



"Shooter."

"Shooter" [Network slang for a cameraman]

The story of a Freelance Cameraman who's covered wars and most of the major stories for the last 30 years in over 90 countries for all the major international TV networks.

ABC, BBC, CBC, CTV, NBC and CBS.

**Crazy things that happened to me during my career.**

Got bitten by a poisonous snake in Thailand, got shot at in Beirut, walked into a minefield in Vietnam, took part in an air attack on the Viet Cong, landed in a fighter jet on the aircraft carrier "Coral Sea" Didn't buy an original painting by Andy Warhol for \$100, nearly fell out of an aircraft filming, spent a week on a mountaintop surrounded by the Viet Cong, flew with the Snowbirds air acrobatic team, got threatened by a CIA

defector and a million other crazy things that happen to cameramen.

Stories about.

Vietnam, Beirut, Monks, Belfast, Haiti, Prince Charles, Biafra, N.Y Muggings, Brixton Riots, Wine War, Sadat assassination, Margaret Thatcher, Film Stars, Trevor Howard, Frank Sinatra, Rex Harrison, Julie Andrews, Charlton Heston, Robert Morley, Sarah Miles, Roger Moore, not forgetting Charlie Mingus and Willie Nelson. The Mexican Earthquake, Harold Wilson, General Montgomery, Simon Wiesenthal, Major Parker-Bowles, Gun Runners, I.R.A., Rhodesian Rebellion, Peter Jennings, Knowlton Nash, Hollywood, CIA Killer, Presidents, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, The Queen, Prince Philip, Prince Charles, Witch doctors in Ghana, Deported from Kuwait, Christmas at the Savoy, The Royal wedding, Barbara Walters, Fall of Vietnam, 10 Downing Street, Martin Luther King and the Peace Prize, Libya, Falklands war, Desert Storm, Panama, John Diefenbaker. Pierre Trudeau, Roland Mitchner, Lester Pearson. Barbara Amiel, Andy Warhol. Robert Moses.

**"Shooter"*****By Bob Dutru***

Just a story about "A Job" that kept me nervous, excited, slightly off balance most of the time, kept my adrenaline pumping, took me in luxury and squalor to places that I never dreamed that I'd ever go to in my wildest imaginings, gave me the chance to do impossible things that I'd yearned to do all my life, scared the pants off me some of the times, allowed me to meet people ordinary and famous that I loved, loathed and adored, placed me in situations that most people had dreams or nightmares about, gave me an real understanding of other peoples lives and their hopes and kept me sane happy and never bored..

When I was growing up the singer we all worshipped was Frank Sinatra. He symbolized to us, everything that was American and glamorous, those two things were synonymous in those drab post-war days in England.

We watched him on the screen, never getting the girls and watched him in the newsreels having hundreds of real girls clawing at him for just a touch of his hand..

We fantasized about being him and bought his records by the dozens.

It became a Saturday ritual for myself and my best friend, Gordon Comber to go across to the local record shop and listen to the four records they allowed us to hear before we bought one, then agonize over our selections and then even more excitedly, take our purchases home and play and swap them till they became a scratchy, noisy and a permanent part of our collections.

Between Gordon and myself we had almost every Sinatra record going and as the collection grew so did our idolization. The news that Frank Sinatra was coming to London's Palladium drove us to a frenzy and we queued for hours clutching our hard earned shillings till we were lucky enough to get tickets.

We sat entranced! Not for us the yelling squealing audience of the New York teenagers,

London's Sinatra fans knew they were at the feet of a master and behaved so. We walked out in the clamminess of a London night, humming the Gershwin and Rodgers and Hart songs and went home on the underground in a dream of finger clicking and romance.

I watched his popularity slowly wane and finally fade leaving him with only a few loyal fans.

Gordon and I went to a concert one cold damp London night at the small Shepherd's Bush theater. That night the theater microphone broke down and Frank Sinatra, chilly and lonely in the sparsely occupied, unheated theater invited the few of us that were there down to the two front rows so that we could hear him and warm him with our applause.

The lack of amplification and the cold didn't matter to us, we were unchanging in our loyalty and to us his voice still held the magic that had thrilled us when we were growing up.

I didn't see him again till years later. I'd been making a magazine item for the CBC's "This hour has seven days" on filming abroad and we were on our way back from Rome.

'Would you like to make a film for Frank Sinatra?'

'Sure, why not?'

I smiled at the man over my third airline scotch. As a freelance cameraman I'd learnt not to get excited about filming offers, for everyone that materialized, another ten bit the dust in the cold light of the dawn.

I turned to my soundman and idly twisted the card the man had given me before he went back to his seat. Suddenly my eyes focused on the wording.

"Mort Segal". "Frank Sinatra Enterprises." "Hollywood."

I got up hurriedly and went over to him, even after my years of traveling and meeting a lot of the world's greats, the Sinatra name thrilled me and brought back the magic days of my adolescence..

I went to New York and in the famous theatrical restaurant 'Sardi's' haggled over price, expenses and the length of a making a TV publicity film on the filming of "Von Ryan's Express" I was a little overawed by my surroundings, famous people's photographs gazed down at me from the walls and I kept being distracted from the bargaining as I recognized yet another celebrity walking past the table. I think that's why the film publicity people took me to lunch there, so that they could beat my price down while I was distracted, They were very generous however, they didn't try too hard to cut my price, for some reason I'd taken their fancy and they were prepared to pay well for my services.

I flew to Milan with my equipment and immediately ran into trouble. Sinatra Enterprises & 20th Century Fox had suggested I enter Italy via Rome and get help from their agents "Cinecitta" but I'd been to Rome and I wanted to spend a few days in Milan. That was a big mistake, the Italian customs took one look at my big silver camera cases. and shook their heads vigorously. The customs men was adamant, there was no way they was going to allow my camera equipment and the film I'd brought into Italy without a \$5000.00 deposit.

'How about me giving you \$500.00 in American Express cheques and I'll leave my passport with you as security?'

That was almost all I had and the thought of abandoning my passport to an Italian customs man made me break out in a cold sweat but I was getting desperate.

‘No Signor, \$5000.00!’ He said adamantly.

I sat gloomily on top of my camera cases on the wrong side of the customs barrier, my visions of becoming a famous Hollywood publicity cameraman rapidly going up in flames.

Finally in desperation I phoned the hotel in Cortina D’Ampezzio where the cast and crew of “Von Ryan’s Express” were staying and eventually found someone who knew why I was there and explained my difficulties.

‘Why didn’t you come in via Rome, we had it all sorted out there?’

Even through the sputtering of the Italian phone system I could detect a note of exasperation in the Californian voice.

**‘I’m sorry, I didn’t realize.’ He cut me off,**

‘Hang on there for an hour or so and we’ll do something.’

The phone went dead.

The custom officers and I watched the white helicopter drift lazily down in the warm Italian afternoon, it got closer and I made out the words on it’s side. “Sinatra Enterprises”

Everyone seemed to be talking at the top of their voices as I, the assistant director they’d sent, the Italian customs agents and the great packet of money swept through Milan airport watched by an interested crowd. Italian money is extremely large and the equivalent of \$5000.00 US was enormous. I’m sure the crowd thought we’d been caught smuggling currency. Within minutes however, the bond money was stored in the customs safe, receipts, smiles and handshakes were exchanged and we were off to Cortina to meet Sinatra.

Cortina is a dream winter ski resort but now it was summer and 20th Century had hired practically the whole of the fabulous Cortina Palace hotel to house the cast and crew. We were they only one’s there, except for a rather staid English couple who seemed fascinated and appalled at the same time by the film people’s strange antics.

The scenery was fantastic! Towering mountains surrounded our hotel and every morning the cast, crew and myself got on the famous “Von Ryan’s”

train and were trucked up to the mountainous pass where the filming was taking place.

The scene being filmed was when the train had just gone through a tunnel and “Von Ryan’s” men had planted bombs there to derail a pursuing German train.

‘I guess you’d better meet the “Man”.

Sinatra had fully regained his popularity by then and gone on to greater heights. Now he was surrounded by a large group of hangers on who clearly resented the time he gave to me.

“Hi Fella.”

We shook hands and that was all!

That was ALL!,

The “wonderful moment” I’d been waiting for and dreamed about all my boyhood years was past and was over in a flash, the group closed around him and swept down the path ignoring me.

The massive cast and crew of a full length Hollywood feature dwarfed my small 16mm Arriflex camera and Swiss Nagra recorder as I filmed the making of an epic.

Fake explosions, menacing German soldiers, falling Styrofoam painted rocks crashed down from the cliffs making me duck and run thinking they were real, much to the amusement of the special effects experts .

It was time to talk to “Mr.” Sinatra again,

You had to be very well in to call him Frank and I wasn’t. I fought through the ranks of his hangers-on, ignoring their glares at my impertinence and I addressed the great man.

‘Mr. Sinatra I’d like to do an interview with you about the making of the film so we can lay some of your voice over what I’m shooting.’

He glared at me.

I gulped and went on bravely,

‘So if you can spare 20 minutes, we can sit down and chat with my recorder going and lift bits out to put over the documentary.’

That was the technique we normally used but “Mr. Sinatra” seemed aghast at the suggestion. He pointed an accusing finger at me and fixed me with a reproving glare.

‘That’s not the way to do it FELLA!’

The crowd around him agreed quickly, there was a noisy chorus of disapproving voices and I shrunk smaller and smaller under the combined disapproval of the Sinatra crowd.

He relented for a second.

‘Get the producer to write something out and I’ll read it from cue cards later.’

With that he swept past me without a backwards glance.

I hadn’t realized till then what I’d asked.

Frank Sinatra all his life, had rehearsed every note of every record he’d sung, hundreds and hundreds of times till he got it perfect and my suggestion of doing “something off the cuff” appalled him.

The producer Saul David and I sat down one night and hacked out a script for him to read and I searched around for something to make cue cards from.

I soon found something I thought ideal, there were dozens of large empty brown cardboard boxes on the location site and I ripped a few dozen apart and began writing out the script on them. It was a tedious business, my felt pens kept running out and I kept being distracted by the filming around me.

‘What are you doing?’

Behind me stood an interested crowd including the film’s director and the producer.

‘I’m making the cue cards for Mr. Sinatra.’

I was anxious to get on, I still had loads to do.

There was a shocked silence and a drawing in of breath.

‘You can’t expect Mr. Sinatra to read from those!’

I took the day off from filming and borrowed the Sinatra helicopter and flew back to Milan, enjoyed a good lunch and a great bottle of “Amorone” red wine which cost a bomb so I quickly put it on down on my expenses, while meanwhile, one of the film’s script assistant scoured Milan’s art shops for large white cue cards, felt pencils and stencils, so the lettering would be neat,



Feeling much better and fortified by the wine, I flew back to Cortina.

Wiser now to the ways of Hollywood, I had no intention of spending hours on my knees stenciling the long script. I wanted to get on with filming.

I went into one of the large conference rooms in the hotel where there were swarms of attractive female “gofers” who seemed to be doing nothing constructive except looking pretty and hoping someone would notice them and give them a part in the picture and I held up the famous script and a large stack of cue cards, felt tipped pens and stencils and said firmly.

‘Mr. Sinatra wants this written out as soon as possible!’

I passed out pens, cards and stencils to one and all, confident that no one there would dare dispute the “Royal” command and check if Sinatra had actually made it.

The next day I collected the beautifully prepared, gleaming white cards. The girls had excelled themselves and they put my brown shabby cardboard attempts to shame.

We carried the cue cards up every day to the location and down again at night, it took three days before I managed to catch the great man’s eye.

‘I’ve got those cue cards ready, Mr. Sinatra, so when you have a moment.’

I held an example up proudly, they were really beautiful.

**‘I’ve changed my mind, throw them over the f..... cliff !’**

The star was in a bad mood, I’d caught him with a “Jack Daniel’s” hangover and this was the wrong time to ask for favors.

They were too lovely to destroy,

I thought of all those hours the nice young women had spent on their pretty knees writing the cue cards out.

‘I’ll keep them around for a few days in case your not too busy another day.’

The star’s finger was accusatory, it pointed at the cue cards and then swung dramatically to the cliff edge.

‘I said throw them over the damned cliff !’

So one by one, the shining, gleaming cue cards shimmered sadly down over the beautiful landscape till they were all gone, dotted far below on the slopes of the Italian Alps.

Trevor Howard relented and he and I spent a glorious afternoon drinking wine on the side of the mountain, recording him talking about the film which gave me everything I needed, then a chat with the director Mark Robson, gave me some more and I soon had enough for a voice track to go with the sound effects.. even though I didn't have Frank Sinatra's voice.

I borrowed the great man's helicopter once again, I was getting daring now and got the smoothest helicopter shots I'd ever made. The helicopter blades had been especially "trimmed" to ensure a comfortable ride for the star and the scene below of the filming looked peaceful and tranquil, showing off the Italian Dolomites in all their beauty as we swooped and glided above.

I never spoke to Sinatra again, he'd been so annoyed when I'd questioned him about the disposal of the cue cards that I thought it wise to stay out of his way, .....Especially as he was paying me.

The film looked good and we edited it for a week and then got New York's approval for a final cut which was a success and my documentary showed on television hundreds of times before the release of "Von's Ryan's Express."

I still think covering wars is much easier

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

