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For the last assignment in COMM 180 Digital Media class we all had to create a video documentary trailer for the Life on the Farm project. This is a project to preserve the oral histories of farmers from Hancock County who live on century farms. The farm we focused on was Mark Metzger's farm. Mr. Metzger is a local farmer whose family moved to their farm over a century ago. He began as a dairy farmer but when the industry changed he made the switch to crop farming.

As I began this project, I wanted to focus on how important farming and the farm community is to all of us. I wanted to provide a deep appreciation for what farmers do, as a way to help promote the project. Visiting the Metzger farm was a great experience. I could see how proud Mr. Metzger was of everything he showed to us. I wanted to show the types of tools used by early farmers and how hard they worked. I was hoping to gradually transition to the way farming is done now. I planned to use photos and video clips of old time farm equipment and current practices. When we studied copyright and fair use, I realized that it would be hard making a documentary to get permission for everything that might appear in the documentary, but at least ours was nonprofit and for educational purposes so fair use should apply. I also had concerns about the music I wanted to use. It would have to be something generic from the public domain. I would have liked to use something modern and popular instead.

Early on I didn't really think about how grueling the process was going to be. The only film editing experience I had to that point was in creating my high school football highlight reel. That required little to no editing, just shaving some clips to get the length I wanted, then dragging and dropping the music I wanted. This project was my first time working with Adobe Premiere and it was far more complex than anything I had used before. Then I was presented with the hours and hours of footage I had to go through to find the clips I wanted. It was all very overwhelming at first. I didn't even know what direction I wanted to go and I felt lost.

Things started off slowly. I spent the first couple weeks of the project just learning how to use Adobe. Once I had a handle on that I needed a direction to go with the film. My initial thoughts were that I would do what most documentaries did and show Mr. Metzger telling us about his life and how his farm came to be and why it was so important to him. This is when I realized that working with film someone else had shot was a problem. The film shot was not focused on the questions I wanted answered. I had to work with what I had. So I began using wide shots with no dialogue in them. It was all I could think of to do and it at least gave me something. I still did not have a main focus though.

After finding a lot of shots that worked for the outlining parts of the video I still had no true direction I wanted to go. So I skipped to finding background music. I love music so this was honestly my favorite part of the process. I wanted to find something that really went well with the farm life. This didn't mean I wanted country music but Fetty Wap wasn't what I was looking for either. As a guitarist I decided that something acoustic would be nice. I found Free Music Archive online, and chose this solo acoustic guitar song by Jason Shaw. (I realize I should have given credit in the video to Jason Shaw for the music. Here is the link:

http://freemusicarchive.org/music/jason_shaw/audionautix_acoustic/SOLO_ACOUSTIC_GUIT

[AR_3-11](#).) The song had a way of making me happy and sad at the same time. That's when I remembered some things from my childhood.

Growing up my family lived in a small town in central Illinois. There were all kinds of farms around us including dairy farms. We would go and get our milk fresh from the cow every couple of weeks. It was definitely a high point for me because I love animals and visiting a farm was a real treat. I remember learning about how dairy farming worked and seeing how much the farmers cared for their animals. It was a very special thing and a great part of my childhood. Later we had our own pasture and we rented it out to calves. I remember how sad I was each year when the calves left to be fattened for slaughter. With those memories came the direction for my video.

I wanted the main focus to be on Mr. Metzger's transition from dairy farming to crop farming. I had witnessed firsthand how much farmer cared for their animals. I knew they were more than animals to him and I knew that by going this route with my video it would evoke an emotional response from the audience. So I began searching through the footage. Then I came across an interview with Mr. Metzger where he was asked if he always knew that he wanted to be a farmer. He goes on to talk about the transition he made from dairy to crops and it causes him to cry. I truly understood how much he meant every word he said about how hard the transition was.

I chose to feature that clip. It took up the majority of the video. After that I just had to find clips that showcased the actual farm. That was not hard at all because Mr. Metzger had taken us all over the place. I wanted to give the audience a real look at the enthusiasm Mr. Metzger had for his farm. I used a clip where he showed us a wall of old tools and described them. I took the audio out of it and played an instrumental song over it. You didn't need to hear

what he was saying to know that he was very happy to show off his antiques. I finished the video off with a shot of Mr. Metzger's family plaque that displayed when they came to the farm.

For all my effort my video was chosen as one of six to be shown to Mr. Metzger and Dr. Denecker at the end of the semester. I had never really experienced that kind of reward for a project. In high school I didn't get to watch the coaches who evaluated my highlight film react to it, and they didn't even know I had put it together. So when I was selected it felt really good. What felt even better was to then receive praise from you and Dr. Denecker since both of you have a lot of experience with film editing.

This project taught me a lot about storytelling. You have to evaluate your audience and then adjust your content and methods according to them. I also learned a lot about editing videos and the difficulties you may face with it. I went in thinking that it would be a drag and drop project I could easily skate through. The reality was it is a very grueling and at times boring process of analyzing film and finding the two minutes that will tell your story the best. The shocking part that I came to see when I had finished is that all the time and effort I had put forth produced one three-minute video. It gave me a very deep appreciation for people like Elaine Sheldon, who is doing the Hollow documentary. This project basically took half a semester and it only gave me a taste of all the hard work filmmakers put into their craft. I enjoyed this project and this class. I am looking forward to furthering my experience with video and audio editing. I may discover a career in it.