

Video Producer ◀

BRIEFLY: The camera communicates in language far more emotional than most oral utterances. It telescopes pain and joy, piercing viewers with them. John Prin, video producer, scripts and directs educational videos for businesses, churches, and social agencies. Then, he lets the camera work its magic to move audiences to action.

John Shoots to Live

The Sky's the Limit For Educational Videos

"When I started my own business, I made a huge leap," John Prin says. "It was like jumping out of an airplane at 20,000 feet without a parachute!"

That leap eight years ago turned out well for him. John (49) is owner of JP Mediaworks, Inc., a company that he operates from his home in Minneapolis, Minn. A video scriptwriter, producer, and director, John creates videos for educational purposes. His clients include family counselors, teachers, and persons working for churches, libraries, and the armed forces.

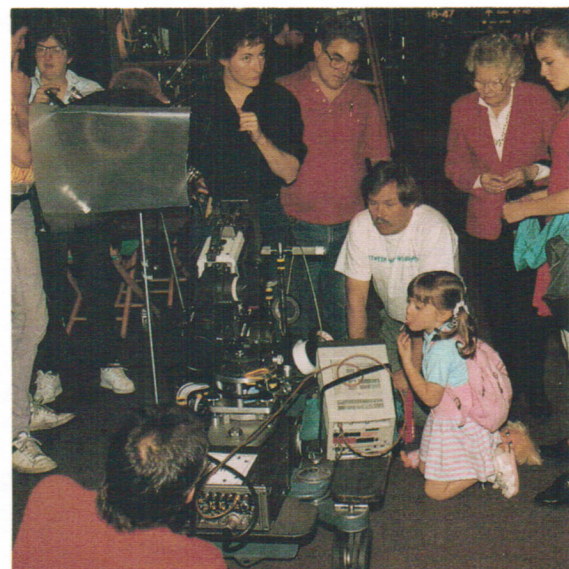
"In my job, the sky is the limit. My own inner barriers and assumptions are my main obstacles to overcome," John says. **"When I worked for someone else, the work load was always there when I walked in the door. But, when I own my own company, I must create my work load. If people don't hire me, I don't work or get paid."**

John started his company in 1986, setting up JP Mediaworks in the family room of his home. He invested approximately \$100,000 in equipment, marketing efforts, support staff, and consulting fees. He bought two computer systems, a copier, and a fax machine; remodeled and rewired his work space; and installed a two-line phone system. He developed a brochure and produced a video drama as a sample of his work. "I also hired advisers to tell me what I was doing wrong or what I could do better," he says.

To build his business, John called everybody he knew in business to ask about their video and

communication needs. His first job as owner of JP Mediaworks was as a free-lance writer and consultant for a large corporation at which he had previously been employed. "Then, I began working for some smaller companies, and I enjoyed that work a lot more," he says. "I was working directly with the person in charge rather than with layers of management."

Marketing his services to potential clients continues to be a big part of John's work. He finds clients, assesses their needs, and draws up cost estimates of proposed projects. When a client hires him, he writes, produces, directs, and edits videos. Some of the videos John creates portray social issues, for example, family violence or the effects of divorce on children. He also designs marketing and training films for corporations throughout the United States.



▶ John (center), cast, and crew prepare to shoot a scene for "Between Planes and Parents" at the airport.

FOR THE RECORD



John Prin
Video Scriptwriter/Producer/
Director
JP Mediaworks, Inc.
Minneapolis, Minn.

EDUCATION

- ▶ Edina High School, Edina, Minn. Graduated 1962. Played on the hockey team. *"My English teacher, Mr. Anderson, boomed into the room quoting Beowulf in Old English. He said, 'Welcome to senior English. We're going to write an epic poem!' I credit him with awakening me to love of language and literature."*
- ▶ University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Bachelor's degree in English and theater 1968.

WORK HISTORY

- ▶ Film editor/assistant director, Countryman Klang, Minneapolis, Minn., 1968-1970. Edited 16mm industrial films. Made his own films outside of work, using borrowed camera equipment.
- ▶ Television and movie jobs, Hollywood, Calif., 1971-1981. *"I had no contacts when I went to Hollywood. But, after three months of knocking on doors, I got a day's work with a TV production company as a utility man. I did whatever they asked me to do quickly and as best I could. They hired me back the next day."* Progressed to production assistant and set decorator. Worked his way up to the art departments of major TV and movie studios. Wrote screenplays in his spare time.
- ▶ Writer/communications consultant, Control Data, Minneapolis, 1981-1986. Created company brochures, wrote annual reports and speeches for executives, and produced videos. *"I started learning about journalism. I became reader-oriented rather than author-oriented, and that has served me the rest of my working life."* Left to start his own company.

JOB BENEFITS

- ▶ Favorites—leaves of absence (unpaid); flexible time; company car.
- ▶ Current benefits John gives himself are medical and workers' compensation insurances; expense account; opportunity to work at home.

CLOSE-UP

- ▶ John honed his skills in Hollywood, where he worked with people like Carol Burnett, Bing Crosby, and Peter Graves. *"I learned that, if it's worth doing, it's worth doing well. In Hollywood, they do it very, very well. I carry that code of excellence with me."*

As a one-person company, John takes care of all the business details for JP Mediaworks, too. In addition, he teaches classes in screen writing, writes free-lance articles for a variety of publications, and serves on industry committees and boards.

One recent workday began at 8:30 a.m. in John's home office. He wrote, faxed, and mailed a letter and budget proposal to Big Brothers/Big Sisters. This organization had expressed interest in having him create a promotional video for them. At 9:30, John met with his accountant. They discussed bill paying and cash flow for 45 minutes.

"Being Good to Myself"

Then, John made a number of phone calls to clients, prospective clients, and people at the Hilton Hotel about arranging a room for an upcoming awards banquet. "I also talked to a designer about a logo for my business, to a publicist, and to a friend."

At 12:45, John made a bank deposit and dropped off mail at the post office. Then, at 1, he treated himself to lunch at his favorite restaurant. "I call it 'Being good to myself,'" he explains. "But, as I ate, I also read the Big Brothers/Big Sisters background information, filled out a form, and read an industry newsletter."

John spent the afternoon at a nearby post-production house. There he edited an animated video called "Tulip Doesn't Feel Safe," which dealt with ways children could make safe decisions in an abusive home situation. To develop this video, John and an animator first created a world of little people called "Rulus." Then, they drew storyboards, which are illustrated panels showing the sequence of action and changes of scene. Finally, they hired child actors to record the dialog.

That afternoon, John reviewed the storyboards for the final time and checked each scene. Then, as a technician pushed the buttons, he watched the video and made final editing choices. He made sure voices, sound effects, and music corresponded to actions on the screen. That completed his work for the day.

John recently wrote, produced, and directed another video, "Bringing Light to the Shadows." It opens with black-and-white shots of a young woman sitting helplessly in a wheelchair. Then,

as caring people from Partnership Resources, Inc., (PRI) help the woman out into the world and connect her with a paying job, the video is in color. The video is so effective, it boosted PRI's promotional efforts and earned John an international award.

"Bringing Light to the Shadows" took two days to shoot. On shooting days, John's work schedule is entirely different than other workdays. When he filmed "Bringing Light to the Shadows," for example, the first day's shoot began at 7:30 a.m. in the home of the video's disabled leading lady. He and his crew shot scenes of the woman and her PRI mentor. They finished filming there at 10.

Then, John and his crew moved to a local YMCA to shoot scenes of other persons with disabilities doing work like cleaning gym equipment. After taking a lunch break, they spent the rest of the day recording interviews with YMCA personnel and PRI staff members.

The following morning, the crew resumed shooting scenes for the video. They began their work at a Pizza Hut where several persons with disabilities work. As usual, John followed the shooting schedule that he had previously drawn up. It told him which persons to interview and in which areas of the restaurant the interviews should take place.

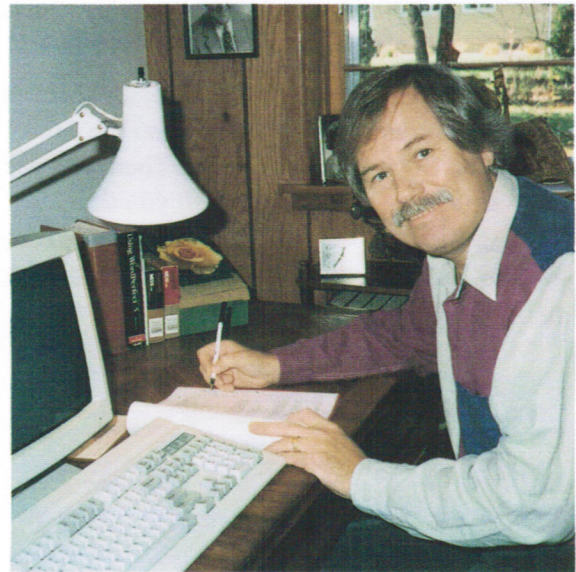
Then, John took his crew to a ceramic shop in South Minneapolis to shoot more scenes of persons with disabilities at work. They filmed the final footage for "Bringing Light to the Shadows" in John's home, placing PRI employees and parents of persons with disabilities on his porch and in his studio. As a final touch, John persuaded a local TV weatherman to narrate the video.

Hires as Needed

John has no regular staff, but he does hire independent contractors as he needs them. He often finds camera crews, makeup artists, post-production crews, and animators through the Minnesota Production Guide, a listing of media and entertainment professionals.

"I like the freedom I have in my job," John says. "I also like its creative challenges and business challenges. I like teaching as well as writing and getting my thoughts and feelings on paper."

In addition, John enjoys attending national trade conferences each year. Here he can screen



► John revises a script he has written for a client.

competitors' works as well as network with other film producers from around the country. He was honored at a recent trade convention in Columbus, Ohio, with an award for "Bringing Light to the Shadows."

John's work has some downsides. "I don't like it when some of my good ideas are ignored or when there is a lack of funding for these good ideas," he admits. And John is not happy when persons don't deal fairly with him, when they don't pay their bills on time, or when his dogs bark while he's on the phone!

In the future, John predicts "more and more people will be running their own businesses rather than working for monolithic corporations. And, if you're smaller," he says, "you have to do more things well. You have to be a generalist and on top of almost everything."

He also notes that the communication field is growing and will continue to grow in the future. "When TV arrived, we thought radio would go away," he says, "but it didn't. Then, TV was supposed to be a threat to movies, but more and more movies are being made all the time. Cable TV was supposed to destroy broadcast TV, but that didn't happen either. And, when VCRs came on to the scene, they were supposed to destroy everything, but they only multiplied our choices."

John recommends that aspiring video makers should first learn to be journalists. Then, he says, "Get lost in the design world—not computer design but moving things around on an empty canvas. Study composition, foreground, background,

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texture, and shading. Everything we do is design. I design every video both visually and for the ear.

“If you like a movie,” he continues, “watch it the first time and enjoy the rush and the excitement of it. Don’t try to analyze it. Then, go back and watch it again and again until you figure out how they did the sound and the transitions. Then, practice those ways of doing things with your own home recorder.”

In his spare time, John likes to walk, exercise, and watch movies and television. “And,” he adds, “I literally love going to lunch and having dialogue with people.” John’s wife Susie is a liturgical dancer who performs at churches and sacred retreats. They have a daughter Emily (19).

“In the future,” John says, “I’d like to make one- and two-hour stories about families and kids—like after-school specials. I’d like to reach more people through the electronic media, and I have committed the rest of my life to doing so.”

DATA FILE

Video Producer

D.O.T.: 159.067-014 CF S.O.C.: 3241

WORK DESCRIPTION

Creates educational and training videos—finds clients; assesses their needs; draws up cost estimates; writes, produces, directs, and edits videos; scouts locations; hires independent contractors including camera crews, makeup artists, and post-production crews. May answer phones; respond to mail; and supervise bill-paying.

WORKING CONDITIONS

In office. On location shooting scenes for videos, at post-production houses editing videos, and in clients' homes or offices. Frequent local travel required. Stress from trying to get clients, working with artists, and meeting deadlines.

PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT

Self-employment; video production companies; communications departments of large businesses and corporations; television stations; government agencies.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Creativity; verbal ability; imagination; self-motivation; sales ability; organization; flexibility; perfectionism; ability to work with a variety of people; detail-mindedness; willingness to take risks.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

On-the-job training possible. A degree in theater, film, or English highly recommended. Courses in accounting and marketing useful for the self-employed.

JOB OUTLOOK

Growing.

SALARY RANGE

\$10,000 to \$50,000 or more per year.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

Development Director
Communications Director
Movie Producer

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The subject of this biography is not available to answer personal inquiries. For more information, please write to the following organizations. Addresses are current as of publication date.

International Television Association
6311 N. O'Connor Rd., LB-51
Irving TX 75039

International Documentary Association
1551 S. Robertson Blvd., Ste. 201
Los Angeles CA 90035

Professional Photographers of America
57 Forsyth St., Ste. 1600
Atlanta GA 30303

To find information about similar careers, see separate Vocational Biographies booklet index and cluster listing, an encyclopedia, or books on careers found in your library, career center, or counseling or placement office. Check the vertical file, card catalog, microfiche, or computer listing. Look up the following words:

Advertising, Arts, Camera, Communications, Documentary, Films, Movies, Producer, Production, Television, Video, Visual. Also see the Communications and Media, Fine Arts and Humanities, Marketing and Distribution, and Public Service Careers clusters in the Vocational Biographies Career Library Index.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Visit video production companies, television stations, and communications departments in large businesses or corporations and talk with people writing, producing, directing, and editing videos. Get a part-time job in retail sales, graphic arts, display, or publishing. Intern at a TV studio or commercial-producing company. Take part in school plays, newspaper, and art activities. Watch and analyze movies and videos. Practice making videos. Take courses in art, computer design, photography, composition, public speaking, drama, English, accounting, history, social studies, foreign languages, and psychology.

LIFESTYLE IMPLICATIONS

If self-employed, one may have flexibility to set one's own working hours, but long daily hours plus work on evenings, weekends, and holidays may be required to meet production deadlines. Income may be irregular.

Persons are portrayed herein without regard to race, sex, or religious background. Careers discussed are to be considered acceptable for either sex. Information is current as of publication date.