

Obituaries

Robert Raymond, 59; videographer, photographer

By Emma Stickgold
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It was an analog world with larger equipment and a more elaborate process for recording moving images when Robert A. Raymond began building television studios in and around Boston.

Beaming live images around the world was not as easy as it is now, so he relied on technical prowess to collaborate with C-SPAN and others to capture on video subjects such as Nelson Mandela, the South African leader, and Michael S. Dukakis, who served as governor of Massachusetts and ran for president.

"Bob was one of the first people to understand the convergence, in the television industry, of computers and video technology, so he was way ahead of the curve in the 1980s," said Stephen Marx, who hired Mr. Raymond to work at a cable television company.

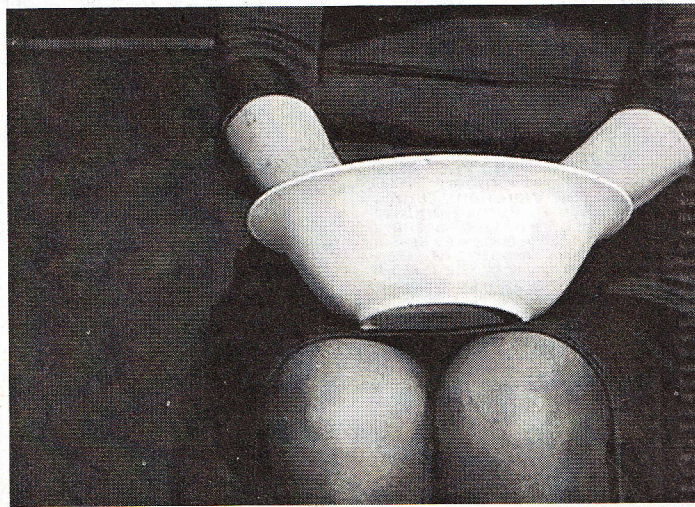
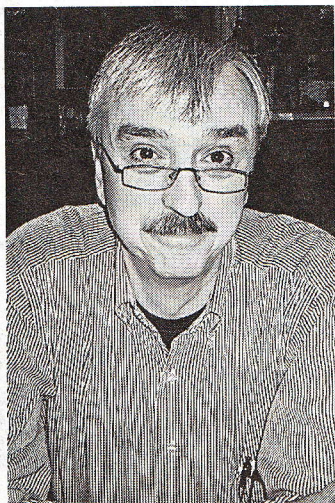
Mr. Raymond, who in addition to his video work photographed artists from around the world, died of complications of a lung infection Feb. 27 in Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. He was 59 and lived in Jamaica Plain.

As assistant director for the Boston Film/Video Foundation in the mid-1970s, Mr. Raymond helped connect the region's experimental artists with equipment at an affordable price.

Before public access television got off the ground, Mr. Raymond also was an early champion of making equipment more accessible to people, patiently explaining how light was captured and rendered into moving pictures.

To thousands of experimental artists around the world, however, Mr. Raymond extended far beyond his work as broadcast engineer. For three decades, he recorded live performances for the Boston-based Mobius Artists Group, capturing new and returning artists in a collection of roughly 25,000 photos, which he meticulously archived.

"His commitment to his work and to all of his activities was so unparalleled," said Jed Speare, director of Mobius. "He set an example for everyone around him."



ROBERT A. RAYMOND

Mr. Raymond relied on natural light and was very conscious of the need to remain unobtrusive

In the basement of his home, Mr. Raymond had every kind of camera gear imaginable, a museum-worthy collection demonstrating the evolution of technology he mastered through the decades.

"He was a highly skilled person with an extremely refined sense of beauty, and that is the way he functioned in life," said Nancy Adams, a former codirector of Mobius.

Mr. Raymond often performed alongside his wife, Marilyn Arsem, who founded Mobius, and "his understanding of performance as a performer was crucial to his ability to capture images . . . and to understand his subjects," Adams said. "He understood how an image would evolve, whether it was artistically created from another artist, or it was an image he had set his eye on. He respected the evolution."

Many artists had never been photographed while performing.

"His presence there really validated their work, and that level of respect Bob gave to everybody and every task he undertook really spoke to the integrity that was all-pervasive," Speare said.

Mr. Raymond relied on natural light and was very conscious of the need to remain unobtrusive, family and friends said.

"He paid attention, and he wanted to make sure that the work wouldn't be forgotten," his wife said. "One of the things he always did was to photograph the aftermath of a performance,

when the audience had gotten up. He'd be right there, photographing what got spilled on the floor, the remnants of the work. He was interested in the 'during' and the 'after.'"

Part of what fed Mr. Raymond's curiosity about the human condition, family and friends said, was his background in anthropology.

He grew up in Woonsocket, R.I., in a family with French-Canadian roots, and studied anthropology at the University of Rhode Island, from which he graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1974. Mr. Raymond studied communications at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and nearly finished a master's degree before landing a job at the Boston Film/Video Foundation.

"And every important and, for lack of a better word, experimental filmmaker came through there," said Maureen McNamara, a longtime friend and former colleague. "It was a hotbed of experimentation, both in production and exhibition, so Bob just thought that was so cool."

Mr. Raymond worked there until the mid-1980s, when he worked for a year on a video arcade game project with McNamara.

After that, Marx hired him to work for American Cablevision. "His training as an anthropologist was useful," Marx said.

Because Mr. Raymond was mostly self-taught, he "had the kind of mind, very systematic,

very orderly, that looked at the overall system, and that was a remarkable combination of things," Marx said.

The company went through a series of ownership changes. In 2009, Mr. Raymond was laid off from what was then called CN8 and joined Marx in a company that streamed live video over the Internet. He also helped McNamara build a touch-screen kiosk at the Bunker Hill Monument museum.

"There was such an outpouring at his memorial," McNamara said. "He was one of a kind. I'm at a great loss. I'll never find anybody like that to work with."

Speare said Mr. Raymond "did his work so selflessly and so discreetly."

"That's really the mark of his personal style, but the results of his work are just astounding," he said.

Darin Murphy, a librarian at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, is creating an archive at Tufts University of materials from Mobius, including Mr. Raymond's photographs.

"Bob would open himself up to all kinds of work, good, bad and ugly, and really try to find a moment that encapsulates at least his best conception of what is really going on," Murphy said. "I am trying to get my mind around what it would mean to attend thousands and thousands of these performances."

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