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Meeting Two British Journalists Who Made History, by David J. Marcou, USA.

During my time in the Missouri-London Reporting Program, autumn 1981, I didn't know for sure I was writing important history, but I knew the topics were very interesting, and the people possibly very famous.

One story I had published then was about the impromptu meeting between the Catholic Cardinal of England, Basil Hume, and 50 IRA protestors. They met in his rectory at Westminster Catholic Cathedral in London, in September of that year, I believe, though I don't have the exact date in my story, and no longer have those notes. The protestors included brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, of IRA hunger strikers in the Maze Prison of Northern Ireland. They'd protested the day before at 10 Downing Street, which I covered, as well. My story for the Columbia Missourian a couple of weeks later, dealt only with their meeting with the Cardinal, and the five famous demands the hunger strikers were making.

Also that September, though, Sally Soames, a Sunday Times photographer, gave me the address of a black-and-white printing firm of note, Grove Hardy Ltd. The reporting program's moderator, John H. Whale, also worked for the Sunday Times, and Ms. Soames had heard I was looking for a top printer.

I didn't think anymore then about the slip of paper with that address on it, 2 Burrows Mews off Ufford Street, because I had already lined up photo-processing with a couple of different shops – my black-and-whites were being done by Prem Olson, and my colors were being done by a shop near the Angel, I believe.

After I'd covered other stories that semester – including interviewing the top director for the only professional Palestinian theatre troupe anywhere then; reporting on the Camden Jazz Festival featuring the Archie Shepp Quintet with Charlie McGhee on trumpet; interviewing the painter Erica Daborn; reporting on the Almedia Theatre in its infancy; interviewing Rudi Christopher, a Paralympic Champion in two events, despite spina bifida; reporting on a pain relief conference; and

researching Asian-Indian immigration; I was looking for one last report to hang my hat on for the semester.

In late November, I was talking with Prem about that situation, and he said he knew of photographer who had very good stories to tell about his pictures. I asked if he was an excellent photographer, and Prem said, 'Well, he's at least a very good photographer.' I asked the name of this man, and he said, 'Hardy, Bert Hardy.' Now, I didn't put two and two together until Prem had given me contact info and I'd phoned Mr. Hardy. We agreed to a time and day for our interview, and he instructed me to take the train from Elephant and Castle Station in London to Oxted in Surrey. I then proceeded to ask Ms. Soames more about this Mr. Hardy. All she would say is, 'He's a very nice man.'

On the day designated, I made my way across the Thames Bridge from my shared flat at 13 Willowbridge Road in Islington, to Elephant and Castle Station. I caught the train, and it took it exactly 38 minutes to arrive at Oxted. Mr. Hardy was waiting at the station, and he drove me to his farmhouse via Limpsfield and some countryside. He mentioned that he'd been at his men's club the night before, and they'd discussed the A-bomb. We also talked about the University of Missouri's Pictures of the Year Contest he'd won an award at in 1951.

We disembarked at the gate to his farm, and Mrs. Hardy, Sheila, met us there. We went inside, and immediately we continued talking about Mizzou, and the program I was part of via its J-School. I said the program's London moderator was John Whale. They said his name as 'Wall,' and I corrected them. But a wall has great meaning in Mr. Hardy's story.

We sat down, and after coffee or tea was served, with a brownie, we discussed Mr. Hardy's career. It turned out, he was the man who provided the capital for the printing firm, and Gerry Grove, an old Picture Post printer, ran the day-to-day of it. The Hardys were, by that time, professional farmers. It was Mr. Grove who would provide me with the eighteen 8x10 photos I later requested among Mr. Hardy's works, to take with me to the States.

Mr. Hardy had been chief photographer for Picture Post. He'd begun freelancing there without credits from the fourth issue, in Oct. 1938, and worked there, except for a four-year lull while he was a Royal Army Film Unit photographer in World War II, until the magazine's demise in June 1957. Even while he was in the military, he'd still send back occasional photos to the magazine, and they'd be published there, too.

However, before he entered the military (1942), he spent several nights covering fire-fighters during the height of the Blitz. He took some amazing photos during the winter of 1940-41, and on Feb. 1, 1941, Picture Post gave him the cover-story, 'Fire-Fighters!'. They also gave him the first photographer-credit ever for that magazine, for that cover-story.

Hardy crossed at Normandy 2-3 days after D-Day, and photographed the Liberation of Paris (including sniper attacks), the Rhine Crossing (photographing Gen. Dempsey leading British units across that river), the liberation of Belsen (where Anne Frank had died), and the meeting of the three Allied commanders (Eisenhower, Montgomery, and Zhukov). He then headed to Asia, where he became Lord Mountbatten's personal photographer.

After he returned to Britain in 1946, he went almost immediately to India, where he photographs Prime Minister Nehru smelling a rose (a Picture Post cover) and the first Indian constituent assembly (parliament). When he returned to London this time, he covered everyday life in Britain, brilliantly, and won a number of Encyclopaedia Britannica photo-sequence awards.

By late 1950, he'd covered the Korean War, too, but he told me very little about that history during our first interview. And the photos of him I wanted to take were scheduled for a couple of days later. I took my train back to London, and bided my time.

At the appointed day and time, I arrived back at Oxted Station, where I was picked up this time by Mrs. Hardy, I believe. We went to the Hardy farmstead, and we talked further, but only for a short time. Then, an executive from the Rank Company (a xerox and movie-making firm) visited, and I photographed the Hardys talking with him. Before we went back inside (I think this is the sequence of events that day), Mr. Rank left, and I photographed Mr. Hardy and his dogs in the open exterior doorway of his house's kitchen.

We then went back inside, and I photographed Mr. Hardy seated in his favorite chair next to the living room window. Mrs. Hardy said something about his cameras, so he went and retrieved one. I'm not sure if he took my photo, but if he did, it was surreptitiously. He seemed to enjoy holding that camera, though.

Then, we spoke more about the Korean War. And before I left that day, the Hardys said there was a man I needed to interview. "A very important man", they said. The Hardys gave me the name of the man's agent, and I phoned there either later that day or the next. I can't recall the agent's name, but the man to be interviewed was a certain James Cameron.

Now, today the name James Cameron conjures up scenes from the movie 'Titanic,' which was directed by the Canada-born James Cameron. In 1981 Britain, though, the Scottish journalist by that name was equally famous. He had not only covered many wars, including the Korean Police Action with Mr. Hardy, but he'd also witnessed the first A-bomb dropped on Bikini Atoll, and thus became a founding member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In addition, he was a former employee of the great newspaper publisher Lord Beaverbrook, who'd admired Cameron greatly, but also a friend and confidante of many other celebrities. He was an

especially dear friend of Pandit Nehru, and indeed Mr. Cameron's third/final wife, Monee, was an Asian-Indian woman of note.

I went, then, at the appointed time and day, to 3 Eton College Road, the Camerons' residence in London. I was greeted at the door by Mr. Cameron, who asked if I were Mr. Markham. I said, no, Mr. Marcou. Markham had been a name relevant in his early life, pertaining to one of the areas where he lived as a boy.

Soon, I was seated in his living room or study (I think the two rooms were adjacent without walls. There were large bookcases and two nice chairs for sitting. At some point, maybe at the start, he served me a gin and tonic, which he himself had, too. He smoked a cigarillo, either Hamlet brand or Prince of Denmark.

We talked of many things, including Mr. Hardy's standing as a photographer. I said, 'Mr. Hardy is very much like Henri Cartier-Bresson, isn't he?' Mr. Cameron replied, 'Ah, but there is only one Cartier-Bresson.' As we spoke of Mr. Hardy's association with Mr. Cameron, the latter said, 'Well, Bert Hardy was the sort of man you either got along with or you took out and shot.'

However, in more literary places, James Cameron had some very decent things to say about Bert Hardy. After the two had covered U.N. atrocities at Pusan in early September 1950, a story that would be aborted in London by Picture Post publisher Sir Edward Hulton, the pair made their way up by sea to the port of Inchon with U.N. troops, for MacArthur's famous lightning stroke counter-attack on the North Koreans. Only two days each year were right for such a sea-land assault, one of them was Sept. 15. Otherwise, there would be miles of muddy flats for the troops to slog through, rather than water to the famed seawall.

Hardy and Cameron found themselves a spot in the Press landing craft, but in a twist of fate, the Press sea-land vehicle got out front of the First Marine Division, the key assault troops at Inchon. Thus, the two British journalists were stuck on the wrong side of the seawall (though potentially safer), as the light began to fade. As First Marine troops came up to the wall, Hardy knew he would have to work fast, because flash wasn't an option. He says he was the first U.N. man to go over that wall, to begin photographing the assault, and Cameron had no choice. He soon went over, too, with the First Marines.

Although there were photos taken by others when the big craft landed the next day, Bert Hardy got the only good photos of the initial landing assault, at dusk, because he used a 35mm camera, while the other pressman either had large-format still cameras or movie cameras. Despite competing with former Marine and top Life photographer David Douglas Duncan, during that phase of the war, though Duncan wasn't at Inchon, Bert Hardy earned the award for the top Korean War coverage from the University of Missouri/Encyclopaedia Britannica Pictures of the Year Contest in early 1951 (for 1950).

Not only were there bullets and grenades that had gone off all around the seawall, rocket-fire from the U.N. ships had softened up the beach (the wrong beach to hit with U.N. rocket-fire!) the Marines landed on. Mr. Cameron wrote a sterling account of how insane that war was, though he did write that 'God was on the side of the big battalions; they were even that big.'

The great writer was also honest about Mr. Hardy's contributions to their coverage that day, when he later wrote: "One of my enduring memories of that strange occasion is of Bert Hardy on the seawall of Blue Beach, blaspheming among the impossible din, and timing his exposures to the momentary flash of the rockets. That is the difference between the reporter's trade and the cameraman's. His art can never be emotion recalled in tranquility. Ours can – or could be: the emotion is easy; the tranquility more elusive. As for Inchon – for me, the record stands.'

Although subsequent months were very hard on me personally, trying to piece together the whole Hardy-Cameron saga, with very little help from the Journalism School I returned to from London in December 1981, I eventually began writing more extensively about that duo. I've penned three book-length manuscripts regarding them, and have had those manuscripts in storage for more than a decade, occasionally trying to sell them to publishers. One of those manuscripts is a complete history of Picture Post, but no one has really bit on it, unless people have published it bootleg style, when I've occasionally e-mailed it to potential publishers.

I have had a number of stories and reviews published about the British duo and Picture Post over the years. Because Mr. Cameron's agent forbade my bringing a camera to photograph Mr. Cameron, I never did take his picture. I had photographed Mr. Hardy, though, and my best view of him with his dogs Lizzie and Kim has been published often. A cropped version, showing only Mr. Hardy, was published in the March 2007 issue of Smithsonian Magazine, with my report about Mr. Hardy's incredible photo-montage of the Queen's entrance at the Paris Opera in April 1957. And a print of my uncropped view of the same scene is in the Photographs Collection of the British National Portrait Gallery. I still hold the copyright to my two best Bert Hardy images, the other one being the best one I took of him sitting by his window. But I lost the rest of my Hardy photos from 1981 when my then-wife absconded in 1987 with much of my early photos and negatives. She didn't get everything from that period, though, which is why I still have my two best portraits of Mr. Hardy and a related photo I also took, of his two dogs playing along a road on his farm.

The list of celebrities Bert Hardy and James Cameron covered could fill many, many pages itself. However, the two men were themselves famous British citizens, and great journalists. And I met and interviewed them both around the time of my 31th birthday (November 25, 1981). I'm still glad I did.

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