

Not an Ordinary Kansas Garden: A Documentary Exploring the Grassroots Art and Town of
Lucas, KS and a Huge Learning Experience for an Undergraduate Broadcasting Student

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Introduction

Video has always been a fascination of mine. As trite as it may sound, since making old home videos as a kid, I knew I would want to incorporate this field into my education. For that reason, I decided to major in Mass Communication and become heavily involved with Missouri Southern's broadcast television station, KGCS-TV. Over the past three and a half years at MSSU, I have expanded my horizons tremendously in the field of mass media, and this capstone project certainly contributed to this learning process. I don't believe I knew just what I was getting myself into when taking it on. There were several times I asked myself, "What was I thinking?" Nonetheless, I know this documentary project has been one of the most educational and rewarding experiences in my academic life, and I am pleased with the results of my work.

The Beginning

Deciding what to make the capstone project of your entire undergraduate career is not an easy choice. Knowing I would need to complete a senior thesis project as part of the Honors Program requirements as well as having interest in graduate school in the future, I enrolled in the Communication Research Methods. This class taught me everything I would need to know to complete original research and present it in a formal research paper format. I decided to do my research paper on women in television news and the effect of gender on audience expectations for television news anchors. As television news is something I am interested in, I found the quantitative, survey-based research interesting and enjoyed the study. However, after this class, I felt that there was information that could only be gained through qualitative research, and I knew I would want to incorporate this, along with documentary video, in my senior thesis.

After realizing that it would be very difficult for me to get an interview with Katie Couric and get enough accurate qualitative research as well as access to get video to continue with this

research for the project I was wanting for my senior thesis, I began to search for a new topic. After several weeks of stressful consideration, I decided on a completely different route for my project- I wanted to make a documentary. I thought of the most interesting things I could make a movie on, and I remembered a small Kansas town that made a huge impression on me. I decided it would make the perfect subject for a research-based video documentary- and thus, my journey began.

Discovering Lucas

I first learned of Lucas through my father. When we first moved to Neosho, MO, my dad wanted to make a trip to Kansas to see this weird attraction known as “The Garden of Eden.” Finally, in the fall of 2008, my family, some friends and I made the trip to Lucas, KS. Knowing my Dad and some of the quirky places he took us to growing up, my expectations were not very high; however, what we found was something surprisingly exceptional. When we finished that trip, I was simply amazed by this small, unique community. The Grassroots Art Center, which we had no idea existed prior to our visit, added on to the obscurity of the town. I simply couldn’t believe that such a place existed in the middle-of-nowhere Kansas, and wanted to learn more about it and tell everyone I knew about it. Thus, when thinking of a subject that would make a unique, and interesting research documentary, I knew there would be nothing better than Lucas and its grassroots art community.

Taking on this project would not have been as easy of a decision without the knowledge that I have an amazing group of advisors to help me through the journey. My academic advisor, Ward Bryant with his extensive experience gave me several helpful tips, ideas for different shots, and simple encouragement. Kristen Livingston, my advisor for this senior thesis, has herself made two documentaries, one of which was for her Master’s program. Not only did she teach me

a lot on the entire process of creating the documentary, ample suggestions, showed me her own documentaries as a teaching tool, but also was a simple source of much needed moral support to survive the daunting journey. Josie Mai, associate professor of art served as my outside-department advisor. She gave me great insight as to what would be good to ask these artists in terms of art; she also had the smart idea of starting my own blog dedicated to this project to get feedback from others who may have some useful insight or tips. Furthermore, she suggested a documentary on a similar topic *A Man Named Pearl*, which was also a good learning tool. And last, Bill Hunt, who has been one of my key advisors from my very first day of classes at MSSU, was vital to my project. To be honest, he is part of the reason I decided to really pursue this field, taught me everything I know about editing, and has spent countless hours helping me get to the point I am now. I would have never felt that I would have been able to take on this project had I not had his influence over the past few years.

Research

A big part of this project was first doing research on Lucas and its unique community. Along with my blog and viewing of other documentaries, there were a few key sources that helped me tremendously with this research. The book *Backyard Visionaries* edited by Barbara Brackman and Cathy Dwigans included a section about the famous Garden of Eden sight in Lucas. This book gave me tons of great information about the site, its creator S.P. Dinsmoor, and the state of Lucas during this time period in the late 19th century. This section was written by John Hachmeister, the closest person to a Garden of Eden expert. Fortunately, I also got the opportunity to personally interview him.

Another great written source for me was *The Pictorial History of The Cabin Home* a small booklet that was written by Dinsmoor himself. This first-hand information let me know exactly

what he was thinking about some things, and I am very glad that he did take the time to write the booklet while he was alive.

In this day and age the internet was of course a key source of research for me. The websites for the main sites that make up the town of Lucas like the Grassroots Art Center, the Garden of Eden, and general sites about Lucas were great jumping off points for research. The social media site Facebook and pages for these sites and some individuals served as a both a great source of information and a communication tool.

Finally, the meat and potatoes of my research came from my personal trips to Lucas and personal interviews with the individuals that make the town of Lucas what it is. This primary source of research is what really allowed me to make a documentary and made my project what it is.

Background

Lucas is a small town located in North-Central Kansas in the heart of Post Rock Country, 16 miles off Interstate 70 at the intersection of Kansas Highway 18 and Kansas Highway 23 only a few miles from Wilson Lake. Lucas was one of the several small towns formed in Kansas in the 1870's and 80's as the railroads spread across Kansas and promoted farming. In fact, there were more towns in Kansas during this time than during any other time in the history of Kansas as expanding railroads promoted this land for farming (Hachmeister, personal communication, July 13, 2011).

According to the 2010 Census, there are 393 people, 192 households, and 108 families living in Lucas, and the entire area of the town is only half a square mile (U.S. Census 2010). There are only a handful of business from the single small grocery store, old hardware store,

lumber yard, liquor store, community theater, Linda's Café, and the famous Brant's Meat Market which has been owned and operated by the same family for over 89 years.

The small town of Lucas is as special as it is because of the unique grassroots art community that has established itself there. The grassroots art scene began in Lucas with the creation of the Garden of Eden in 1907. Starting with this first grassroots art environment, the grassroots art community has grown tremendously including the establishment of a Grassroots Art Center in 1995.

The Garden of Eden

The heart of this small Kansas town is without question the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden is the first major grassroots art site to appear in Lucas. The site features a post rock log cabin and hundreds of cement sculptures. It is considered one of the one of the eight wonders of Kansas Art, one of top ten most important pieces of art in the world, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places ("John Hachmeister," "The Garden of Eden," and "Lucas's Art Tour").

S.P. Dinsmoor, the sculptor of this magnificent environment was a Union Civil War nurse at the age of 19. In 1886, he moved to Grafton, IL where he met his first wife Frances, whom he married on horseback; they had 4 sons and one daughter and then in 1888 they moved to Lucas where he started a farm.

In 1905, he retired from farming and at age 64 started to build his post rock log cabin which took him two years to complete. He then spent the next twenty years completing his over 150 sculptures. In 1924, seven years after his wife Frances died, Dinsmoor married his second wife Emily. Emily was 20 years old at the time of their marriage, while Dinsmoor. They had a daughter, Emily Jane, and a son, John, who are in the world record book as the youngest children

of a civil war veteran. He worked on his sculptures until 1930 when he lost most of his eyesight and died in 1932.

Dinsmoor's elaborate display of cement sculptures vary from 8 to 40 feet tall and were created with a total of 2,273 sacks of dry cement a total of 113 tons. His sculptures communicate many religious, societal, and political messages. Dinsmoor was a populist and used his sculptures to voice his ideas. Some of his sculptures promoted voters rights for women and minorities, others pushed for worker's rights and criticized the power of monopolistic trusts. A section of his sculptures also demonstrated the theory of Social Darwinism starting with a woman chasing after a soldier, the soldier shooting at an Indian, the Indian shooting at a dog, the dog chasing a fox, the fox chasing a cat, the cat chasing a bird, the bird chasing a worm, and the worm eating a leaf (Schneider, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Dinsmoor was a very inventive man and showman. Dinsmoor created his own fountain from a so-called "spring" he found. On the spring, Dinsmoor remarked in his *Pictorial History of the Cabin Home*, "Say! I am the only fellow in town that has got a spring that I know of. Wasn't I lucky to have a spring to come up right in my yard? That is natural water, but say; the others could have a spring with natural water if they would make the spring like I did and tap the main" (Dinsmoor).

Dinsmoor was the first in town not only to have city water, but also electricity. He had his own generator and he used this electricity to light his towering sculptures. Lynn Schneider manager and tour guide at the Garden of Eden said, "That was probably the main thing that brought tourists in, because passengers on the trains would see the light and would come down and take a look at the place. You can imagine what that would look like with on trees around and

this little community is all glowing with this artificial light compared to kerosene-it would be very fantastic” (Schneider, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Dinsmoor was such a showman that he did not want to be left out even after his death, and arranged to have his body mummified and placed in his stone mausoleum he built alongside his first wife in a way that visitors could still come and see him. He also built his own coffin that was used in his tours prior to his death; he even charged an extra 25 cents to lay inside the coffin for his tourists. Dinsmoor left his Garden of Eden so that he and his messages would be clear to future generations, and they are still viewed by around 10,000 visitors from around the country and world every year (Schneider, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

After visiting the Garden of Eden myself, going on the tour, and learning so more about Dinsmoor, it was extremely obvious just how innovative and eccentric he was, and how special of a place he is. Also recently, the Garden of Eden has been going through a major restoration. The Kohler foundation, a non-profit organization that restores environmental art, temporarily purchased the Garden of Eden this year to do its restoration. During my last two visits to Lucas, I got to see the restoration and the HUGE improvement to the sculptures. Although they got a good deal of work done, Kohler will finish the restoration this coming summer.

The Grassroots Art Center

With a grassroots art icon like the Garden of Eden, it is no surprise that Lucas easily became the focal point for grassroots art in the Midwest. Kansas ranks third in the U.S. in the number of grassroots art sites, after Wisconsin and California. The Lucas Arts & Humanities Council, also known as the Grassroots Art Center, was formed as a non-profit organization in 1991.

In 1996, Kansas Governor Bill Graves named Lucas the "Grassroots Art Capital of Kansas" in response to the number of sites in the community dedicated to preserving this untrained art. A

year earlier the Grassroots Art Center opened an exhibit space completely dedicated to grassroots art in a renovated 19th century native limestone buildings on Main Street. The old building which was originally a doctor's office also includes outdoor space which is used to display the Post Rock Limestone exhibit- the courtyard exhibit shows examples from the late 19th and early 20th century stone mason architectural work.

Grassroots art is a unique form of untrained art. Rosslyn Shultz, Executive Director of the Grassroots Art Center, said, "Grassroots art, my definition would be, that they have to be self taught, usually in Kansas, are 65 years and older, you've worked at a job all your life, and now you can play. We have a few that are younger but in general. You work only to please yourself. You take materials that you have collected for 65 years. And you create with it, and so you're going to create for 10 to 15 years, things are going to start spilling out into the yard, and become a conversation piece for the community" (Schultz, personal communication, July 30, 2011).

The Grassroots Art Center works to preserve these art environments through the collection as well as documentation and photos. This is especially important considering that around 90% of the environments are destroyed after the artists' death. The demographic of grassroots artists tends to be similar; however, the grassroots art itself is anything but alike.

"There are no two people that work in the same two medium, because there are no two people that save the same two things. Think whatever is valuable. We have one gentleman working in bone, to metal to cardboard, chewing gum, grocery sacks, wood, limestone, its anything, it's anything- so it can be paperclips whatever you have a lot of- yes the pop tabs- yes if you have 800,00 of them you should do something with them," said Rosslyn Shultz (Schultz, personal communication, July 30, 2011).

At the Grassroots Art Center, I was given a crash course in this unique, un-trained art form. The Kansas Grassroots Art Center, which is housed in an old 19th century building downtown on Main St, exhibits hundreds of pieces of this untrained art. I also learned about many of these interesting artists such as Inez Marshall. Inez Marshall was not your average Kansas woman working as an auto mechanic, truck driver, and traveling evangelist. While recovering from a broken back, she started carving Kansas limestone in the late 1930s and did not stop for another 51 years. Her sculptures include animals, politicians, scenes from small town life, a one-fifth size Model T Ford, and much more (Grassroots Art Center).

Florence Deeble grew up watching S.P. Dinsmoor construct the Garden of Eden and was inspired as an adult to build her own concrete postcards around her home in Lucas. She began building Florence Deeble's Rock Garden using rocks brought back from her travels when she was 50 years old and has now been a landmark for over 50 years (Stokes).

Ed Root was a grassroots artist who farmed south of Lucas until he was forced into early retirement after an automobile accident. For over twenty years, he created hundreds of concrete shapes embellished with broken glass, stones and metal with which he ornamented his entire farmstead. This site where Root lived with his wife and their ten children is now under Lake Wilson, but more than a hundred pieces were moved to the center and preserved by the Kansas Grassroots Art Association before the lake was filled (Grassroots Art Center).

Grassroots artist Herman Divers used the medium of old pull-tabs to create a full-size motorcycle which is displayed along with his pull-tab car, umbrella, clothing, and chair at the grassroots art center. John Woods, of Kansas City, created an interactive grassroots art piece called the "Name Game" in which there are visual clues for visitors to guess the corresponding name, which will then light up when selected with metal tip of a stick. And one of my personal

favorites is Betty Milliken of Lawrence Kansas. Betty used one of the smallest mediums in the exhibit- chewing gum. She made chewing gum cameos as well as figures out of grape fruit rinds.

Finally, the previously mentioned grassroots artist Mri-Pilar is featured at the Grassroots Art Center with her interior environment located at the old Florence Deeble home. Pilar uses recycled material from Barbie dolls to bone and board games. She has filled several rooms of the house with her unique work.

These grassroots artists are those that I chose to feature in my documentary, although there are many more with just as interesting pieces. I chose these artists based on their prominence at the center, the uniqueness of their work, and the impact they had on Lucas as a whole.

The Grassroots Art Center is also working a new major addition to the town of Lucas with a new public restroom. The Bowl Plaza is a very special public restroom that will feature mosaic artwork, similar to that of Lucas- native grassroots artist Ed Root. Volunteers throughout the community are working to complete the project. I was hoping that it would be completed this fall so I could include the final product in my documentary; however, it looks to be completed this coming spring.

Goals

With this project, although a creative video, there were still several questions I wanted to answer. I first wanted to learn more about the Garden of Eden, SP Dinsmoor, the Grassroots Art Center, and the grassroots artists. In addition to this, I wanted to delve more into this basic information and to answer some of my own questions.

First, I wanted to know more about who exactly these grassroots artists are/ were. I wanted to know if they had any common demographics. I wanted to know what differentiated

grassroots artists from other types of artists. Second, I wanted to know what impact SP Dinsmoor and the Garden of Eden had on the creation of this unique community. Would Lucas have become the “Grassroots Art Capital of Kansas” without him? Were other grassroots artists inspired by him? I also wanted to see what professional artists in Lucas thought of this art form. Last, I really wanted to delve more into the future for Lucas. What did locals think of their future? What do current projects/ developments in the town suggest for the future of the town?

Through my interviews and trips to Lucas, I was able to answer all of these questions. The Grassroots Art Center, Rosslyn Schultz, and grassroots artist Mri-Pilar taught me everything I needed to know about grassroots artists. I learned of the artists’ common demographics as well as what differentiated them. It was also unclear how big of a role the Garden of Eden and S.P. Dinsmoor had on the creation of this grassroots art community. The Garden of Eden is what drew many of the grassroots artists like Mri-Pilar as well as two professional artists Erika Nelson and Eric Abraham. Some of the other grassroots artists like Florence Deeble were directly inspired by Dinsmoor. Overall, he was the cornerstone that led to the subsequent grassroots art community. And last, I learned that the future of Lucas is very bright. Between the current restoration of the Garden of Eden, the addition of the Lucas Bowl Plaza, and continuous growth of the grassroots art community, it does not appear this town is going to slow down anytime soon. Everyone I talked to acknowledged that many small towns like Lucas in Kansas are dying, but every person I talked to felt that Lucas was different and will continue to prosper, and I after seeing what I have of Lucas, I must agree with them.

Footage

As Lucas is close to six hours away from Joplin, it took several long trips and many long hours of shooting to get the video I needed for this project. For still photographs I used a Canon Rebel

SLR while most of my footage being video was captured on a Canon GL2 video camera, a very nice piece of equipment that I was able to use with great thanks to MSSU's KGCS-TV.

Prior to most the trips, I would make trip agendas listing which interviews I would be completing that day at what time and which items/places I would also be getting during that trip. There were many shots that I knew I wanted to get prior to going, like plenty of footage of the Garden of Eden, the Grassroots Art Center, Main St and the major local businesses, the different Lucas town signs, and other random b-roll, or many other shots, of town.

Having edited several other projects, I knew that when it comes to editing the final project, it is always better to have extra b-roll than not enough. Furthermore, I tried my best to get at least seven seconds of each shot, as I knew once again from prior editing that it is much easier to work with footage if you have at least that long of a shot. Some of the trips were easier to get footage than other trips. My first trip to Lucas in early May and last quick trip in early November were both very pleasant and allowed for me to get plenty of good footage in. Conversely, my last trip to Lucas during the last weekend of July was extremely hot, and running around the small town for 7 hours in 103-degree temperature made for a very long, but worthwhile day.

Interviews

A documentary being a form of qualitative research, it was imperative for me to get plenty of first-hand interviews. While researching Lucas, I made note of the key figures involved in the town, Garden of Eden, and Grassroots Art Center. I then made lists of questions for those individuals, sending a sample of the questions to the interviewee if requested.

To get the interviewees I needed I ended up going to a variety of places. I conducted one interview in Salina, one in Lawrence, one in Oklahoma City, and the remaining nine in Lucas

with three separate trips to Lucas. Some of the interviews were planned, some came up by chance, and some went better than others did, but each interview had its own purpose and contributed in some way.

My first trip to Lucas was in early May 2011 and my first interview was one that I had planned to get when I first decided to do my project on Lucas. Mri-Pilar is the most recent grassroots artist to work in Lucas, starting in 2002, and I believe, is one of the most interesting artists displayed in Lucas. Her “recycled art” is like nothing I’ve ever seen, so I was excited to meet the person behind such interesting work. I met her in Salina, KS at their public library to interview her. Having worked in television before, she was an excellent interview, providing me with lots of great information, and helpful to me, gave them in great sound bites for the documentary.

After this interview, I continued to Lucas where I got several more interviews. I recorded a tour of the Garden of Eden with manager and tour guide Lynn Schneider who I also interviewed briefly, although most of her information and sound bites I got during the actual tour. Lynn was extremely helpful, even specially turning on the lights on the sculptures for me to be able to get some footage of the site lit up. I also had a quick and unexpected interview with another Garden of Eden tour guide Mary Ann Stinley who is not only a life-long resident of Lucas, she also happens to be the great-niece of Dinsmoor’s second wife, Emily.

After the Garden of Eden I went on the Grassroots Art Center where I similarly recorded a tour of the Grassroots Art Center with Executive Director Rosslyn Schultz. The sound bites I got from her during the tour were very informative, and this also helped me plan future interviews and shots to get.

In June I made a trip to Kansas University in Lawrence, KS to get a very crucial interview with Associate Professor of Art at KU and Director of the Garden of Eden, John Hachmeister. Hachmeister almost singly handedly saved the Garden of Eden by creating a corporation to purchase the property in the 1980's and brought it back to the successful tourist attraction it is today. His interview, as I suspected, was one of the most in-depth, information gaining, and helpful interviews. I talked to Mr. Hachmeister for an hour and a half, learning more than I had hoped about the Garden of Eden, the history of Kansas, the start of the Grassroots Art Center, and about Lucas in general.

In late July I made another trip to Lucas which ended up being my busiest trip. During the trip, I interviewed six people: professional artists Erika Nelson and Eric Abraham, the owner of Brant's Meat Market Doug Brant, Kohler Conservator Ben Caguioa, a full sit down interview with Rosslyn Shultz, as well as her husband and life-long resident of Lucas Steven Schultz. All of these interviews were very helpful in their own ways and added a great deal to the overall project.

Finally, in early August I made a special trip to Oklahoma City, OK to interview Peggy and JayDe Zehr. The Zehr's lived in the log cabin at the Garden of Eden in 1960 during the short period that the home was actually being used as apartment living space. I was very excited to get a unique perspective of what it was like to actually live in the cabin, especially considering there were only a handful of people who actually have. I learned of the Zehr's by luck when I met their daughter-in-law in Topeka, KS in April in a hotel elevator while there for a convention. The couple was very kind and added an interesting component to the documentary.

Logging and Scriptwriting

The most tedious and most difficult part of the entire process of making this movie was undoubtedly the logging. When one has 14 tapes and over 13 hours of video to watch and transcribe, it can be slightly overwhelming and rather easy to put off. Although a tape may only have an hour's worth of video, it can easily take up to double the time to listen, pause, rewind to get what the last part of what the person said, didn't quite get it so rewind and listen to it one or two more times, and type it out, etc. To ease some of this pressure, I received some assistance from a friend with transcribing skills way beyond mine for three of the interviews.

I ended up with 107 pages of logs by the time all the tapes were logged. Once this wearisome process was completed, I moved onto the more enjoyable task of scriptwriting. Scriptwriting is truly like putting together a big puzzle. After reading through the logs several times, I selected the appropriate quotes from my interviews and key information from my other research, roughly chose the corresponding shots and photos, and put the pieces together in a sequence that made sense and told the story of Lucas that I wanted to tell. I ended up with a 14 page script.

Editing

As a student at Missouri Southern, I was fortunate enough to have access to our top of the line non-linear editing system, Avid Media Composer. Even though I have been using Avid for the past two and a half years consistently, there are still components of this program that I am learning. One of my great instructors, Bill Hunt who taught me almost everything I know about Avid, describes non-linear editing as "riding a bike," once you learn how to do it, you don't forget. Although I agree with his metaphor, I would have to add on that there is much more to learn in editing. The majority of people do not realize the amount of work that goes in to editing

even a minute of video. I can attest that even with all the editing experience I had prior to this project, I learned a great deal.

My editing style is rather quick with little edits of space without a voice over or interview, which may or may not have been the most effective approach for this project, but gets the information across. The text style I decided to use was Poor Richard font. I don't know if I want to admit, or could even add up the number of hours I spent in the editing lab working on this documentary. There were many evenings where six hours went by without realizing. It is always amazing to me how much time it takes to edit even the simplest sequence. Nonetheless, I am extremely lucky to have had access to this top-of-the-line editing system at MSSU's KGCS-TV. My documentary is approximately 43 minutes long, which is about the length I was hoping to reach.

Music

With my background in media being more in a news-like setting, I do not often have to worry about incorporating music in my work. Thus, the thought of what type of music I would use in my documentary did not occur to me until late into the project. Although, once I was reminded of this crucial component, I knew I would need a strong music presence to create a successful video.

Fortunately, I was informed that two of my fellow Southern classmates were talented musicians- Taylor Bond and Robbie Cooper. These two gentlemen were extremely helpful and kind enough to record some original music to create the mood for the documentary. Taylor and Robbie used simple melodies with acoustic guitars.

To get music that complimented the video well, I worked with Taylor and Robbie, telling them about Lucas and showing them some clips of the documentary. I told them the mood I was

wanting and the feel of music I was shooting for. Although I'm not sure that my vague musical descriptions and small bank of music terminology was helpful, the two guys were awesome and did a wonderful job providing me with great music that enhanced the video perfectly.

Furthermore, it helped me not have to worry about jumping through the hoops of music copyrights and ASCAP or BMI listings to use other copyrighted music.

Problems Met

As with any large project, problems are bound to arise. Although overall this project ran rather smooth, I did come across several problems. One of the first problems was simply being unable to reach one interview. I was really hoping to get an interview with the Mayor of Lucas, as the leader of this small community would have plenty of knowledge on the town. However, after several unanswered phone calls prior to my last trip, I gave up on this interview, knowing I had enough other strong interviews to use in the project.

A few of my interviews suffered from technical difficulties. I lost almost an entire interview with Linda and Gene Jespen. Although I'm not sure exactly what caused the loss of the interview, I know I lost a lot of potentially good footage and simply research for this project. Fortunately, most of my b-roll in Linda's Café was not affected, so that I was able to include this important component.

My interview with Doug Brant also had some minor problems. I learned to never schedule an interview at a popular business right before close. During our interview, we were interrupted at least six times; at one point during these interruptions, Doug messed with his microphone, causing some of the later parts of the interview to be un-usable.

As an interviewer, there were several improvements I could have made. One thing that I noticed several times during my interview was my tendency to talk while my interviewees are

still speaking which is noticeable in the audio, even if the interviewee is the only one with a microphone on. I should have taken the time to say, “Sorry, I was still talking when you began to answer that question, could you please start that answer again.” That simple step would have improved several of my interview sound bites.

Another thing I could have done better as an interviewer was to instruct my interviewees on the best way to answer my questions. To get the best sound bites, it is better to instruct the interviewees to answer the question using part of the question. For example, if I ask the interviewee what his/her favorite color is, I would instruct him/her to answer the question, “My favorite color **is** yellow,” instead of simply “yellow.”

There were problems with many of my footage shots. Some of my shots were slightly shaky, I did not hold all my shots as long as I needed to on others, and many of my pans and push ins and outs were not as smooth as they could be either. All of these mistakes and problems are things I have learned a great deal from and hope to correct with future projects.

I also encountered some problems during the editing process. Computers are our best friends and enemies- computer based editing is light-years better than old film and glue editing days, but sometimes it runs into problems too. I had trouble with the computer I was editing on to transfer my documentary onto a DVD. To make a long story short, after having trouble with different hard drives and a glitch on the computer, moving to a new computer, and completely re-editing the audio for my documentary, I was able to complete the project and get it onto a DVD.

Conclusion

Like the town of Lucas itself, this project has a great capability to change and improve. Although I am proud of what I have accomplished with this project, I don't think I will ever be completely

satisfied with it. After spending so much time with the town of Lucas, I know just how special of a place it is. Every person I met, interviewed, or simply passed on the street was kind, courteous, and extremely helpful. Even though it is a tiny town, I know there are many more great stories that could be told in Lucas.

As the restoration of the Garden of Eden will be completed this next summer, and as the Lucas Toilet Bowl Plaza project is also still in progress, I definitely plan on adding on to my documentary to include the completion of these two major projects. I feel very fortunate that I have made a connection with this unique town and these great individuals, and I plan on taking advantage of this connection to continue my research and work with this documentary. I also hope to eventually have a premiere of this documentary at the Lucas Community Theater to share it with the entire town. KGCS-TV is also planning to air it on their local broadcast cable television station. I plan on sharing a copy of this documentary with all of those that helped me with interviews and those featured extensively like the Garden of Eden and Grassroots Art Center. Eventually I may also look into giving it to the Kansas Tourism board.

Personally, this project has given me a better understanding of utilizing documentary film theory and methodology to create a documentary film, implementing mass media devices when integrating audio and video into the presentation, using my interview skills to gather information, as well as develop my research skills which will all certainly benefit my future career. I also hope this project will serve as a recorded documentation of this unique and important art community and act as potential promotion for the town of Lucas, KS. Overall, I am really excited about this continuous project and looking forward to keep working with this great town.

Resources

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