

Stanley Fox: A Life in Film

Archivist Dennis J. Duffy



Stanley Fox (age 22) at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1950. Allan King photograph.

Seventy years ago, a young Vancouverite began a lifelong fascination with motion pictures. Stanley Fox was an 18-year-old student with an interest in still photography when he learned that the Vancouver Film Society, founded in the 1930s, was being revived after the Second World War. He started attending the society's screenings of classic and foreign films, which had a tremendous influence on his visual awareness. Soon Stan was shooting his own amateur 16mm footage, capturing moving images of his city and surroundings with his perceptive eye. Within a few years he was creating short experimental films and documentaries. Two of them, *In the Daytime* and *Suite Two*, won honourable mentions in the amateur category in the first years of the Canadian Film Awards (1949 and 1950) and are preserved at the Royal BC Museum.

In 1953, Fox directed his last substantial amateur film, *The Suetonius Version*. In the same year, he joined the staff of CBC Vancouver as a film editor.

Although he was largely self-taught, Fox's interest in motion pictures was encouraged by film enthusiasts Dorothy and Oscar Burritt. In turn, Fox would play an important role in teaching and fostering generations of younger filmmakers. As a television producer at CBC Vancouver in the 1960s, he supported the work of local experimental filmmakers, broadcasting their films on his TV series *The Enterprise* and *New World*. He also taught film courses at UBC and later ran the film school at Simon Fraser University. In 1972, he moved to Toronto to become a film studies professor at York. He returned to television production in 1981 as the director of adult programming for TV Ontario, buying programs and finding projects by new filmmakers. In 1988 he moved to Victoria, where he continued to work part-time as an independent producer and consultant, assessing film proposals for Rogers Television and BC Film. In between these career moves, Fox made time to manage the Vancouver Film Society, co-found the original Vancouver Film Festival (1958–62), start his own production company (Aquarius Films) and travel extensively to major film festivals around the world.

I met Fox in 1986, after he donated two of his amateur films to the BC Archives. I was responsible for the restoration work on his wonderful 1949 documentary *In the Daytime*. In March 1986, at National Film Week in Vancouver, the archives launched the restored version of the film, as well as my book *Camera West: British Columbia on Film*. When Stan retired to Victoria, I recorded an oral history interview with him. We gradually became friends and discovered that we both loved to talk about the movies. We're still talking.