



Being an Editor

Sheldon Kahn

1975	*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, directed by Milos For- man (Coeditors: Richard Chew, Lynzee Klingman)	1985	*Out of Africa, directed by Sydney Pollack (Coeditors: Pembroke J. Herring, William Steinkamp, Fredric Steinkamp) Legal Eagles, directed by Ivan Reitman (Coeditors:	
1976	Mikey and Nicky, directed by Elaine May (Coeditor: John Carter)	1986		
1978	Bloodbrothers, directed by Robert Mulligan Same Time, Next Year, directed by Robert Mulligan The Electric Horseman, directed by Sydney Pollack Private Benjamin, directed by Howard Zieff		Pembroke J. Herring, William Gordean) La Bamba, directed by Luis Valdez (Coeditor: Don Brochu) Casual Sex? directed by Genevieve Robert (Coeditor: Donn Cambern)	
		1987		
1979				
1980				
1981	Absence of Malice, directed by Sydney Pollack	1988	Twins, directed by Ivan Reitman (Coeditor: Donn Cambern)	
1984	Unfaithfully Yours, directed by Howard Zieff Ghostbusters, directed by Ivan Reitman	1989	Ghostbusters II, directed by Ivan Reitman (Coeditor: Donn Cambern)	
		1990	Kindergarten Cop, directed by Ivan Reitman	

^{*} See Appendix for complete list of editing awards and nominations.

From his early days of racing through the TV newsroom with "top story" under his arm, to pioneering the KEM flatbed editing system with colleague Donn Cambern, to branching out into producing, Sheldon Kahn never shies from challenges: "As long as I can continually try new and different things, it's fresh every time I come to work." For Kahn, dramatic film is as compelling as comedy, and he comfortably works at both ends of the spectrum, as evidenced by his award-winning work on *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Out of Africa* and the box-office smash *Ghostbusters*. The first two films also show Kahn's versatility in collaborating with a team of other editors to produce a unified, seamless motion picture.

Kahn's youthful passion for the movies drives him to experiment with film as an editor. Sitting behind a large desk in a comfortable office at the Burbank Studios in California (with a Ghostbusters ray gun on a nearby table), Kahn presents the movie magic of his profession as well as the hard business realities. Although he recognizes the trying personalities, unreasonable schedules, and innumerable decisions that every editor faces, Kahn refers to them in a near whisper as if ultimately they are not the real concerns in editing. He prefers to focus on what he hopes to create with the motion picture for the public and himself.

This interview introduces many basic principles and dimensions of editing, specifically feature film editing. Kahn describes the rich emotional involvement that editors share with film; the intuition needed to unleash unknown connections; the role of the editor as objective audience and storyteller. His experiences reveal how all-consuming editing is in daily and personal life, if editors are to solve problem sequences; his examples illustrate how editors must break rules or make new ones to meet the demands of each film.

Since I was seven, I knew that I wanted to be behind the camera. I wasn't one of these kids who wanted to be a doctor, a fireman, or an actor.

What was the lure to be behind the scenes?

The lure was the knowledge that a lot of talented people were behind the screen helping to put those images there, and I wanted to be part of that process. So from age seven, I focused my education toward going to a college with a great film school so I could learn about all those behindthe-camera jobs. Today I shudder when I think that I applied to one college and one college only, USC, with no doubt that I was going to get into their cinema program. I did, I got into the program, but what a dumb mistake to apply to only one college! Learning about camera, lighting, directing, producing, editing, sound, and writing, I found out very fast that I seemed to shine at the editing process. It seemed to me to be a big puzzle that we're putting together, and sometimes putting it together in a manner that is not necessarily the script's view, but maybe better than the script's view. After graduating, it took me a year to finally break into the film union. I had interviewed at different places and finally got a call from CBS Television City to come in for an interview for the film shipping department. When I left, I said to myself, "Gee, that was good, but I'll probably never get the job," because I knew that a cousin of a TV star and a writer's son from Gunsmoke were also applying for it, and I had no family in the business. A week later, I got a call from CBS to come in, the job's mine! Within three or four weeks I got to know everybody, and one day I think I bragged to the boss's secretary that my interview must have been real good because I knew the competition and I had no family in the business. She said, "Oh Shelly, don't tell me that, I know better." I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "Come on, isn't your father Irving Kahn?" I said, "Yeah, my father is Irving Kahn." She said, "And doesn't he own Acme Lab?" I said, "No!" They had thought that was my father and so that's how I got the job. Sometimes having the right name helps you break into the business!

Once you were in, how did you move up?

From carrying cans at CBS Television City, their sister station KNXT needed someone to develop 16mm news film with the possibility that the job would lead to cutting news for TV. I thought I would apply for the job. Of course, I had never seen a processing machine, so the night before the interview, I bought a seventy-five-cent pamphlet that Kodak had on developing stills and the next day I went in and said, "Oh sure, there's developer, there's hypo, there's the button to turn on the machine! No problem!" I got the job and begged the guy who was leaving to show me how to run the machine! He did and I stayed five years at KNXT. Within a few months, KNXT increased its news from thirty minutes to one hour,

so they needed to increase their staff. And after three months of being on the monster processor. I went downstairs and started cutting news. After five years, I decided that this was fun but I wanted to get into feature films. I got into assisting and after a few years, I met a wonderful editor named Donn Cambern who wanted to use a new machine called the KEM. It is a flatbed editing machine and very different from the Moviola. I assisted him on two films, Blume in Love and Cinderella Liberty. The first film on which I was full editor and also coeditor with John Carter was Mikey and Nicky, which Elaine May directed. Since I was one of the only people in Hollywood at that time to have ever used a KEM. she wanted my expertise as she was used to this style of editing in New York. After I finished that picture (eighteen months later), I got a call from Michael Douglas, who was producing One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest in San Francisco. Milos Forman, the director, wanted to work with editors who worked on the KEM. I think I got the job more because of my KEM experience than my editing ability at that time. The rest is history.

Was your approach to editing news very different from features?

Yes and no. The one thing that news taught me was the importance of deadlines. At KNXT I usually got the story that went on at one minute after the show started, but may not have arrived until minutes before showtime. So I'd have seconds to cut it together and, like in the movie Broadcast News, they would hold all the doors open, clear a path, and at ten seconds after six, I would race from my editing room to the telecine department where the projector was, and as they're announcing the story, we're threading it up and just making it on the air. This only relates to feature films as I find it important to get the story on its feet as fast as possible to see if I have everything I need to tell the story. And if I don't, I talk with the director to make sure he is happy or if maybe we should get additional material to make the scene better.

How can anyone survive such pressure?

In all honesty, I'm one of the nuts that find pressure to be fun. Even the pressures of doing a film like *Ghostbusters*—normally you take twelve to fourteen weeks to cut a picture from the time they finish shooting, but we had five or six weeks total. I found it to be a great challenge because we had to make many decisions and be right 99 percent of the time. That added pressure made you do better because many times you could not go back and make changes.

Were special effects a problem for you?

Ghostbusters is in a class by itself in problems because many times the shot consisted of something we could not see when we were editing until it was manufactured by the optical house. Bill Murray may be talking to "Slimer" but you have to use a piece of blank film in place of the character who has to be manufactured later. When you're doing this kind of picture, you're guessing at how long it takes that action to happen, and in *Ghostbusters* you had to guess 99 percent, 99.7 percent correct, because the material given back to you by the optical house would be exactly as long as the leader you put in. Like shooting off the guns, you had to be pretty accurate about how long it took for the ray to hit something, and they would draw it that way. If you made a mistake by making it too short or too long, especially if you needed more of something, you were stuck because there was no more.

Could you overguess and cut down?

"Less is more" is rule-of-thumb with many opticals. When you realize that opticals contain a lot of animation and each frame of animation is very expensive, you try hard to determine how long something is going to be. You don't want to make it twice as long because then the optical costs twice as much money. That becomes a big factor in your editing of the scene. Many times the way you thought scenes were going to look ended up different when they came back because the people manufacturing the optical had a different overview of it. In these cases we might do some last-minute reediting to bring the scenes closer to the way we saw them in our minds. In live-action pictures, if something doesn't work, you can cut it out or change to a different take in order to make the performance between two actors work. When you have an inanimate actor working with a real actor, you don't have that ability to go to a different take of the inanimate actor. You have to make "him" work at all times.

Did you have to act the scene out to determine how long it took?

Yes, mentally you have to act these things out in order to figure out how long it's going to be on the screen. When you're looking at that blank screen, you're seeing images that aren't there!

How about a heavily animated sequence, like that of Marshmallow Man?

In a lot of that, you cut back to the reactions of the live actors. Ivan Reitman and I had discussed how we would make the Marshmallow Man's entrance. As an audience, we learned that Danny Aykroyd is the one who caused this to happen because in his childhood he remembered that marshmallows were important to him. And while he's making that speech, we hear offstage sounds going boom-boom—we don't know what it is yet, but we know that Bill Murray and Danny Aykroyd have seen something unbelievable. I remember Ivan and I discussing how to enhance the enjoyment of the audience by adding as much tension in the

development of this character before we see it. Through Aykroyd's eyes, we see something going past two buildings. It's the head of the Man—we're not sure what it is, but we know it's going to be unbelievably great. We could have just had it turn the corner and come straight toward us and you would have seen the whole thing, but we didn't want to do that. We heightened the audience curiosity by showing you a sliver of what is coming, then went to Danny saying something, then another sliver. Finally it turns the corner and you see it in its immensity! The Marshmallow Man.

Is there a standard format for creating tension, whatever the genre?

I'm sure that the "standard" one would say is short tiny cuts would make you more excited than long fluid cuts. Yes, at times you do go to the tricks that you know have worked in the past. The Jaws trick of very short shots that get your attention. Absolutely, there are certain techniques you will use in order to heighten the scene that are totally proven. You've got to be very careful, I believe, as the storyteller not to let the audience get ahead of you. And sometimes giving them less information and letting them fill in as the story goes is better than giving them all the information immediately and then they're two steps ahead of you through the film. I hate, for instance, when a writer does a lot of expository dialogue so the scene tells you what the next scene is going to do. As an audience, I prefer not being told what I'm going to see next. I try as much as possible to get rid of that dialogue so that the story tells itself. An example is when someone says, "Well, let's go visit Dr. So-andso and see if he knows where the Magic Flute is." Then the next scene is they're knocking on Dr. So-and-so's door and they go in looking for the flute! I'd much prefer them saying, "We've got to find out what has happened to the flute, where can we start?" Boom! They're at Dr. So-andso's door. The way I edit a story, the audience is with me as we go along this adventure. As a film editor, you're looking at the picture totally objectively, not subjectively, and you're trying very hard to pretend you're the audience so that if something is not working, you are the first one to know and can fix it. It's nice to be able to go to the director and say, "Could we cheat something in order to make the scene work better?" I remember when I cut Same Time, Next Year with Bob Mulligan. I saw the dailies of Ellen Burstyn the third time she comes back to the cottage and she walks around the room touching all the things that were important in another scene before Alan Alda enters. I felt it might be playing too long and I would be in trouble if I did not have a way to get her into the room faster. So after they shot the scene and I started putting it together, I asked Bob if he'd shoot me one extra shot so that instead of going A-B-C-D-E, I could go to A-B-E, with just one extra shot to shorten the scene. At the end of the shoot he was able to do it and, if I'm not mistaken, he labelled it "Shelly's Shot."

You talk about being the audience when you edit. Do you actually play a different audience member, like a sixteen-year-old or a fifty-year-old?

No, not really, I can only be myself but I hope my intuition on what is funny or serious in a scene affects other people the way it affects me. This is what I mean by being the audience when I cut a film.

Certainly Ghostbusters draws a different audience than Out of Africa.

Yes and no. Audiences, I believe, want to be serious sometimes and want to laugh at other times. I find that to be wonderful because it's so nice to know you can do dramatic pieces like Out of Africa or Absence of Malice or Cuckoo's Nest and still have the sense of humor to do Ghostbusters or Twins. I find both kinds of films challenging and I know that if I only did one kind of film, I might get bored. I try to find a film that's going to be interesting to me, otherwise I don't want to do it. The director, the producer, and the editor are probably the three people who spend the most time on a film. The editor's there from the first day of shooting till usually it gets into the movie theater. And if it's a project you don't have good feelings about, it's very difficult to get up in the morning and want to come to work. I know when I get up in the morning and go into the shower, the first thing I say to myself is, "What am I editing today?" and I mentally cut the scene in the shower! It's not an eighthour-a-day job. I find that I make four thousand decisions a day. One of the things that upsets my wife the most is she'll say, "We'll go out to dinner tonight," and I'll say, "Fine, you make the decision where because I've made four thousand today and there's no way I can make another one!"

When you're cutting away feverishly, do you enter another dimension? Yes, I guess I am in the film.

Are you one of the actors?

No, I'm sort of that omniscient observer watching all the actions of the actors in all the dailies, trying to find the best pieces to make that scene work. Many times I'll find a particular action that an actor has done, and it might have nothing to do with that part of the scene, but I notice that their eyes lit up at a moment as a reaction they might have given to something else, and then I'll use it within a scene to enhance the character. I remember, for instance, in *Cuckoo's Nest*, Louise Fletcher was preparing herself for a scene and Milos Forman said something to her. She sort of sniffed and reacted to what Milos had said because she was registering

it in her mind at that point. I noticed that particular attitude as a wonderful reaction to be used somewhere in the picture. When I was cutting the scene in which Jack Nicholson comes back from electroshock treatment where he's walking stiff like Frankenstein, one of the cuts I went to was Louise Fletcher doing her sniff and giving a sideways glance—which was really to Milos Forman, but it looked like it was in the direction of Jack Nicholson. It was a wonderful reaction of her seeing him after his "treatment." It also worked because the costumes never changed, she always wore the nurse's outfit, and she was sitting in many of the scenes. Mostly, it worked for that moment.

That is an amazing film in its use of reactions, as if you never see the person you hear, but you see everyone else.

That was a style of editing that Milos wanted to use on this film, and in my opinion, it was totally brilliant. I don't know of a film prior to *Cuckoo's Nest* that was cut as much on the reactions of other people as opposed to the person who was talking. It's been used since, and it's sort of fun to see a dramatic picture in which they use that style. "Aha! I know where they got that from." Also there were three editors on *Cuckoo's Nest*, myself, Richard Chew, and Lynzee Klingman, and I thought it was miraculous that Milos could form from the three of us this one style of editing where you can't tell the difference between the three people editing. I give him a lot of credit for that.

Is there a distinct editing style between editors?

I find that one of the editors I coedit a lot with is Donn Cambern, and we have seen enough of each other's films to know how we work and the style we work in and it's very easy for both of us to maneuver our styles right into one style of editing. I think that different editors do bring a certain look to a film. I am what I could call a "performance editor," always looking for the best performance from the actors, and I spend a lot of time going through the material, cutting it two or three different ways until I decide, even for the first cut, how the scene should go. I try to bring as much of the performance—it may be in twelve different takes—that I can onto the screen. It's not to say that other editors don't do that too, but I don't consider myself necessarily the best "action editor" in town. I focus on the actor and the performance.

When you follow speakers, it seems fairly easy to know when to cut from each, but when you work with reactions, how do you pace the cutting?

That's like asking an editor how does he know how to cut. It's strictly something that's inside him and it's an emotional thing. When you're in a room with eight or nine people and they're all important to the scene,

you've got to keep each one of them alive by seeing each one of them even though they're not talking, and you just instinctively go to them and get what they're doing as well as the person who's talking.

Almost as if you're telling two stories.

Or four or five stories at one time, yes, you are. It's the magic of film, that a little bit of information goes a long way. Hold on a reaction from Danny DeVito during a scene, even though the reaction might be a second and a half, then go to four or five more different reactions. You record all of them in your mind and see the whole canvas at once.

Would that cutting be as effective for a film like Out of Africa?

You never use the same style on every film. Every film dictates to you a little different style. It's the old saying of, "If an actor's giving a wonderful performance, don't cut away from it." There's no need to. You don't have to be insecure that the audience is going to be bored. When you're talking about a picture like *Out of Africa*, you just believe in the performances and go with them. It's a different type of story, it's a love story, a romantic story, quite different than the quirkiness and insaneness of *Cuckoo's Nest* where so many people are doing different things and they're all important to the telling of the story. *Out of Africa* is one woman's story and her images are important. The images are much longer played on the screen so you get the beauty of the images that she sees. That's part of the style of telling that story.

Yes, to tell the story at one point you used her voiceover rather than let us watch her performance. Instead, we see the room or the manservant changing the flowers as we hear her reminisce.

I want you to know I get chills when you start talking about that. At the end of the movie when the character is leaving Africa for the last time and telling the manservant who has been so wonderful throughout the picture, "Call me by my first name," it brings tears to my eyes. It's a wonderful relationship between two people. That picture is about relationships. I've seen that film forty or fifty times, and those moments are as stirring and as poignant to me today as they were the first time I saw them.

In the love scene between Meryl Streep and Robert Redford, you used a technique very different from the rest of the film.

We were trying to go for some kind of montage feeling in that scene, and my first mental approach to it was doing 1930s kinds of dissolves, keep it flowing with pretty dissolves and images because this is their first love scene. But Sydney Pollack and I sat down and decided that was so stereotyped for a way of doing a love scene and that there's got to be another way of getting the same message across. To me, the ultimate love

scene with dissolves was done with Jane Fonda in the war picture Coming Home. It was one of the most erotic love scenes I've ever seen. She's in bed with Ion Voight, and many dissolves lap from one to the next to the next. I knew I could never achieve as good an effect in Out of Africa as was done in that picture, so I wanted to do something different. By accident almost, we came up with letting the action go on a particular shot of certain business and *cutting*, moving the action back a little bit, letting it go forward to another point, then cutting to another. When they got in the bed together and Robert Redford starts to move his head down to kiss her, I cut to him getting into the bed again and starting to kiss her again. Those were all different takes of the same particular action that went on in that scene. We felt that we got the best pieces of romanticism out of each piece by doing this style and making it as romantic as we could. That interrupted style was a unique way of telling a love story. The love scene at that point in the film was stylistically different from the rest of the film and we were definitely striving to do that. If it jumped out at you, we succeeded.

Contrast that with Private Benjamin when Goldie Hawn and Armand Assante walk through the streets. That's a more typical montage.

Correct. But it worked for that scene. Another montage in that picture is when she's going through basic training, and we do all these 1930s wipes or "flops" in which we start the basic training with her running through the obstacle course and wipe, then we see her working with the rifle, then wipe out of that to her with the gas mask, then wipe out and see her running. Then when she gets to another obstacle, we wipe to her with a machine gun, and so on, and finally get her through the obstacle course. In a period of maybe a minute and a half, you as audience saw a ten-week period of basic training. For that film, an old-fashioned look worked.

Are you ever so affected by the beauty of the photography, as in Out of Africa, that you risk slowing the story to include the images?

Well, maybe, but I think the advantage of being an editor is that, yes, you may let the beauty of the photography slow the story down, but then you see it on the screen and you know that you need less. And you keep honing it down and bringing it to a playable size. That picture, as I recall, ended up two hours and forty-one minutes long on the screen, and I think the first cut was three and a half hours. We knew we had too much story to tell and we had to bring it down without ever letting the audience know that things were missing from it.

Did you eliminate storylines?

Or cut down, yes, very much. For instance, the little boy with the broken leg that the Meryl Streep character heals, we took a lot of his story

out, but it still made sense and it worked as part of the movie. Also we had a lot more of the beauty of Africa to work with; unfortunately we had to take it out of the story. This is part of storytelling, slim it down and keep all the enjoyment of it. I remember the first cut of *Private Benjamin* was three hours and one minute long. For a comedy, that was insane. A comedy at two hours is too long. I think Woody Allen has the best approach; his movies are never over eighty-five, eight-six minutes. We finally came out at an hour forty-five, which to me was a little too long. That was challenging to bring it down to that size and keep the comedy moving.

What is the nature of comedy that it must be short and sweet?

I think the audience may get tired of laughing. And you've got to be careful you're not telling the same joke four or five times. It becomes tiring for the audience, they know the joke's going to happen, and you've got to keep it fresh and moving and surprise the audience at all times. It's difficult to do that for more than 85 to 110 minutes.

You can achieve a surprise by either cutting or not cutting. Does that decision depend on what you sense to be the point of the story?

Sometimes by putting little pieces of information into a scene that are not in the script, we can tell a story in the most solid manner and understand why a character feels a certain way. In Private Benjamin, there is a scene toward the end where Goldie is going to get married to Armand Assante. When I put it together for the first time, we had a justice of the peace speaking the marriage vows to her in French. We had close-ups in which we could see her thinking, and halfway through the ceremony she says, "Stop! I'm not going through with this." I remember putting that scene together Friday afternoon and being very unhappy with it. At six-thirty, seven o'clock, on my way home, it all of a sudden came to me what I was feeling terrible about and what didn't work. As an audience. you could see she was thinking, but you had no idea what she was thinking about. So it came to me in a flash that the way to make that scene work would be to cut to what she was thinking of. As an editor, I'm forcing in the minds of the audience what she's thinking of. I did a very short cut of her first husband Yale doing something bad to her, then cut back to her and a little more of the ceremony. Then she looks over to her father and at that point, I cut to a shot of her father shaking his finger at her, being negative, and then cut back to her at the wedding. Then a little later in the ceremony, she looks over to her husband-to-be and I cut to a shot we've seen earlier where he asked her to sign a prenuptial contract. Then she says, "Stop! I'm not going through with this." She realizes that the men she has related to have all done something bad to her and she does not want this to be her life. But that was not part of the script. I knew when I cut it together as it was scripted that it was not working for me—Shelly Kahn, the audience—and I felt that if I did not understand why she stopped the wedding, neither would the audience. It had bothered me to the point that I was halfway home when the solution came to me, and I had to turn around, go back to the studio, and make sure it worked. I couldn't wait till Monday morning!

That sequence became even more appropriate because at the end you held the long shot of her walking down the aisle of trees. You used that for credits, of course, but it was like a victory march.

That's exactly what it was. Her victory march.

How do you draw the line between subjective and objective when you "force" ideas in the audience? Can that line even be drawn in editing?

I don't know how I draw it. It's just an instinct, in all honesty. I can be wrong as well as right, and therefore that's why in my first cut, I will cut the scene three or four different ways before I decide in my own mind and heart how a scene should play. Part of this objectivity comes from trying to make it work. To feel that the scene is visually and auditorially telling the story.

So objectivity is fitting the pieces together in many ways, and subjectivity is your choice of the best fit.

Yes. The best way that satisfies me in telling that story. And of course, hopefully the director too. I think an editor's best sense is his visual sense, keeping the story moving with all the visuals he has at hand. There is no measurement saying, "The shortest you can have a close-up is two feet, three frames." No. It's what works emotionally. Audiences are very sophisticated today. They catch a short image on the screen, register it in their minds, and understand it. In the old days, in order to cut from one scene to the next, you had to go with long dissolves so that you knew time had passed, it's the next day and another set. Today you can cut from one place to the next. One of the stylistic ways I like to work is finishing one scene in a longer shot, then cutting to a close-up of a person who wasn't necessarily in the scene you just saw. That person will start talking, then I will cut to a longer shot so the audience knows where he is. The audience is surprised by the change and they're taken with it. All of a sudden they say, "Aha! Here we are!"

Then your close-up is the so-called transitional device. Yes, as opposed to going through a fluid dissolve.

Were there textbook formulas for situations like that at one time?

I believe there may have been. And if there were, I don't want to know about them because, to me, the discovery of how to make a scene work

is the most important thing. Not that you should start the scene at this particular point and end it at a certain point, textbookwise. I don't want to know from that, I want to know emotionally what makes it work.

Do you carefully match cuts when you don't use dissolves?

I tend to take liberties all the time in making the scene work. If the actor did not continue with a certain prop, and I have to hide the fact that the cigarette is in the left hand in one shot and the right hand in the next, I try to misdirect the eye to something else that is moving in the next shot so that you don't notice the mismatch. Yes, matching is very, very important, you try to make sure that the action does the same from one shot to the next. But as editor, it's part of the puzzle to make it work with or without that particular action or prop.

Are you aware of mismatches in other films?

Never. Unless I'm bored. If the film is not working, your eye will start wandering the frame of the shot and you might see the mistakes in the shot. But if it's good storytelling, good acting, good editing, good directing, I'm like any other person watching that movie. People will tell me the next day, "Did you see that? Did you notice the microphone in the shot?" Absolutely not. I'm so engrossed in being part of that story.

Do you think editors have had a neglected position in the business?

That's too loaded a question. I think that the most important thing is the script and when you get a good script and those words come out of the actors' mouths, it is absolute magic. There are times when an editor can take a bad script and make it better, but it's very difficult to make a good script bad. A well-written story is very difficult to turn into a bad movie. There are times when through a good editor's vision you can take a not-too-well-written story and make a much better story out of it, usually by what you leave out as opposed to what you put in. The audience never knows what you leave out, they know what they see on the screen and how the story is told. I think the editor as storyteller has a very important function that is part of the scope of motion picture making. But he is not the most important part of that team. He is definitely one of the team that makes it work. Motion pictures, as opposed to other art forms, is a team experience, not a job by one person.

Have you ever had any desire to try another area of film?

Yes, and for Ivan Reitman Productions now, I am producing and enjoying it very much. Do I want to direct? Not at this time, no. It will be a little while longer before I know *every* thing I need to know about producing and I may never want to go on to something else. However, I don't think I ever want to give up editing. It's always a challenge the first time

to look at that material and figure out where do I put the close-ups, where do I put the long shots, and so on. All of a sudden your hand moves, your mind starts to click, and magic happens for me. A few hours later, you press a button, sit back and look at that scene, and say, "Yeah, it's working! Wait a second. What if I do this? What of the material I didn't use? What if I change it?" You go back and you shine it a little more and make it a little different. The thing I love most about editing is when I finally get together with the director and we look at the scene, there's a magic that goes on so much of the time. The director will say, "I don't like the scene the way it's put together. What if we try . . . ?" And I'll come back and say, "Wait a minute! What if we try . . . ?" And all of a sudden, a third idea comes up that both the director and editor hit on the exact same time. That's when you know you're cooking, you're on the right track, and the scene is going to work. You don't have to say it to each other. You both know and understand.

Do you feel you know everything about editing?

I don't ever want to know everything there is to know about editing. I think then it would be boring. The learning and the trying make editing fun. Those jump cuts in *Out of Africa*, I'd never done that before, but it was something I wanted to try and it seemed to work. As long as I can continually try new and different things, it's like finding the excitement of why it's fresh every time I come to work. I don't know what I'm going to do until I sit with that film, and the film speaks to me and helps me put it together. I'm not trying to be arty. It really is what happens.

Have you fulfilled your childhood fantasies?

I'm not sure but I still am that seven-year-old kid sitting at the Howard Theater in Chicago watching movies. The only difference is today they pay me to watch movies! But I haven't changed. I still have that same love I had when I was seven for being in that dark room and watching someone spin a story for me. The real joy for me, after I've finished a picture, is to go to a theater and watch other audiences stare transfixed. It's working for them and that to me is just wonderful.