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# Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

August 2010

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## Fantasy Factories

Sam Aurelius Milam III

The most important difference between fictional characters and historical characters is the intentions of the authors who created them.

—Milam's Notes

I like to watch documentaries. When I turn on the television, I'm likely to check the documentary channels before I check the other channels. I'll often watch a documentary in preference to a movie.

The first documentaries that I remember watching were programs that I watched while I was visiting my grandparents in Wharton, Texas, during the 1950s. They were short programs about how things were made and used. The series was called *Industry On Parade*. It was a precursor to more recent documentaries such as *Modern Marvels*.

Also during the 1950s, my father worked at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Because of his job, he had access to a source of army training films. They were the old celluloid stuff, in big flat, round metal cans. He brought some of them home and showed them to us on his Bell & Howell movie projector. Some of them were army indoctrination and propaganda films, variously disguised. I still remember bits and pieces of them. I recall one propaganda piece that was presented as fiction. A soldier who hadn't bothered to get new shoes when he needed them ran through a wooded location in a combat situation, got a twig caught in a hole in his shoe, tripped, fell, and was killed. The intended lesson was that soldiers should always follow established procedures. There was a reel of the Disney wartime cartoons. In retrospect, I can recognize them as being a very entertaining form of wartime propaganda. There was an allegory called *Miracle in Paradise Valley*. In that little movie, a farmer took a short cut that was too close to a gully and his tractor tumbled over the edge. Again, the moral of the story was to follow established

procedures. There was one reel of film that might not actually have come from Fort Sam Houston. We saw only the first few seconds of it. That brief glimpse was of a woman who pulled her shirt up around her face, revealing a rather nice set of boobs. Poppa stopped that one abruptly with the terse comment, "Oops. You kids aren't supposed to be watching that one." No propaganda there. In retrospect, I can only chuckle. All of the films that Poppa showed us were interesting but the premier programs were the reels of *Victory at Sea*. He had several of them and I watched them at every opportunity. They were of special importance to me because Poppa had served in the navy during World War II. My love of documentaries was well established by *Victory at Sea*. Later, while I was attending the East Central High School, during the early 1960s, my love of documentaries was sustained by our biology teacher, Mr. Powers. He showed us several reels of the Walt Disney *True Life Adventure* series. To me, they were a magical and enchanting cinematic peek into the planet Earth, viewed as a natural wonderland.

During those early years and for most of the years that followed, I'm afraid that I was largely uncritical of documentaries. They were always presented as being factual. In keeping with the brainwashing to which I was exposed in the schools,<sup>1</sup> I just accepted them. Back in February of 2008, my uncritical acceptance of documentaries came to a screeching halt. This is what happened. I was again watching my copy of *Victory at Sea*. Up until then, I'd been greatly impressed with the documentary. While I was watching the program on that particular day, I noticed something that changed my attitude. There was a sequence in the episode *Sealing the Breach* in which the crew of a German submarine torpedoed an American cargo ship. Action inside of the German submarine was shown by what appeared to be authentic German footage, presumably →

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1 See *Enemies of Liberty* on page 1 of the February 2004 issue of the *Frontiersman*.

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captured after the war. After the successful torpedo attack, the order was given to prepare to surface. The intention of the captain, according to Leonard Graves' narration, was to finish sinking the ship with the deck cannon. However, the order to prepare to surface wasn't a part of the narration. It was a part of the sound-track of the footage. When I saw the video sequence, I couldn't believe it. I had to put the DVD into reverse and watch the sequence again. I watched it several times before I was sure that I was seeing it correctly. Not only was I astonished by the sequence, I was astonished by the realization that I'd watched it several times over the years and had never noticed the flaw. As unlikely as it seems, the order to prepare to surface wasn't spoken in German. On authentic captured German footage of actual events in a German submarine during combat operations, the order to prepare to surface was spoken in English.

Something was obviously phoney. After the shock of realizing that the much revered documentary had a fake scene, I watched the entire documentary again. I discovered that it was riddled with fake scenes. For example, there were many views of torpedoes being launched from German submarines during attacks on Allied shipping. The torpedoes were shown leaving the torpedo tubes, viewed from under water outside of the submarines. The shots couldn't have been taken by hull-mounted cameras because they were taken from 20, or 30, or even 40 feet away, looking back toward the submarine. Are we expected to believe that the Germans had frogmen with cameras outside of their submarines, paddling frantically to keep up and taking pictures while the submarines were maneuvering into position during surprise attacks on Allied vessels? Other views of torpedoes were equally phoney. There were many shots of German torpedoes whizzing along just below the surface of the water. The shots were taken from alongside of or just ahead of the torpedoes. Are we expected to believe that the Germans had camera crews in speedboats, whizzing along with their torpedoes during their sneak attacks on Allied shipping? Then there were the shots of periscopes traveling through the water. Maybe the Germans thought that those guys on the American or British ships, using binoculars to search for approaching submarines, wouldn't notice a

German speedboat full of German cameramen, taking pictures of something in the water. The phoney footage wasn't presented as being explanatory. There weren't any disclaimers or notices clarifying that some scenes were dramatizations or reenactments. It was all presented quite unapologetically as authentic footage of actual events.

After that, I began to watch documentaries more critically. Since then, I've noticed a lot of phoney things in programs that are presented as factual. Some such fake sequences could theoretically be regarded as funny. For example, I saw a documentary in which an intrepid explorer was preparing to enter a cavern deep within a network of caves. The narrator reported some anxiety among the members of the team. They feared that the cavern might be filled with rattlesnakes. As the explorer peered cautiously through the opening, I couldn't help but to notice that the footage of him had been shot from inside of the cavern. Clearly, the camera crew was already there. I saw another documentary in which two explorers were investigating alleged Aztec ruins on a deserted island off of the west coast of South America. There was a tall pinnacle of rock that was believed by one of the explorers to be the remains of an ancient Aztec rock carving. The explorers wanted to climb the pinnacle. It was a difficult and dangerous climb. They made a big deal out of being the first men to accomplish it in however many centuries it had been since the Aztecs had abandoned the location. As the courageous explorer climbed the last few dangerous feet of treacherous, crumbling rock, the first man to do so in centuries, I couldn't help but to notice that the view of him was from above. Again, the camera crew got there first.

Individual phoney sequences in documentaries are dishonest but the most serious failure is the disregard for authenticity in the mixing of video segments. It probably isn't a universal failure of documentaries but it's sufficiently common that I tend to doubt the credibility of most documentaries, particularly those that show video sequences of recent wars. Such sequences are likely to consist of actual archival footage, dramatizations, reenactments, video clips of similar but different events, recreations, simulations, or even animations, all seamlessly blended into one believable sequence. Such documentaries don't contain →

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any indication of which scenes, if any, are authentic. The blurring of the distinction between actual events and somebody's reenactment or dramatization of them is a deplorable failure of credibility. Are people really so stupid that they won't notice that kind of thing? Maybe so. Remember, they're all educated, and I use the word with grave misgivings, in the government schools. Part of that education is learning to accept expert testimony without question.

Some people might not think that such fabrications are important in a documentary that portrays events prior to the invention of video technology. Surely, an apologist might say, everybody knows that video sequences of events in the Middle Ages must be reenactments. Don't be so sure. I heard an account, reportedly true, of a discussion that took place in a high school history class. While discussing some battle that was fought during the War Between the States, one of the students exclaimed in surprise, "You mean they didn't have helicopters back then!?" So, when a documentary shows the count's thugs attacking villagers in medieval England, it might not occur to some viewers that movie cameras didn't exist back then. They might assume that they're just watching actual footage of real events. Remember the high school student. What? You mean they didn't have cameras back then?

I'm very much in favor of documentaries. I'd like for them to be credible. How to achieve that credibility is uncertain. Here's a suggestion. On any program that's intended to be a documentary, every frame of every video segment should be labeled in a corner of the screen. The label ought to identify the frame as authentic footage, a dramatization, a reenactment, a simulation, or whatever else it might be. I'm not suggesting government regulations, just integrity among the producers. Of course, they could still use false labeling but it's the only thing that I can suggest that might restore some credibility to documentaries. Failing that, we might as well just watch *America's Funniest Home Videos*. At least those videos are credible. Indeed, *AFV* is probably the only credible documentary on the air nowadays and that's a sad comment on the sorry state of documentaries.

*AFV* is a documentary? Of course it is. 🐉

## Suffrage Is a Lie and a Trap

Sam Aurelius Milam III

You're not governed by the people that you elect but by the legislation that they pass. You have a tiny influence on the election but no influence at all on the legislation. If you don't like the legislation, then your only option is to vote for somebody else next time. If the incumbent loses, then that doesn't repeal the legislation that he passed. You're still governed by it.

Voting doesn't do you any good. It accomplishes only one thing. It legitimizes authority. Vote against the police state by not voting. 🐉

## Letters to the Editor

In regard to the "Comeuppance" article [*July issue, page 3*], I saw the same video clip. Without knowing exactly what led up to the incident, I think that the cop would have been in the wrong even if the person he hit had been male. Just because a person is cursing and acting foolishly, that doesn't justify such violence. In no way was the cop in danger of being seriously harmed by that woman. It looked like he just became impatient, and decided to wallop her. Wasn't all over a jay walking incident? Must have been a REALLY hot day.

—Sir Donald the Elusive

Dear Sam

I just had to make time to write to say the *Frontiersman* June 2010 is in my humble opinion the very best for several years. Like the earlier ones where your genius just shines — everything was so supremely on target. This came after your July 2010, due to my moving & forwarding. The person who wrote in the July issue a derogatory comment that you weren't told to shut up or some such thing, could not have shown her own nefarious colors better than to pick this issue to verbally vomit on. It's better than any other dozen issues combined over the past 2-3 years. None have ever been bad or useless, mind you — all have been useful — just this one is that much better than the others. (Not only your main piece, tho mainly that, but *Stray Thoughts* & the Reagan quote were also exceptional).

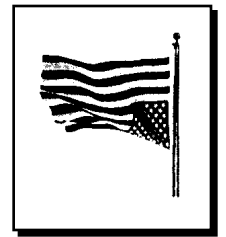
Thank you again for another excellent *Frontiersman*. This one covers so vastly much of the whole picture, our entire plight & its solution that I wish it could be available to every American to savor — Not mandatory, of course....

—FL, of Vacaville, California

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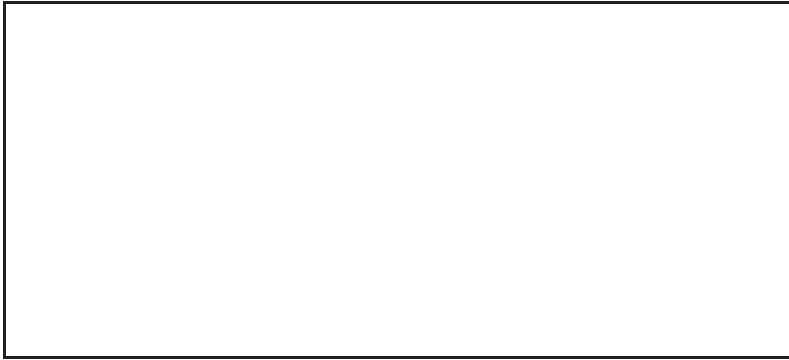
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Nation in Distress

The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools.  
—Herbert Spencer  
English Philosopher (1820-1903)



### Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; my mother; Dewey and Betty; and Eric, of Ione, California.

—editor

### Court Quotes

From *Humor in the Court* and *More Humor in the Court*, by Mary Louise Gilman, editor of the *National Shorthand Reporter*. Forwarded by Don G.

Q: You say the stairs went down to the basement?

A: Yes.

Q: And these stairs, did they go up also? ∞

### Puns

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Lady Jan the Voluptuous.

- Sea captains don't like crew cuts.
- Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?
- Without geometry, life is pointless. ∞

### Frontiersman

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### Tough Language

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

- When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert. ∞

### How Ta Tawk Southern

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Lady Jan the Voluptuous.

IGNERT: *adjective*. Not smart.

**Usage:** "Them N-C-TWO-A boys is sure ignert!"

HAZE: *contraction*.

**Usage:** "Is Bubba smart?" "Nah, haze ignert."

TIRE: *noun*. A tall monument.

**Usage:** "Lowrd willing and tha creek don't rise, I'd sure lack to see that Eiffel Tire in Paris." ∞

Submissions — I solicit letters, articles, and cartoons for the newsletter, but I don't pay for them. Short items are more likely to be printed. I suggest that letters and articles be shorter than 500 words but that's flexible depending on space available and the content of the piece.

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—Sam Aurelius Milam III, editor

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