

Producer adapts to changing technology

By Jon Fure
Minnesota Sun Publications

For the past six years, Barry Peterson of Shorewood has operated a home-based video production studio, where he has been able to attract clients from throughout the United States. He recently received an award for his work on a promotional video for Harvard and Radcliffe.

Peterson received a Telly Award, which is awarded by a panel of judges who work in the video production industry. According to a news release, The Telly Award recognizes outstanding non-network television programming, such as commercials and films. Previous winners include Walt Disney, Nickelodeon, Baseball Hall of Fame and The Weather Channel.

Peterson said receiving the award is an honor, because it shows that it is possible to create the highest quality of work in a small, home-based studio.

"I felt very blessed, and very fortunate to receive it" he said.

Peterson said he finds his clients

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primarily through word-of-mouth. He said he landed the job with Harvard and Radcliffe through John Carlson, a fellow producer who is a Harvard graduate and worked for many years at WCCO Television.

The 16-minute video on Harvard and Radcliffe involved about 80 hours of work, Peterson said. It is narrated by actor John Lithgow, a Harvard graduate, and it shows scenes of the Harvard campus in Boston and interviews with students, professors and administrators.

Although the video does not contain much footage of Radcliffe, Peterson said the admissions office at Radcliffe uses it to attract potential students.

Harvard administrators gave Peterson input throughout the production process, he said. He said he is able to accommodate clients' requests because of the rapid advances in the technology of video equipment.

"The digital technology gave us the capability to make changes all the way through the project," he said. "A lot of people from Harvard were involved in looking at it, and we were constantly revising — they would say, 'Can we make this a little shorter?' or 'Can we add a little more here?' We were making changes up to the last hour.

He compared the influence of digital technology in the video industry to the influence of the word processor on writing and publishing. Video producers used to make changes by re-recording and shuttling tapes back and forth, he said. To insert a few seconds

of video for example, the scenes would have to be copied onto a separate tape. The timing would have to be perfect, and the quality of the copy would diminish, because it would be a second or third generation.

With digital equipment, scenes can be rearranged as easily as cutting and pasting on a word processor. Such changes can be made repeatedly without a noticeable difference in quality.

In digital, the quality holds up a lot better," he said. "It's not even really a generation; it's more along the lines of a clone."

Peterson said video technology has coincided with advances in personal computers in terms of information storage. Three years ago he used two hard drives, each with four gigabytes of memory. He said he could store about 15 minutes of video footage per drive. He upgraded one year ago to two hard drives with 2 gigabytes each, which can store a total of three hours of footage.

Before starting his home-based studio, Peterson worked for a production studio in Edina. He said the advances in technology influenced him to start working on his own.

"About six years ago there was a technological shift where everything was just kind of turned upside down," he said.

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"I compare it to the first time I flew in an airplane. You kind of marvel at how you can be doing this."

Peterson's other work includes videotaping events, including concerts, graduations, weddings and corporate events. Some of his clients from Minnesota have been the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, St. Olaf Choir, Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.



Submitted photo

The Telly Award