

DAMON RUNYON'S PUEBLO

Recreating Runyon's Colorado Roots

by JOHN H. JOHNSON

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When Damon Runyon is mentioned, what comes to mind? Probably Manhattan and Broadway or GUYS AND DOLLS. One doesn't think of Colorado wide prairies, blue mountains, or Bat Masterson and a barefoot boy. Either group of images is correct. Though Damon Runyon was renowned for his New York stories, anecdotes, and even his use of the language, few know that Runyon was a born and bred Westerner.

Runyon used to refer to "my old hometown" in his articles and stories. That hometown is Pueblo, Colorado—population around 110,000. Not many people in Pueblo knew exactly how Runyon was connected to their town. Sure, there was Runyon Lake down by the Arkansas River and the baseball field is known as Runyon Field, but exactly how that famous writer who lived in New York figured into local history was not common knowledge.

In Colorado, there is an agency called the Colorado Humanities Program whose work is to further the understanding of the humanities, literature and history among out-of-school adults. CHP funnels money from the National Endowment for the Humanities into Colorado and is responsible for the selection and completion of grants it distributes. In 1979, a group of men who knew of Runyon's connection to the city decided it would be a fine thing to make a film on his early life in Colorado with possible funding from CHP. With support from the University of Southern Colorado and the Sangre de Cristo Art Center, it was decided to apply for a grant. At this time, my friend, Joel Scherzer (who would ultimately write

the script for DAMON RUNYON'S PUEBLO), volunteered to help. A transplanted New Yorker, Runyon fan, and a former grants writer in up-state New York, Joel wrote the grant which was accepted by CHP. He deserves the lion's share of the producer's

credit on the film, for it was he who raised the money.

The grant funded the making of a film on Runyon's early life, from 1887 when he was seven and arrived in Pueblo from his Kansas birthplace until 1910 when he left Pueblo and



Art director Joe Pachak paints window frames and curtains onto boarded-up windows in the historic Union Avenue district of Pueblo.



Bat Masterson's gang during the 1879 Colorado Railroad War.



(LEFT) Doc Brackett takes his fiancée for a walk. Costumes such as these were often provided by the actors themselves.



Frame blow-ups from a 16mm print of two scenes in the film: Runyon covering a prizefight and reading a dime novel as a boy.





Director/cinematographer John H. Johnson takes to the air to film a baseball game at Runyon field.

started his journalistic climb, which resulted in his becoming the highest paid short story writer of his time. Seventeen of his stories were later made into features including: *POCKET FULL OF MIRACLES*, *LITTLE MISS MARKER*, and of course, *GUYS AND DOLLS*. The idea for the grant was that the people and experiences he'd had in Pueblo formed the basis for his later work. For instance, we show how Runyon used Bat Masterson's Pueblo exploits of the late 1870's as the characterization for Sky Masterson, the lead in his "Guys and Dolls" story. For both Runyon and Masterson were in Pueblo before the turn of the century and both ended up in New York as newspapermen where they became fast friends.

For a shot of Runyon jumping a train a static boxcar was used with Johnson and the camera riding on a sled pulled by assistant cameraman Al Maisel, scriptwriter Joel Scherzer and art director Joe Pachak.



So we proposed to produce a period dramatized documentary dating from 1879 to 1913 about these relationships and experiences.

It was at this point that an old prof. and colleague of mine at USC, Lew Tilley, asked if I wanted to be involved and, of course, I did. My background has been a mix of photography and filmmaking. I received my BFA from Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York, in 1975 and my MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, in 1977. Since then, I have made my living mainly by teaching photography and filmmaking in about half a dozen universities and colleges around Colorado, my primary background being Fine Arts Photography, utilizing Ansel Adams' Zone System. I would, in addition to teaching, occasionally work on my own films or as a crew member on various documentaries and television commercials. After having written several scripts and applying for a number of grants with none coming through, I was primed and ready for just such a project when Al Kochka, Director of Sangre de Cristo Art Center, asked me to direct and photograph the film on Runyon. I felt that this was a golden opportunity, and it has proved to be just that.

CHP approved the grant, which, in these tight fiscal times, surprised us, because the RUNYON grant asked for \$21,705, the largest single grant request they had received for a media project. The grant, as with most humanities or arts grants, required a series of checkpoints at which time, progress of the project could be

stopped or its course altered. The first of these was the finished script.

During the summer of 1980, Joel and I worked over the forty or so pages of research that he'd done previous to my coming on the scene. He provided the narrative of the storyline that carries the bulk of information about Runyon's early days. As director, I set the visuals which I thought I could find without putting limitations on my imagination (including such things as a jungle battle scene, a Western gunfight, and a ferryboat in front of New York's Statue of Liberty). I wanted to portray, not just Runyon, but the time and place from which he was nurtured, plus a few pieces of his writing so the viewer could make his own connections on how the boy's early experiences resulted in the literary works of the man. I wanted to utilize a mix of live dramatized sequences with historical photographs and images of the places and people Runyon knew as a youth. In researching for old photographs, I discovered a number of previously unknown photographs of Runyon. One shows Runyon and his boyhood gang outside the Pueblo Chieftain Newspaper building and is probably the earliest photograph of Runyon yet found. Another, which had to be retouched, was of Runyon sprawled right in front of the Pueblo troop in the Philippines during the Spanish American War.

If there was an existing building where he had worked or which he'd written about, I wanted to get that on film, as much as for the historical record as for the appropriateness of the setting. This sometimes caused a great deal of work for the crew, in particular Joe Pachak, the art director. But we all felt it important enough that the whole film is, in truth, an accurate presentation of the Pueblo of the turn of the century that Runyon knew. Period films can be killers and accurate historical locations are terribly tough, particularly when you consider the size of our budget. We quite often had to use ingenuity where there was no money.

Because it was a government grant, we had a number of review boards whose approval was needed. First, there was the statewide board of 12 CHP members who are scattered throughout Colorado. Then, once they'd given us the go-ahead, we had a local group of about 12 humanities scholars in literature, history, etc. that had to approve our script. If



Shooting Runyon in New York Harbor by means of a low angle and replica of the Statue of Liberty located in front of the Pueblo County Courthouse.

you haven't been through it, you can only imagine the difficulty of melding detailed historical facts, which were often very specific in nature, into a dramatized wide-interest film which would not bore an unsuspecting audience. Rest assured that we were elated when the script that Joel and I had labored on all summer and had to adapt to the whims of the numerous scholars, received a unanimous vote of approval from the statewide CHP board. They wondered if we could do what was in the script for so little money, but then they said go ahead, we hope you can.

I probably prepared for the film in excess. For instance, I photographed all the locations with my Canon using lenses of equivalent coverage of my 16mm lenses. The photographs could then be used to determine color schemes and in deciding exactly what areas of buildings needed painting or fixing up.

The budget didn't allow much in the way of equipment, but I preferred using my own anyway. My camera, an ancient though impeccably kept Kodak Cine-Special II, would serve me well. For the lights and editing, I was able to use the university's equipment.

In any film which has aims as big as ours, community help cannot go unsought. I felt that it was indeed the community's film, and we never turned anyone away who was serious in wanting to work with us. Though I was experienced and trained, most of

those who worked on RUNYON were rookies. But, if they stayed on until completion, their work would hold up against anyone's. Basically, I gave them a chance and most came through beyond my wildest expectations.

The City of Pueblo was fantastic. We had contacts in all of the city departments who we called if we needed something. For instance, the Parks department lent us their cherry picker on and off for a total of about two months for building-painting and for use as a boom. The Streets department dumped dirt on paved streets where we wanted to film and the street sweepers would pick it up at night. The Police and county Sheriff's departments lent us barricades to close streets during filming. Local government and industry welcomed an increase in film activity and they gave us incredible help during the production. The Colorado & Wyoming Railroad, which is part of the CF&I Steel Corporation (a subsidiary of Crane Corporation), lent us a freight train on which to film Runyon riding the rails. Because of their help we got shots which we could get in no other way of Runyon looking out of the moving freight car at the prairies and mountains of Colorado. The local newspapers, The Pueblo Chieftain (where Runyon once worked) and The Pueblo Star-Journal, were extremely helpful in publicizing our needs. Once they helped us locate a rare antique wagon hearse of which fewer than a

dozen exist today. Generally, they covered our progress for a very interested public. Many local shops lent us antiques for props. An awning company gave us fifteen reject awnings which we used in almost every scene. In our research, we found that Pueblo at the beginning of this century had awnings on almost every building, so we used them too.

I searched the county for the most interesting locations including actual Runyon haunts to compose the backdrop for the needed 79 locations which the film would contain. We had a resource of wonderful old structures along historic Union Avenue, one of the main business districts in Colorado in the 1880's. The characteristic architecture, though a bit bedraggled, is still there. Union is the location for one of Runyon's writings which we included in the film, a poem entitled "The Funeral of Madame Sarah Chase." It depicts Runyon as a seven year old boy watching a madame's funeral procession from the sidewalk with his father in 1887 and noticing the reactions of the people along the street. It is a marvelous little poem in which a child sees and tells of things, not knowing the implications, though conveying full significance to adult readers. Runyon wrote the poem about the street so we shot it there over a period of five weekends. I feel it is really the highlight of the film.

The Chase poem and another Runyon writing, a short story entitled "Doc Brackett," were actually two little films contained in the larger film. Because of its complexity, Chase was saved until the end of the schedule to allow for the extensive preparation needed. When we did shoot it, we did closeups and shots that wouldn't show the paved street on Saturdays. On Sundays, we closed the street, dumped the dirt, and did the large wagon hearse and buggy shots.

Only two locations outside the county were used. One was a reconstructed 1890's classroom in the Colorado Heritage Center of the Colorado Historical Society in Denver. The other was the oldest operating steam engine in Colorado, which we shot at the Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden. I used it during the initial sequence when Runyon hops a freight. The engine actually was operating in Southern Colorado during Runyon's time, so it is very possible that the real Runyon hopped a train being pulled by this same engine.



Johnson films Runyon at a social event with his Kodak Cine-Special II which he used for the entire production.

So with much cooperation lined up, the main actors selected, and most of the locations found, I made up a production board and schedule for the shooting which commenced in December 1980 with a series of tests and ended in June 1981. Everything was shot on weekends and nights, as we were all working at day jobs.

In a film like this where people come to help you, basically for the experience, and with a seven month shooting schedule of literally no free nights or weekends, you find you go through a lot of people. Those who thought it might be fun to work on a movie drop away pretty quickly. Those who advanced past that and became involved with the process and were still in there doing the daily hard work, generally stayed till the end. Of all the positions, we found it almost impossible to get and keep a good props person. We had three before we gave up. It turned out that between all of us we could come up with anything in under a week. The crew performed wonderfully. In two days we could be ready to shoot any scene in the script from scratch though most of these people had never done anything like this before. For those who stayed with the production, it became a labor of love. Each week they tried to out-do last weekend's sequence. A few other professionals were involved in the production. The editor was Jackson Cravens, an old friend from my days at the local TV station. For stunt work, we used George Hayes Jr.

(Gabby Hayes' son and a longtime resident) and Mike Cronin of the Rocky Mountain Pro Stunt Association.

In December 1980, the camera crew ran a number of tests on 7247. During much of the production this crew consisted of Al Maisel, camera assistant, Tony Oreskovich, a former student of mine who worked as second assistant, and myself. I wanted an old feeling to the look of the film and knew we couldn't get that with the ECN unmanipulated, which we shot at E I 100. So we flashed it, smoked it, filtered it, and gelled it. I found that for our purposes in certain scenes we could shoot with extreme ratios of 4:1 or more, though often we used quarter inch foam core for fill outdoors. For interiors, I love showing the source light and supplementing this with gelled tungsten halogens. The best gels for fire or lamp light were: Lee #134 Golden Amber, Lee #158 Deep Orange, and Roscolux #19 Fire. In a scene with a camp fire, Joe made a tube covered with bits of all three gel types and then slowly spun it with a light placed inside. Another time, when I wanted a dramatic glow from what is supposed to be New York lit by lamp light, the shot was done with the 85 still on, though we were shooting at the magic hour with a tungsten halogen as the main light source. In retrospect, this color tinting of overall scenes would have been easier and probably better accomplished at the lab.

We also gelled almost all of the windows and used Roscosun 85 N6 extensively with the window image reading about a stop to a stop and a half over the interior image. Once or twice I mixed daylight and tungsten for a pleasing effect. Occasionally, we used Rosco Tough Blue 50 over the lights and left the windows alone. It mainly depended upon the size and accessibility of the windows. The people at Denver's Cinema Sales were very helpful with the gels I needed.

From the tests, I decided to shoot all the night shots during the magic hour. During filming, I found that in order to get exactly the right balance between my scene and the background, I had to shoot the scene over and over starting just after the sun had set until it was pretty dark. In the rushes, the perfect one just stands out and it or the exposure on either side should print beautifully. Often I'd use Tough Spun over the lights to soften shadows, sometimes two or three layers, depending simply on how it looked to the eye. The final look for the entire film was achieved by having Western Cine, our lab in Denver, flash the exposed stock before processing. This muted the colors nicely. Also, Joe built a smoke machine which he used to smoke all interiors (unless possible damage might result). Smoke gives a look unmatched by any type of filter, more depth fall-off, I guess.

I'm an avid reader of *American Cinematographer*, often using it in my film classes. I examined all my back issues for a look that was similar to what I wanted. I found the visuals for HEAVEN'S GATE a knockout. I used their techniques modified somewhat, and would like to thank them here for their exhaustive research which preceded mine. Hopefully, someone will find something in this article that they will, in turn, find helpful.

In any period film, costumes are, of course, very important. My wife Nadine, who worked as production assistant, helped me in almost every area of the film and was the production's still photographer. In relation to costuming, she researched clothing styles from the 1870's to around 1920 and made careful notes of changes, which, though subtle, were often significant in keeping with the proper period of the shot. Through an old friend at the Impossible Playhouse (the local amateur theater company) she arranged a loan of about fifty appropriate suits and dresses for the length of



Robert Festerling, who plays Doc Brackett in the film, and casting director Barbie Halvorson help even out the dirt with which Union Avenue was covered for the funeral sequence.

production. Nadine, with the help of Casting Director Barby Halvorson, used these in every possible combination. Meanwhile, I had contacted a local costume rental shop owned by Betty Hegler, and she helped us out with particularly difficult clothes that would enrich a scene or with props such as tall hats or derbys. Betty's loan of costumes deserves a debt of gratitude as the rental of the costumes would have probably used up our budget or limited our production had she not worked with us.

Anyone who is contemplating a period production with little money should consider using the actors themselves as sources for costuming and props. Barbie would start calling the actors after we'd held our weekly production meeting. She would tell them what they'd be playing and surprisingly many would show up the following weekend in some of the most beautiful clothes imaginable. Quite often these were their grandparents' clothing. A man who read about our production provided us with his grandfather's Spanish American War uniforms. In many instances such as this, because of the active involvement of the community, which we heartily encouraged, I believe the production value of DAMON RUNYON'S PUEBLO could not have been improved if we'd had a budget ten times as much as it was.

Joe Pachak, a fine sculptor and artist, as art director, researched and painted the buildings, signs, and ar-

ranged for a great many of the props used in the film. Often he'd put a replica sign back on a building similar to what was there a century before. In every respect we tried to find what it was actually like in that location a hundred years earlier and match it as close as possible. Shop owners in the Union Avenue area helped us in filling up general stores, cafes, furniture stores, and dress shops as back-grounds. Barbie found a large amount of muslin very cheap and this allowed us to put curtains in a great number of windows along Union. Windows, by the way, were our biggest problem as far as set preparation. We came up with a mixed solution for preparing the many old structures which often would have forty or fifty windows half boarded up and the other half broken out. Those which were boarded, we painted to resemble a window frame with a curtain behind it (varying the curtain heights and styles for variety).

For the detailed painting of building facades, Joe and occasionally others in the crew used the Parks department cherry picker. Joe must have lived in that thing for a month or two and the building facades looked as grand as they must have when they were new. Joe got the paint for a fraction of its cost from local lumber and paint stores who felt civic pride in what we were doing. All of the Union Avenue district has just been placed on the national register of historic places and hopefully a renaissance of the area will be forthcoming.

For interiors, again we found all we needed just by looking. The Union Depot here was built in 1889 and is one of the grandest in Colorado. We used it for a number of scenes throughout the film. Another old house which has had only three owners since it was built in 1904 and is filled with original furniture, served at various times as a funeral parlor, brothel, and a young couple's home. Often, as in the last instance, I would use the people who lived or worked at a location as actors. The funniest instance of this occurred, when a man who was a history buff let us use his grain warehouse as a railroad building. He is seen being forced at gunpoint out of his own building by Bat Masterson, Doc Holliday, and their force of Dodge City gunslingers during a sequence representing Colorado's 1879 railroad war. I think local productions can take advantage of things such as this for they know the lay of the land far better than a location man who comes to the area for the first time and stays a short while.

Props and details are always needed, and again we found a solution which saved money. Someone somewhere collects almost anything. We found a number of collectors without whose help RUNYON would have been far poorer. One woman, Kay Keating, has a great collection of wagons, buggies, and sleighs. She even has a sleigh with small wheels on it which we used for a winter scene we filmed in May, using 20 lbs. of White Magic laundry powder for snow. Joel found a bottle collector who had a large and varied collection of whiskey bottles which we used in a saloon sequence. A friend, Floyd Marriott, provided us with antiques of all sorts, from old cash registers to guns of all types. Ranging from an array of 1873 revolvers and rifles to a collection of 1895 army issue rifles. We used my parents' large house as a repository for many of the props and costumes. For six months they had an antique coffin on their porch which provided endless jokes.

We held two casting calls which resulted in around 300 actors, many of whom are experienced from the frequent TV or motion picture Westerns which film in Southern Colorado. From this group we found most of our casting needs even though we needed look-alikes for Runyon Sr., Bat Masterson, Doc Holliday, and Runyon himself (so we could cut back and forth from photographs to our ac-

tors). I actually needed two actors for Runyon. I found a young boy named Andrew Meagher, to cover the ages from 7 to 13. But out of the 300 people in the casting calls, none looked like Runyon. So Joel checked with each of the five high school drama departments and had each one send their five most likely candidates in for an interview. Finally, with number 24, we found a teenager, Eric Austin, to portray Runyon from 15 to 33. With a few makeup changes his footage cut in well with Runyon's photographs. The make-up was done by two brothers, Jim and Larry Winget, who had training in make-up for the theater. Generally, the make-up had to be done much more subtly than for a stage play and it worked well, making both "Runyons" look the same and also aging a number of people as required by the script.

Our second grant checkpoint was first rushes, which we needed to have done by January 1981. The first scenes were simple ones such as Runyon leaving the Pueblo Press building, with only one or two actors so as to ease the crew into a working pattern. From the preproduction standpoint though, the Pueblo Press

building shot was not an easy one. For this eight second shot, Joe spent about forty hours repainting and reconstructing the lettering on the building. Many settings took so long to prepare and were so quickly used. Also for this first deadline, we shot for fourteen hours one Sunday in a print shop that had authentic type cases and presses which we used for all the newsroom scenes. Upon seeing our footage, the Colorado Humanities people including Executive Director Helen Volkomenner and Media Chairman Steve Schmidt, were very excited. They waived most of the future checkpoints.

During an average week, we would have a production meeting on Tuesday night to look at the previous week's footage, and then after discussion I would set the next weekend's shooting schedule. The rest of the week we would be gathering all the people and props and resolving any problems, so we would be able to shoot by Friday night or Saturday morning. One or two nights a week, Jackson Cravens, the film editor, and I would cut or re-cut sequences that had been shot. This rough editing continued during the entire produc-

tion schedule and kept pace with shooting fairly well. It is not the easiest thing to make a film while doing other things, but I think many early films were made this way and the filmmakers are probably better off for the experience.

As with any production, there are always interesting stories which come out of the shooting. We shot summer scenes during the winter (complete with an ancient watermelon) and a winter sleigh scene in the summer. We shot Runyon and other soldiers in a Philippines' battle scene in an enclosed apartment complex jungle garden, while they watched which plants they stepped on. There are some very funny outtakes of women with shopping bags leisurely wandering past in the background as these war weary soldiers carefully watch the banana trees above for Spanish snipers. The last shot of Runyon in the film has him on a ferry in New York Harbor with the Statue of Liberty in the descending darkness over one shoulder. We shot this in front of the county courthouse with its ten foot replica. For a ferry, we had a platform on tires which could rock, with a railing attached to the



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back. The best takes were static ones, with Eric leaning against the railing, looking at Manhattan in the distance, as the smoke from the ferry (Joe's smoke machine) floated away in the background.

As we weren't able to pay the expensive rental of a period train for our exclusive use, we ended up shooting parts of three trains: Runyon runs alongside the old engine at the railroad museum; he hops into a narrow gauge car (which in reality is up on blocks); and then he looks out of the C & W freight car as it moves along. To shoot him running and jumping into the static car, my crew pulled me on a sled while I was shooting up and back with Eric (who played Runyon) in effect chasing us. It is a quick shot—about three seconds, but without it, the sequence would be incomplete. We did shots of Runyon and some hobos in the narrow gauge car which was up on blocks. To add movement, I moved the camera back and forth while the actors jiggled back and forth. Through the open window we had a board hanging on a rope painted as if it were the end of the next car, which also was moving.

People would let us use just about anything, though they would want us to put it back like it was. Quite often we put it back better than before. The places we wanted to shoot always seemed to be used for storage. The train car was typical of locations we used. We got to the location early, moved everything that was there out (in this case it was steel and iron parts and ingots), dressed the set, spent the day shooting, and then after having already put in a full day, put everything back exactly the way it was. What a day that was! Once, we were set to shoot a location, a small train station in a nearby town, when someone mentioned that it had moved. Well, after some searching, we found it closer than before and in the process of being renovated to become a Japanese restaurant.

With all of the horses we used, we really didn't have too much trouble. We did have one runaway horse that had to be chased downtown, but the main problems arose from actors who said they could ride only to find out that they had to be doubled.

The wonderful old structures with all those windowed storefronts are beautiful—except for all those reflections of cars, parking meters, etc. On one shot I had to contend with eight different sets of reflections. The an-

swer was to have people hold up extra awnings to block some reflections, use other awnings to block out high reflections, use a polarizer to block the largest area of reflections, and finally to place actors or props so as to block small, difficult ones. Camera placement and careful prop placement took care of many of the modern intrusions in our scenes. We turned parking meters into hitching posts. The power company helped us paint aluminum light poles with brown water paint and took off the light arms so they photographed as wooden power poles.

We shot 8,000 feet of 7247, all of which was flashed. Other than the 85, no filtration was used except during the jungle sequence which was filtered with a Harrison & Harrison No. 2 Double Fog—to add a feeling of weighty humid air that was also supplemented by dry ice to provide ground fog. Dean Schneider of Denver's Film/Video Equipment Service Company deserves thanks for allowing me to test their large array of filters in order to find just the right one for my needs. We shot during part of 52 days over a seven month period beginning with 179 scripted shots and ending with 356 separate segments of film in the final cut. This is due to the outstanding work my crew did, always providing more of everything than I asked for. About 250 actors appear in the film with some scenes having thirty to forty extras in them.

The stamina required to persevere over a seven month shooting schedule while continuing day jobs and rarely having any free time is inhuman. You haven't lived until you find yourself unloading a freight wagon by hand from a pickup truck on a snowy predawn morning. Or doing the preparation for the weekend shoot while also trying to fix the last hundred windows and two facades for the big sequence down the line. Sometimes, I think filmmakers and artists in general are crazy, but the work is so enthralling and the problems so bizarre, that I find it irresistible and so did everyone else on the crew.

The summer and early fall of 1981 was spent in post production. It took all summer, again working nights, for Jackson and myself to finalize the rough cut. Finally, in late summer, I did the fine cut with the film ending up around 40 minutes.

The resources available for making this film simply astounded me, once I began digging. I'm sure it's much the

same anywhere. There are so many talented people who simply want a chance whether money is involved or not. The soundtrack, for instance, is composed entirely of original music by fine local musicians. The main composer, arranger, and musician was Dan Treanor, who with his contacts among area musicians and the elaborate recording studio in his house, made him ideal for the job. Dan saw most of the rushes, but some of those who wrote music for the film simply began their work based on my description of what I needed and what type feeling it had to have. I think they did an excellent job with the music. Often, they performed it on instruments of the time such as a 1910 Gibson harp guitar. The soundtracks were cut by Bill Turnbull of Rainbow Pictures of Denver, while I did the final cut of the voice track to get the exact placement of the phrases I wanted. This was particularly important in The Madame Chase poem that I had story boarded and worked out so carefully. Conforming was done by Susie Phillips of Denver's Motion Picture Services.

DAMON RUNYON'S PUEBLO was premiered on November 3, 1981 at Sangre de Cristo art center, one year to the day from our first pre-production meeting. It was a showing for the hundreds of people who were involved in the production. The large theater was packed and Joel and I, who had lived with this film for more than a year and a half, were nervous. You do your best so that it pleases you, and then hope others will like it too. We needn't have worried. That showing, plus a number of others that week, were packed, and the film was received far better than I could have dreamed. Joel and I ended up giving about sixty showings before a diverse variety of groups. The response statewide was also excellent with it showing on Colorado's two PBS stations and receiving critical approval from Denver's press including one newspaper who recommended it over the Grammy Awards. It received the second highest PBS rating of that February ratings sweep period and will, sometime in the future, be shown on the Pacific Mountain Network (the Western-most of the four regional PBS networks). Colorado Humanities Program Executive Director, the late, kind Helen Volkomener, was so pleased that she used the film at regional and national showings. Because I had expressed hopes of being

able to locate a distributor for the film, she approved giving the distribution rights to Joel and me as principal creators.

As with most grants, part of any money made automatically will revert back to the funding agency to help in the formation of new grants. By all standards, DAMON RUNYON'S PUEBLO proved to be the most successful media project ever funded by the Colorado Humanities Program. Both funding agencies were pleased with the film because for their investment of \$21,705, they received a film now valued at \$250,000. Additional funding came from two local grants: one from the Jackson Foundation for \$1,000 and another from USC for \$300, making the total investment \$23,005 (plus, of course, a fabulous amount of donated help). The high valuation resulted mainly because of the incredible amount of man hours and ingenuity of my crew, plus the generous help of the people and civic leaders of the City of Pueblo and its major industries.

Another form of success generated by RUNYON is that our dream of a production company here is closer to reality. RUNYON helped us attract a producer, Glen R. Garrett, and together, we have formed Tamarack Productions Incorporated to produce films in Colorado and have started developing other projects.

In January 1982, I sent out letters to educational distributors all over the country in an effort to find one who would handle RUNYON with care, after all the effort we put into it. From these, we received a half a dozen responses who wanted to see the film. After receiving another grant for \$500 from the Pueblo City & County Foundation, we were able to have more prints made, which I then sent off. If you find someday that you're in this position don't take the first offer; if they are serious, they'll stay interested. Also, if you think once the film is made it's all in the bag, think again. Finalizing a distribution deal moves like cold molasses.

In October 1982, after ten months of writing and calling and talking to distributors, I signed a distribution agreement with Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation, for RUNYON's inclusion in their special Prestige Collection of films. We were happy to sign with Britannica, the world's largest, oldest, and most established educational film distributor. They can give RUNYON the profes-

sional presentation, care, and representation world-wide in sales and film festivals that a small, new company like ours couldn't. And with the signing, we could finally pay out bonuses to those who had worked so hard and had been with us for so long. The film and the agreement gave us new credibility as filmmakers.

So now with our first film completed (about this puckish boy who was raised by his father and learned to write on small town newspapers) we turned to other things. I have completed another historical documentary script and have offers for its distribution (though no production money yet). And we have spent the

last year in preproduction for a low budget feature entitled RED WIND which will again utilize some of the history of the area and the organization created to make RUNYON. It, too, will be produced far from Hollywood or New York and is planned to be as tightly crafted as RUNYON was. With eight distribution offers from California, which we are presently trying to sort out, I think it will be successful. So I guess I'll end on this encouraging note. If you're teaching film, or you're a film student, or a closet filmmaker who wants to make movies, keep trying. If you get a break use it well, for it could very well make your new career. ■

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