthodox cinematic procedures. One shot that Blue wanted to take—a long lens shot of rain and fog—caused a cameraman to remark, axiomatically: "Long lens, dull light, dull subject—dull picture."



*It is in the cutting room that the real work of the documentary is done. Here Jim Blue examines film strips from his latest effort.*



The shot was eventually used in the finished film.

Again, Blue understands the rigid approach to filming which many of the Hollywood technicians hold. "They're right a lot of the time," he says. "The fog-shot might have been awful. But you've got to take chances. And anyway, it just might be that sometimes dullness is what you want at a certain moment in your film."

The Tahiti crew, ASC's notwithstanding, finally managed to swallow their skepticism when Walter Mirisch, producer of *Hawaii*, sent back warm congratulations on the first rushes. The cameramen, old Hollywood hands all, were realists.

"I know they were thinking that Mirisch has brought in some goddam genius. Some boy-genius to shoot the scenery," Blue chuckles. "But I didn't care what they were thinking as long as I didn't have to argue every single shot."

He looks up and catches your eye. "Actually, I'm pretty happy with the footage we shot. Good scenery. Did you see it?"

You're stuck. "No, I didn't see *Hawaii*."

"The first four and a half minutes are mine," he reminds you.

Waiting for Jim Blue in the old postoffice building at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue is not the most pleasant activity in the world. Aside from a few vagrant shadows, the building is empty. The cutting rooms are locked, and there's no place to sit except one of those stenographer's chairs that must have been designed by Dr. Caligari himself.

And some of Blue's nervousness about the policy screening has rubbed off. He said he'd be back around five-thirty, and here it is well past six. The later your Bulova says he is, the worse the omen gets.

Cigarette tastes stale, which reminds you that Blue quit smoking two years ago, largely, he says, because of the anti-smoking campaign waged by Maureen Neuberger when she was senator from Oregon.

(You check your notes and, yes) one Christmas after he had quit smoking, Blue got on a plane to go home to Portland for the holidays. He was seated next to a distinguished looking woman whom he recognized as Senator Neuberger. Once the flight was airborne, the lady lit a cigarette.

"Pardon me, but aren't you Maureen Neuberger?" Blue asked.

"Why, yes, I am."

"You know," Blue said, eying her cigarette, "I quit smoking because of you."

"I get nervous on airplanes," the senator replied, her wings icing.

Blue has a knack for running into interesting situations. But it's really not so much a knack as it is a state of mind. He is perpetually curious, inquiring, interested. He has a way of making himself available to experience.

And these qualities are invaluable to the documentary film-maker.

For example, take two things that Blue stumbled on during a recent stopover in Des Moines, Iowa.

"Whenever I stop overnight in a place, I always try to go out and look around. Try to see what it's like and what makes it go. And one night in Des Moines I took a little walk. It's about six at night, and the first thing I see is three lanes of traffic, all going the same direction—one-way street—circling a three-block radius. Same cars, same kids in them, circling, circling. Later that night—after midnight, in fact—there are the same cars with the same kids still circling the same route.

"Now there's an image of a country at an impasse."

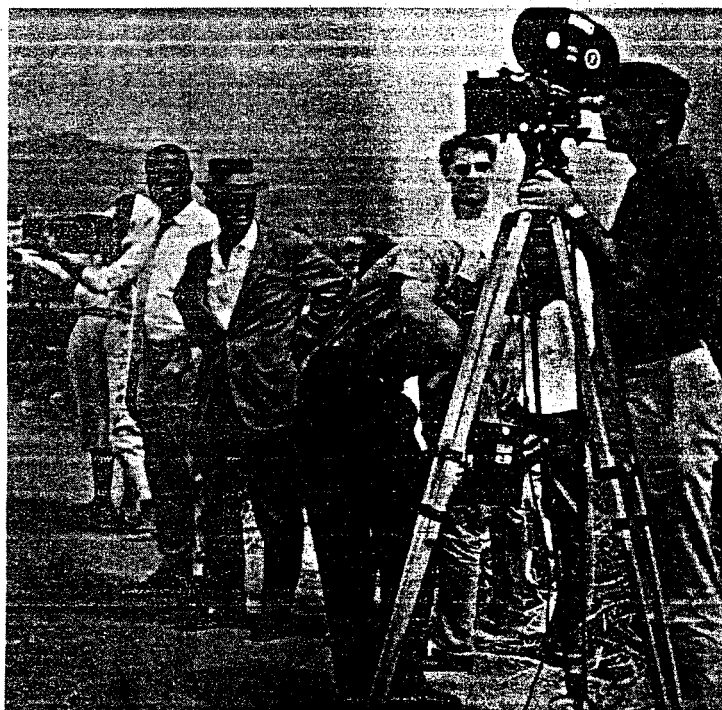
But the circling cars might not have struck Blue so dramatically if their image had not been reinforced by an entirely different image he came upon later.

He had continued his exploratory walk, and he came upon a flashily neon restaurant-bar that advertised go-go dancers.

Interesting, Blue thought. Go-go in the Heartland.

Inside, he found it to be about the same as any go-go bar anywhere. The patrons, however, were obviously the college-educated professional class, the young sophisticates of Des Moines.

"The surrealistic thing, though," notes Blue, "was that the go-go girl was dancing to a Louis Armstrong record and she was mouthing to Armstrong's voice. Bizarre! As if the words sung by this gravel-voiced Negro man were coming from the white go-go girl."



On location at Rincon Santo, Blue (dark glasses) is shown supervising filming of his prize-winning documentary film in Colombia.



*Jim Blue (right) and his associates, Meyer Odze and Lee Alexander, chuckle over a humorous moment in the film, Food, on the Moviola.*

Struck by this, Blue hung around a while. Then, on impulse, he walked over to a woman who was watching the show and said, "Pardon me, madame, but what are you doing here?"

The woman examined him calmly. "Well," she said, "it's not New York or L.A. She"—gesturing toward the go-go girl with Louis Armstrong's voice—"she wears tit-tassels. They don't wear tit-tassels in L.A."

Then she added: "But it's all right."

As Blue says when he tells the story: What's going on? And that's what his next film will be about: what's going on in the United States. What's happening in Kansas and Iowa and Oklahoma and all those places where young people drive around in never-diminishing (or expanding) circles all night and where it's not New York or L.A. but it's "all right."

**F**eet clomp on the wooden stairs and Lee Alexander pops through the stairwell doorway, four reels of film in his arms.

You ask the nervous question.

"They bought it," Lee says, unlocking the door to the cutting room. "Jim will be along in a minute."

When Blue arrives he looks haggard. No longer nervous, just tired. For the moment, a middle-aged lion. He not only had to narrate the film as it was screened (the narration had not been put on the soundtrack yet), but he had to "sell" his film to the policy chiefs.

"I always wish I were better prepared," he says. "I've lived it for so long that I know everything there is to know about it. But I'm never really prepared to *sell* it. I guess I expect it to sell itself."

"It did, Jim," Alexander says. "It's a beautiful film."

"You really think so?"

"Yes. Let's get a martini."

There are many finishing touches yet to be made on *Food*. Two or three months' work. As soon as it's done, Blue will hop in his VW camper-bus and head for the midwest, his researches on "what's going on" financed by the Guggenheim Foundation.

But for now, we lock two years of Jim Blue's life in the cutting room and walk downstairs to the street. ☐