

Two Hats: Personally made films and those films worked on.

by Nathaniel Dorsky
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Ever since I was nineteen years old I have worked on films either as a cameraperson or as a film editor, or sometimes both. These films usually fall within the practical categories of the film industry: *educational films*, *documentaries*, and *feature length fictional films*. This is how I have made a living during my lifetime and how I have supported my more personal film work.



Nathaniel working as a production assistant on *Nothing But a Man*, directed by [Michael Roemer](#) and [Robert Milton Young](#), 1963

In 1963, a year before I presented my childhood trilogy of sound films, *Ingreen*, *A Fall Trip Home*, and *Summerwind*, I made a film, *Catch A Tiger*, which showed the activity in two nursery schools that experimented with allowing four year olds to improvise in music and visual constructions and assemblages. I was inspired to do this by my mother, Blanche Dorsky, whose nursery school was one of the two presented.

1963 Teen-age Movie Contest Winners

Kodak's first teen-age movie contest was a smashing success. It turned up some of the finest movie-making talent you could imagine. Not from pros, but from youngsters! Titles and synopses of prize-winning films given here will tell you what they were shooting. Our heartiest congratulations to all entrants.

And a special congratulation to nine of the contestants whose films have been chosen by CINE (Council for International Non-Theatrical Events) for possible showing in overseas film festivals. It was CINE and the University Film Producers Association who asked our help in locating outstanding 8mm and 16mm movies made by young people, and we want to thank them for their cooperation and help in judging.

Judges for the contest were: O. S. Knudsen, Iowa State University; J. E. Oglesby, Virginia State Board of Education; J. L. Senn, Purdue University; James Card, George Eastman House of Photography; and John Flory, Advisor on Non-Theatrical Films, Eastman Kodak Company.

JUNIOR CATEGORY (12-15 years of age):

First Prize: SON OF WAR SHORTS, Philip Snyder, Jr., 13, Lawrence, L. I., N. Y. (8mm color film with magnetic sound track. Story of the battle of two Jims, as acted by kids, including the raising of the flag on Mt. Suribachi.)

Second Prize: BATTLE FOR THE SKY, Luther Guy Wright, 15, Lynchburg, Virginia (8mm color film, silent. Animation showing man's conquest of space. Enactment of the building of a space station.)

Buddies, James Liban, 15, Milwaukee, Wisc.; **No Time at Noon,** Tanas Milovich, 15, St. Louis, Mo.

SENIOR CATEGORY (16-19 years of age):

First Prize: THE TOURISTS, Albert Ihd, Jr., 19, Nutley, New Jersey (16mm color film with sound on separate tape. A teen-age boy and girl enact a grim, but amusing farce having an O. Henry or Hitchcock-type denouement.)

Second Prize: OUR TOWN, Fred Elmas, 16, Mountain Lakes, New Jersey (16mm color film with sound on separate tape. An attractive portrait of suburbia, filmed and described by the young people there.)

Third Prize: THE BENCH, Alfred Lowenheim, 16, Plainfield, New Jersey (8mm color film, silent. A tightly-knit animated cartoon done in the best modern style. Has humor and aesthetic distinction.)

Special Award: CONCEPTS OF INFINITY, Miss Marie Pearson, 17, Bethesda, Maryland (8mm color film, silent. A lucid and charming cartoon for teaching young children what is meant by the infinity symbol.)

Honorable Mentions: For He Shall Conquer, Larry Klobukowski, 16, West Allis, Wisc.; The Professional, William Young, 16, San Francisco, Calif.; Century 21 Expedition, Donald Fox, 17, El Cerrito, Calif.; Embryology of The Chick, Miss Paulette Cortas, 16, Fayette, Ohio; A Dull Day, Vick Giles, 17, Houston, Texas; Nature Scrapbook, Bruton Peterson, 18, St. Albans, W. Va.; Persecution, Michael Tomlinson, 17, Pacific Palisades, Calif.; For Thine is the Kingdom, Miss Cathleer Voss, 18, St. Louis, Mo.; The Poocher, Jim Waite, 16, Grangeville, Idaho; The Last Walk, Brian King, Jr., 18, Hartford, Conn.; Catch a Tiger, Nathaniel Dorasky, 19, New York, N. Y.; Blueprint for Murder, Terry Zahn, 17, Waukesha,

extract from [pdf](#) Kodak Movie News Spring 1964

I was fortunate to win an honorable mention in the Kodak Teenage Movie Contest that year at 19 years of age. The prize was two rolls of regular eight Kodachrome II and processing which I used as 16mm (double 8) toward my first personal film, Ingreen, completed when I was 20.



photo by [Michael Hausman](#): Nathaniel shooting for an educational film for [Rudolf Arnheim](#), 1965

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A year after making my personal trilogy, I was employed by Gay Matthaei to photograph and edit and help conceive an educational film about four painters for children, [Where Time is a River](#). She won first prize in the first Woman's Film Festival. That film led to my shooting the paintings for a CBS documentary on Gauguin for which I was fortunate enough to win an Emmy. Soon after I was employed as an editor by the famous filmmaker and photographer, [Ralph Steiner](#), to complete three visual studies that he had been working on in his later life. Each job led to the next.

Of course, everyone seems amused that I worked on [Revenge of the Cheerleaders](#), 1976. Two dear filmmaking friends had made a very successful drive-in exploitation feature called The Cheerleaders. The economic success of that film initiated a request for a sequel by the distributor. Paul Glickler who had directed the first film wanted to move on to better things and gave his filmmaking partner and cameraman, [Richard Lerner](#) the opportunity to direct the second.

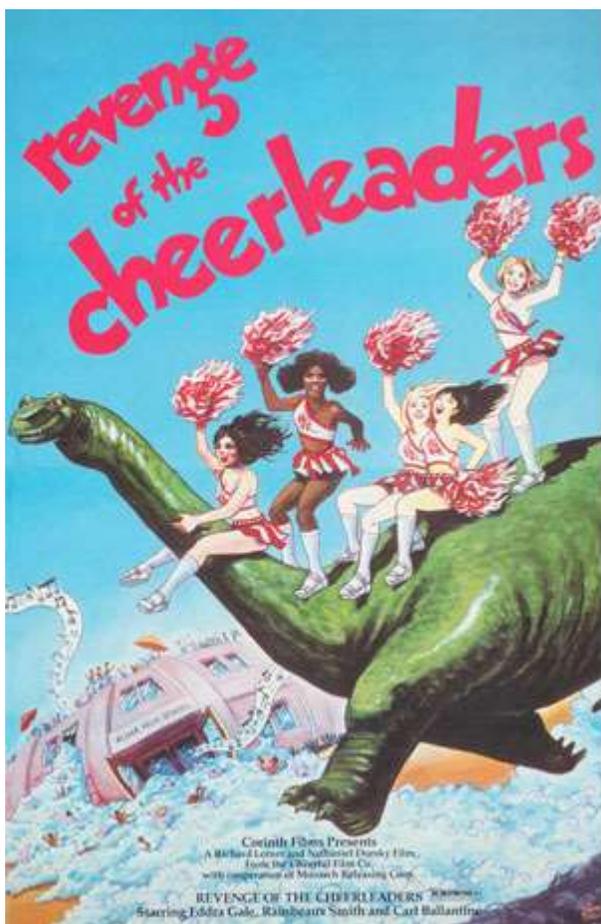


photo poster *Revenge of the Cheerleaders*, 1976

Richard was kind enough to offer me a chance to shoot a feature film, which was irresistible and I became his partner in the making of this rather strange farce of a teenage movie that was very much influenced by the Republic serials we both loved so much as kids. It was [David Hasselhoff](#)'s first feature and the school nurse was played by [Eddra Gale](#), the large prostitute in [Fellini's 8 1/2](#).

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David Hasselhoff as Boner, captain of the basketball team

The comedian, [Carl Ballantine](#) played Dr. Ivory, the school principal, and the evil real-estate mogul, Walter Heartlander, was played by [William Bramley](#) who played Officer Krupke in the film version of [West Side Story](#). And [Cloris Leachman](#) who played Lillie Downs, the waitress at the teenage hangout, had been in [Kiss Me Deadly](#).



Eddra Gale as Nurse Beam, the school nurse

We had quite a low budget and the film had to be shot very quickly. I became a co-producer, cameraman/director of photography, co-writer, and assisted in the editing along with [Jerome Hiler](#). Our final polish was done by [Russ Meyer](#)'s sometimes editor and sound man, [Dick Brummer](#), who was well versed in the low end of Hollywood production. His clarity and strength of experience was a marvelous lesson in editing for us.

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It was a wondrous time in Hollywood from a certain point of view... it was the nadir... the early seventies. Weeds were coming through the sidewalk, buildings were crumbling. Vast eating palaces like the Musso & Frank Grill on Hollywood Boulevard were virtually empty at dinner time. This was an era right before the revival generation of *Jaws* and *The Godfather*.



Nathaniel shooting a scene for Paul Glickler's *Back in the USA*, also called *Running Scared* with Ken Wahl, Judge Reinhold, and Annie McEnroe, 1980

Several New Yorkers migrated to LA to work for [Roger Corman](#) and other very low budget producers. Andrew Meyer, who had made a reputation in the New American Cinema scene made *Night of the Cobra Woman* for Corman for \$100,000, soup to nuts. [Martin Scorsese](#) was shooting *Boxcar Bertha* for American International. Jerome and I were staying at the time at the Tropicana Motel, featured years later in Paul Morrissey's *Heat*, and we would breakfast at their infamous grill, Duke's. We would see Marty there in the morning as I knew him from film classes we had taken at New York University. It was a very heady and exciting short-lived period when there was a way for young filmmakers to learn the trade inspired by the low budget features we all had loved in our youth. Many of the low-end production facilities were on their last legs. These establishments: prop houses, odd and historic car renters, mix houses, sound and music effect libraries, optical houses and sound stages, haunted by the glories of the past were available and happy for whatever work there was.



photo by Mark Birnbaum: Nathaniel shooting in Lowell, Massachusetts with [Father Spike Morissette](#) for *What Happened to Kerouac*. Father Spike was Jack Kerouac's priest.

About ten years later, Richard Lerner was making a film based on interviews he had shot at Naropa Institute's Conference on [Jack Kerouac](#). I had the good fortune to have the thankless task of shooting images to accompany the very gorgeous audio readings of Jack Kerouac, so complete in themselves.



photo by Mark Birnbaum: Father Spike Morissette was our host in Lowell, and we were taken to wonderful secret places.

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One section, using a rare and very private recording Jack made for his girlfriend at the time, Lois Sorrells Beckwith, of *Doctor Sax*, came out really well I thought. That section was entirely shot during a very wintery week in Lowell.

While doing this, there was a falling out with the editor at the time and I had a chance to finish editing the majority of the film. It turned out well, a film titled *What Happened to Kerouac*, 1986, and from that point on I began to work mostly as an editor, mostly on documentaries.

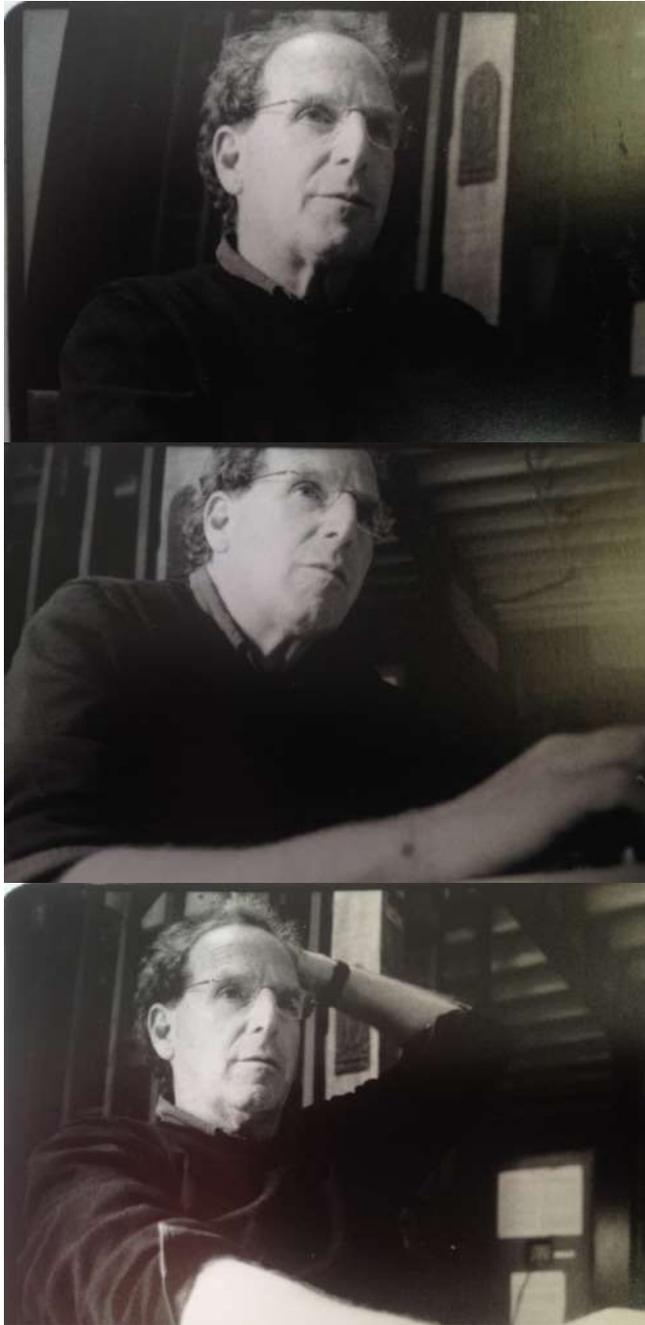


Nathaniel with Allen Ginsberg and Jack Collom, Jane Brakhage's brother, working on *The Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg*.

Some films that are often mislabeled as being in my filmography come from this period. Some highlights as an editor were working on *The Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg* by Jerry Aranson and Michel Dubois' documentary *The Spirit of Crazy Horse*, but especially for the three feature-length documentaries I did with Owsley Brown, *Nightwaltz: The Music of Paul Bowles*, *The Precious Treasury*, which documented a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in far western Tibet, and *Music Makes a City*, co-directed and written by Jerome Hiler. These three films, each quite different from one another, represent for me my very best work as an editor, working on an entire project.

Two other small projects I love very much are, a short fundraiser photographed and directed by Vivian Kurz, *Jewel Mountain*, narrated by the Dalai Lama, about the great 20th century Tibetan meditation master *Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche*, the other is Jane Levy Reed's *My Eyes Were Fresh*, The Life and Photographs of *John Gutmann*.

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photos by Jane Reed: Nathaniel editing Jane Reed's *My Eyes Were Fresh: The Life and Photographs of John Gutmann*

I have worked as a professional film and video editor or consulting editor on hundreds of films. This has been an interesting part of my career. As I have gotten older I have been hired more frequently as a film doctor. In these cases the client feels stuck or confused in their process. My fresh set of eyes plus my structural instincts have saved filmmakers weeks or even months of frustration with problems they could no longer see clearly. Each job is a unique challenge. Sometimes I work for weeks, but many times for just a day or two, helping people straighten out their structure so that they can finish themselves; I usually enjoy the people I work with and have learned a lot about filmmaking from these more subject oriented projects. For one thing, it frees me in my own work from journalistic tendencies, and also much of the stern professional advice I have to offer to my clients, I can then offer to myself in my own explorations.