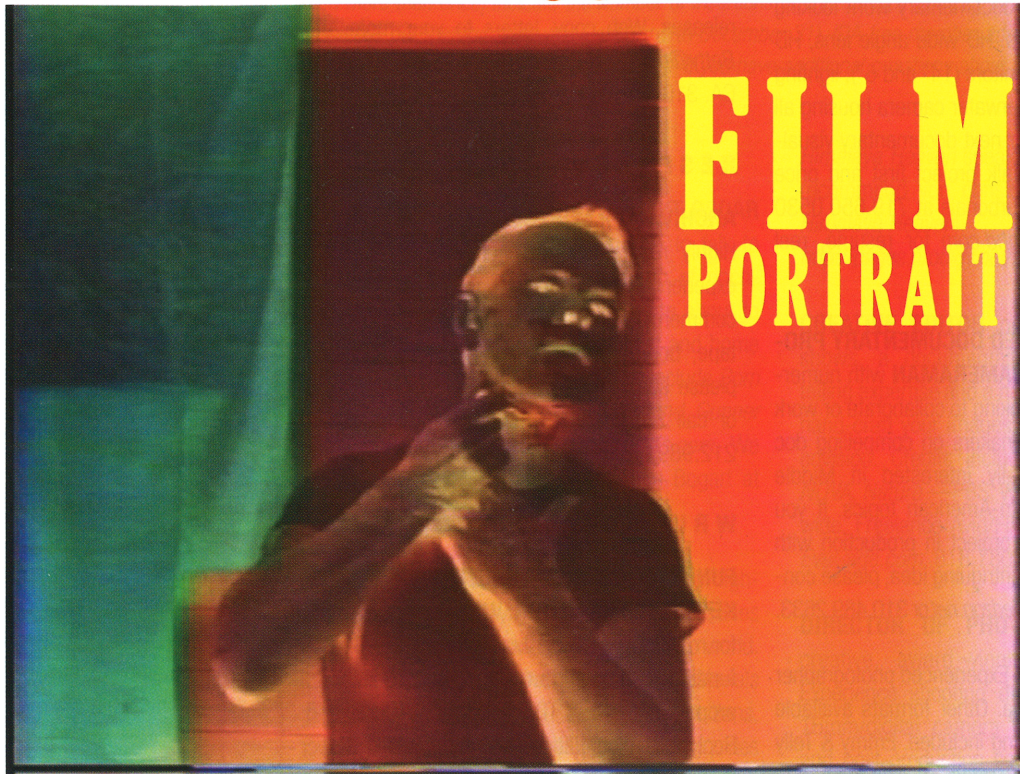


## Jerome Hill's



Courtesy of Jerome Foundation

It's the 1960s and I'm sitting in Professor Haig Manoogian's advanced film production class at NYU. We're awaiting guest lecturer Jerome Hill. I'm excited because Haig has told us that Hill won an Oscar for his documentary on Albert Schweitzer and also made an innovative film about the painter Grandma Moses.

Unlike my fellow classmate, Marty Scorsese, I'm not dreaming of going to Hollywood. I'm hoping to become a documentary filmmaker. Cinéma vérité is just beginning to rattle the aesthetic of documentaries, and I'm all for shaky hand-held camerawork and shooting under available light. I've even managed a part-time job syncing rushes for Drew Associates.

Hill arrives a little late, sweeping into the room wearing a dashing black trench coat. He explains that he's decided not to show us one of his previous films but instead a work-in-progress. He says it's to be an autobiographical film about his life as a filmmaker and its inspiration is Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.

As the lights go down, Hill explains that initially we're going to see some scenes dealing

with his life as a child. The first thing that touches me is the music, which Hill himself composed. It really sets a mood, an elegiac underscore that summons a past life. The sequence itself is a series of still photos of his mother, brothers and sister sitting on an old fashioned verandah. Then Hill does something really charming; he draws a yellow dog running through the photos, painting directly on the film's emulsion. I'm captivated by the way Hill feels free to experiment with the documentary form.

The film was *Film Portrait*, Hill's most ambitious work, which deals with time recaptured by reversing time and film images, superimposing the past with the present—and, yes, it has a Proustian quality about it. Hill skillfully traces his stages of growth from early home movies—saying of them, “What was missing in these feverish stutterings? Discipline? Technique? A sustained idea?”—to his first experiments in cinematography, to his development as an accomplished filmmaker. It had great resonance for me then as a young film student as it is by far the best film ever made about the process of becoming an artist.

After years of working principally in the vérité form, I was presented with the intriguing challenge of making the film biography of a close friend. When Lance Loud entered a hospice, he asked my wife Susan and I to tell his life story. We were presented with the same dilemma Hill had of dealing with time past, time present, the persistence of memories and the creative representation on film of a person's life. Having filmed Lance over a 30-year period from a teenager to an adult, we also had the extraordinary opportunity to recapture and manipulate time and Lance's past remembrances in *Lance Loud! A Death in an American Family*. □

*Film Portrait* is available through [BuyIndies.com](http://BuyIndies.com) and [Facets.org](http://Facets.org).

Academy Award-winning filmmakers Alan and Susan Raymond's most recent documentary is *The Congregation*, which aired nationally on PBS in December 2004. Their website is [www.videoverite.tv](http://www.videoverite.tv).