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**cut**

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**cut**  
By Beth Lane

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Fine Arts in Film and Animation

School of Film and Animation  
College of Art and Design  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester, NY

Approval Date \_\_\_\_5/5/2024\_\_\_\_\_

*Committee Approval*

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Kevin Bauer

Date

Thesis Chair

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Linda Moroney

Date

Committee Member

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Amy Adrion

Date

Committee Member

## *Abstract*

“*cut*” is a documentary film which explores themes of systemic sexism in the film industry. It was produced between September 2023-April 2024 including pre-production to post-production. This paper describes and analyzes the filmmaking process for Beth Lane, Director. In this paper I will also attempt to put to words the intangibles of that process, including the social dynamics of filmmaking, and larger cultural happenings at the time of production.

## *Introduction*

In the film "cut," I share my journey as Beth Lane, a woman who chased her dream of becoming a videographer and editor only to confront pervasive sexism in the industry. The film exposes the harsh realities I faced and the disappointment I felt as I came face to face with the bias that eventually pushed me out of the industry. Through my personal experiences, "cut" aims to shed light on the broader issue of sexism in male-dominated fields.

Growing up, I always wanted to tell stories through film. "cut" is my story of chasing that dream and facing obstacles along the way. Despite my passion and hard work, I found myself hitting a wall of sexism in the film industry. This film captures the struggles I faced, serving as a reminder of the challenges countless women face in similar situations.

"cut" isn't just about me—it's a glimpse into the larger issue of sexism in male dominated professions like mine. I hope that by sharing my experiences, we can start a conversation about gender bias and work towards a future where women don't have to fight so hard to be heard and respected in their fields.

## *Review of Research*

This film is based on my own lived experiences, as well as the experiences I witnessed of my female colleagues, while working in the film industry. With over ten years of experience filming in various settings, including out in the field, as well as in studio environments, I felt very confident in my skills.

I left RIT originally in 2013 during my thesis year because I was offered a job with a local manufacturing company that built custom crane systems for factories. The bread and butter sales tools for this company were case study videos of their product in use. I was able to travel all over the country filming the systems in use as well as interviewing the users. This gave me invaluable experience with interviewing people and “run & gun” shooting.

When I left that company two years later, I started my own company and began creating website marketing videos for small companies around Rochester and Buffalo. Again, I gained significant experience in the art of interviewing and creating effective video from start to finish with only myself and my own skills to complete the work. I worked all around Rochester and was hired by RIT twice to create marketing videos for the college.

After three years of having my own company, I was tired of the sexism. I'd had enough of being pulled off camera to do mundane tasks, of being ignored and mansplained to, and I decided to take a job with Channel 13 WHAM shooting the local news. I have always loved studio production, and had I lived in a better location, I would definitely have worked in television. During this time period, I had the opportunity to begin teaching part-time at SUNY Brockport and very quickly decided to move in the direction of teaching.

By the time I was able to return to RIT to complete my thesis year, I had many years of documentary style production under my belt and I was completely capable of producing this film by myself.

I decided to film the documentary in the broadcast studio at SUNY Brockport college, a studio I am very familiar with and have used many times over the years. Because of my age and my physical limitations, it made sense to work in a space I know well. I wanted to have complete control over the project—from start to finish. That meant handling everything on my own, from filming to editing.

### *Pre Production*

I began my pre production immediately after receiving approval of my proposal. My first task was to obtain permission to shoot the interview in the SUNY Brockport studio. I spoke with Mike Smith who serves as our chief studio engineer. The interview was scheduled for early November of 2023. My goal was to have a rough cut before Christmas and I did meet that goal.

The plan was for me to simply tell my story on camera, but I quickly realized that it would be difficult to appear natural if I wasn't actually speaking to another person. I approached a colleague of mine for help with this. Kim Young is a Lecturer, along with myself, in the Journalism and Broadcasting department at SUNY Brockport. She was a news reporter and anchor for over twenty years and now teaches at Brockport. I asked Kim if she would “interview” me for the shoot. The idea was to have someone I was speaking to that would assist with my being able to sound spontaneous and unscripted as I told my story. Kim agreed and I sent her the treatment for my film so she could come up with appropriate questions to ask me about the subject. Kim was great! She made me forget the cameras were rolling and allowed me to speak candidly and without sounding scripted.

## *Production*

Mike, Kim and I, all met at the studio that morning, had coffee and donuts, and shot the whole interview in about an hour. Mike set up the light grid before we got there. I set up two cameras because I had not decided at that point if I was going to edit the film as a two-person interview, or as a single person speaking. I wanted to have the option, so I shot us both separately in order to be able to do it either way. Kim and I both had classes to teach right afterwards so Mike got the footage ready for me and I picked it up from him the next day.

## *Post Production*

I was excited to have the opportunity to edit again, and I jumped right into it. I had forgotten how intensely absorbing it could be for me and I had to start putting restrictions on myself as to how much time I would spend per session. I really enjoyed the creative problem solving aspect of it and being able to try multiple ideas to convey what I wanted to say. I did quickly remember the frustration and computer glitches that happen with every project, but despite all the swearing, I had a lot of fun with it.

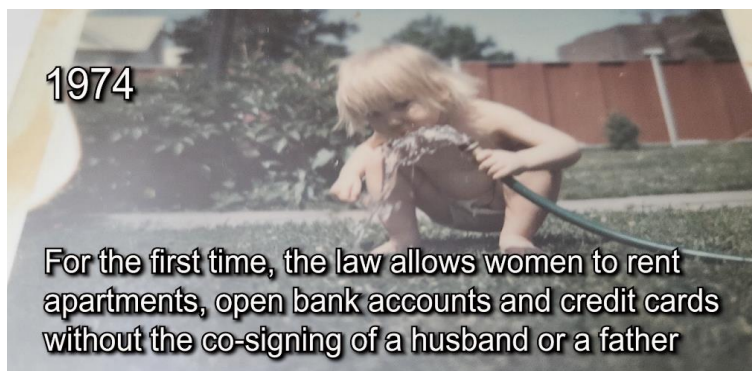
When I begin editing, I always start with the opening sequence, and the first thing I need to nail down is the music. I found several pieces that I really liked, but none were quite right. The sequence of images I was using for the opening needed a piece of music that would build in tempo and drive the images. Many of the pieces that I found with the right pacing were very “inspirational” and didn't fit properly with the tone of the film. Although, in some ways, the film could be seen as inspirational, the overall tone was one of sadness and I needed to find



something that conveyed that feeling. I think the piece I finally wound up using was a good example of that idea.

I knew from the beginning that I wanted to open the film with the line, "I was 10 years old in 1977, when Star Wars came out..." That sentence sets the stage for everything that follows, so creating the perfect opening sequence to set it up was crucial. Setting the right tone from the get-go is key.

To connect with younger audiences and illustrate the experiences of growing up as a woman in the 70s and 80s, I knew I had to demonstrate the sexism and cultural norms of that era. For the opening sequence, I opted to weave together childhood photos of myself with poignant text highlighting the limitations imposed on women during those times. Seeing a picture of me as a five-year-old juxtaposed with text revealing that women couldn't have their own bank accounts or credit cards without a male cosigner was particularly striking. It set the stage for the broader narrative I wanted to convey.



To amplify the impact of the opening sequence, I decided to intersperse these images and text with clips from popular TV shows of the time, such as "Love Boat" and "Charlie's Angels." These shows epitomized the over-sexualization and objectification of women prevalent in 70s and 80s media, portraying them primarily as sex objects rather than complex individuals. By incorporating these clips, I aimed to underscore the contrast between the societal norms of the time and the portrayal of women in popular culture.

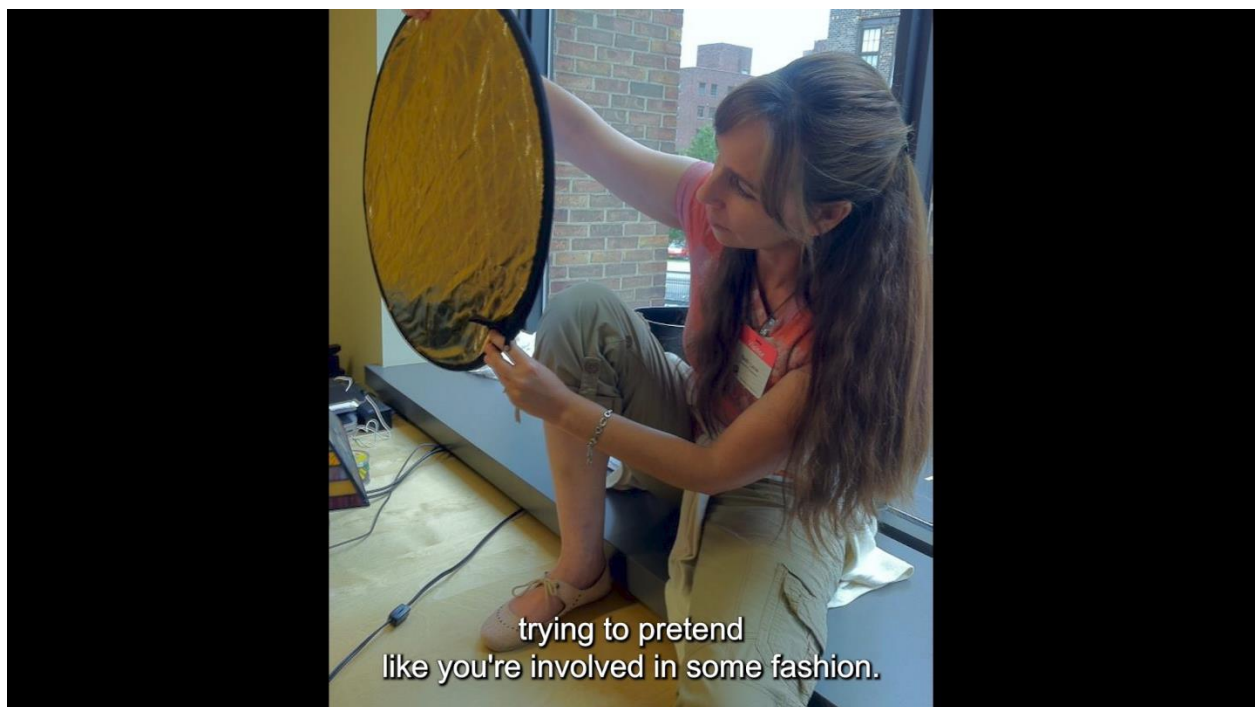


Despite the length of the opening—spanning about two full minutes—I felt strongly about its effectiveness in setting the tone for the film. The dramatic impact, and the way it captured the essence of the time period, made it a powerful part of the narrative. When I presented the opening sequence to my advisors, I anticipated feedback that I needed to trim it down. However, to my surprise, they shared my opinion, and eventually advised me to keep it as it was. Their validation reinforced my belief that these images were a powerful way to convey the complex themes and experiences of my story.

After setting up the film's introduction, I began cutting footage and soundbites from the interview to create the narrative. Originally, I did keep some of the two shot footage of Kim and I, making it obvious that I was being interviewed. I wasn't happy with it but there were a number of times that Kim spoke while I was speaking and it was picked up on my mic. I didn't want to cut out the story to get rid of her voice, so I used the two shot. I didn't like this, and my advisors thought it detracted from the narrative. I ended up using my many found visuals to cover the awkward cuts I had to make in order to remove her voice, and in some instances, use other cuts of my voice to replace what I'd had to cut. In the end, there were a couple of places where you can still hear her faintly as I am speaking, but there was no other option.

The biggest challenge was that there were too many stories to choose from. Narrowing down which experiences to include and which to cut was difficult. Initially, I kept almost everything, but after several meetings with my advisors, I narrowed down what would stay and what would go. I didn't want to do a documentary where I just sat down and told a few stories of what had happened to me. I felt strongly that the context and the history and the culture of the times were what made the stories impactful. I needed to walk the audience through my life and the culture that led up to the events in order for people to see the big picture, and not simply a few disturbing stories out of context. This made for a long film, and at this point, the film exceeded my initial estimate, running about 30 minutes. Suggestions were made as to what I could cut to get it to a more manageable 20 minutes. There were many instances of redundancies and empty space with long pauses that could be removed in order to strengthen the narrative. To achieve this, I repeatedly went back through the dialogue, cutting unnecessary portions. With each pass through, I tried to streamline the narrative without compromising the story.

When I finally reached an acceptable length, my focus shifted to sourcing visuals. My intention was to keep my voice, but to have the audience watching me talk as little as possible. I wanted to find as much as I could to illustrate what I was saying and keep my face off screen unless it was absolutely necessary. I went looking into my numerous personal hard drives, and I found photos spanning my childhood, adolescence, and footage of my professional experiences. I discovered many images documenting the very film shoots that I discussed in the film.



Surprisingly, I looked online, and I found photos of the apartment we were shooting when I was sexually assaulted on set. I don't specifically clarify that they are photos of the actual apartment where the assault took place, but I believe they create an authentic visual representation of what that event looked and felt like. Although it was disturbing and creepy to look at them, I felt the photos added to the story.

Additionally, I searched the internet and found examples of everything I reminisced about during the interview. I found photos of the magazines I collected as a child and footage of the Star Wars craze of 1977, as well as the camera equipment that was available at the time. In addition, I was lucky enough to come across some YouTube footage depicting a high school setting very similar to what I described from my own teenage years.







To illustrate the culture of the time as it pertained to women, I found vintage advertisements that demonstrated women being pushed toward careers such as secretaries and stewardesses. I feel

Olivetti Print Ad Campaign  
Louis Holland Callaway Agency, 1972

The Olivetti Girl ads ran during the spring and summer of 1972 in *Life* and *New York* magazines.

are currently employed in this position?

The final segment of the film recounts my experience filming women's hockey games in Buffalo. I located online footage of the actual games I was speaking about shooting, including footage of myself behind the camera.



The large amount of found footage I collected was invaluable and elevated the storytelling in ways that the narrative alone wouldn't have.

In January, I had a rough cut of the film ready. During my advising meeting, they mentioned they weren't thrilled with the music I chose for the opening sequence. While I liked it, we agreed it didn't quite fit the film's tone. I played with different compositions but struggled to find the right fit. It was suggested that I seek out a composer. Because I was no longer a full-time student at the school, finding a composer was a challenge. Following my advisor's recommendation, I attended an "artist exchange" meeting, where students collaborate on projects. I posted my



request for musical composition and eventually connected with a student willing to collaborate.

We had several meetings, and I shared a link to the film for reference.

Meanwhile, I kept exploring other music options just in case. As screenings approached, I was focused on audio and captioning. I wasn't working with the newest version of Premiere Pro and I heard that there were new tools available. I updated to a newer version of Premiere Pro that had AI features for audio regulation and caption creation. Although it balanced the audio well, using the captioning feature caused audio corruption. With just a week left, my audio was off-sync, and some pieces were missing. In addition, the composition I received from the student composer didn't align with my vision for the film and I decided not to use it.

While I did have to scramble, I was more aggravated than worried. During my years producing videos, it always seemed there would be some type of crisis that would happen just before deadline, causing a mad race to the finish line. Although I would often curse and yell, "This is why I don't work in film anymore," I believe that the adrenaline rush was probably half the appeal of working in film for me. Down to the wire, I was able to fix the audio sync issue and add my backup music. Despite the challenges, I managed to finish the film on time and have it uploaded for screenings.



## *Audience Reception & Reflection*

I think you can always look back and feel there are things you could have done better...but I'm very happy with what I accomplished. I wasn't thrilled with having to make another film. Making a film is extremely hard work, and depending on the film, it can be very physical. Because of my age and physical limitations, I knew that I would have to do some kind of documentary in order to keep the work manageable for myself. Truth be told, I am a very private person and telling a personal story about myself is just about the most horrifying thing I can think of doing. However, after spending time searching for a subject that I would be able to have considerable access to, and be able to work around my schedule of working two jobs...I finally realized the only manageable option was myself. Again, I was not thrilled with this. I find talking about myself and my feelings to be about as pleasant as a root canal. But I needed to get this done, and in my heart, I knew it was a relevant and important topic. Once I committed to the idea, I was all in and tried to put myself out there for the interview. Despite how uncomfortable the whole experience made me, it was cathartic to put my story out there and feel seen and heard.

I didn't want to make women feel as though they shouldn't try to get into film, but I did want them to have a "heads up" as to what they were likely to experience. I also wanted to show the men what unconscious bias could look like in themselves. One of the stories I didn't have time for in the film ended up being expressed in the statistics cards at the end of the film. The female professor in my Producing Class at RIT warned the women in class that no matter what role they attempted in the film industry, they would be pushed into accepting the positions that the men didn't want; such as under the line producers, casting and set designers. It was very important to me to express the nuances in this unconscious sexism I had experienced. It's not that women can't

get into film, it's that they are pushed into certain roles in the film industry, and not accepted in the roles that men have claimed for themselves.

The screening went very well. Someone did say that the open was too long, but the feedback was overall good. Someone else said the 2-minute open was like a “mini-movie” and they liked it. That was my intention, so I was pleased with that. I was a little worried that the subject would be discouraging for the female audience. My intention was never to “scare them off” of filmmaking, but rather to give them a warning of what might be waiting for them on the other side of film school. I wanted them to be prepared rather than surprised. There were many comments that the film was depressing, but they didn't seem negative. It simply seemed as if people were saying how disappointed they were that things were still so sexist after all this time. People seemed to find it impactful and thought provoking – which is all you can hope for in the end.

## *Appendix*

*Thesis Proposal*

Thesis Proposal  
For MFA Film & Animation  
School of Film & Animation  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
September 2023

Approved for submission by: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: "cut"

Genre: Documentary

Duration: 15 minutes

**Log line:**

"cut" documents the journey of a woman who achieved her lifelong dream of becoming a videographer/video editor, only to be driven out of the industry by pervasive sexism. Her story reveals the harsh realities she faced, and the sobering disappointment she experienced confronting the systemic bias that drove her away. This film documents her personal experiences of sexism in the industry but seeks to serve as a microcosm of the broader issues that countless women have faced in male-dominated fields.

**Artist Rationale:**

My artistic motivation behind this film can be summarized in one word: anger.

I am Beth Lane, a 56-year-old woman whose lifelong aspiration was to have a career in the film industry. As a child in the 70's, and a teen in the 80's, it was made crystal clear to me that women were not allowed. In 2006, after marriage, motherhood, and eventual divorce, I decided to wholeheartedly pursue my dream. While juggling the responsibilities of raising three children, maintaining two part-time jobs, and attending college full-time, I managed to excel and finally achieve my goal. I became a videographer/video editor, only to be driven out of the industry by the toxic sexism that is still rampant in this male dominated field.

This film aims to expose not only the typical everyday displays of gender bias and microaggressions, but to recount additional distressing incidents, ranging from being pulled away from the camera to babysit a director's child to experiencing sexual assault on set. In my career, I've endured the indignity of "The Bait & Switch" repeatedly. This degrading behavior involves being approached for a job, initially recognizing, and admiring your talent, hiring you as the cinematographer, only to arrive on set and discover that you've been demoted to 1st camera, or simply a "helper" position. This most often occurred when a buddy of the director suddenly became available.

From incessant mansplaining during assignments, to the infuriating gaslighting that followed, I've experienced it all. Any effort to address an issue, even when approached delicately, inevitably resulted in a variation of the "But that's not what this is" speech. This dismissive excuse consists of being informed that because the perpetrator has a wife and/or daughter(s), he completely understands *why you would think* the situation is sexist, assuring you that *he gets it*. However, in *this* particular instance, it *really is just a coincidence*. After the first dozen times you hear this explanation, you can no longer tell yourself the situation is anything other than exactly what you thought it was. Daring to persist with confronting an issue inevitably resulted in explosive male anger, threats, and/or serious consequences – all directed at me.

The devastating disappointment and rage that I continue to feel is profound, and my personal journey as a female in this industry deserves to be explored. My story highlights the challenges

faced by women in male-dominated fields, and sheds light on the systemic sexism that continues to persist.

*If I must make one more film, this is the story I must tell.*



## **Treatment:**

The documentary opens with a montage of iconic 70's sci-fi film posters, setting the time frame of the story. Beth Lane's voiceover introduces herself and her early fascination with cameras, special effects, and storytelling, driven by Sci-fi classics like "Star Wars." Interspersed are 70's photos of SPFX magazines and Sci-fi models, along with childhood photos of Beth, narrating her lifelong dream of working in the film industry.

In a studio interview, Beth shares her early realization that women were not represented in the film industry. She recalls a field trip where the reality of her ability to work in the film industry was revealed to her, triggering her disappointment, and causing her to let go of her dream. Her high school guidance counselor's suggestion of becoming a typist because she would always have a job, or a teacher for the sake of having summers off with her future kids was equally disheartening. Beth recounts her journey into adulthood, encompassing marriage, children, and eventually divorce, before she decided to chase her dream once more by returning to school at the age of 38.

The story takes a darker turn as Beth narrates her experiences with pervasive sexism as she began working in the film industry. Clips of her work are intercut with the incidents she faced. Beth recounts specific instances of bias, discrimination, and harassment, from bait-and-switch jobs, to being kicked out of an online film group over condescending "mansplaining," to experiencing sexual assault on a set.

The story reaches a climax as Beth describes the moment that caused her to leave the industry, a culmination of sexism that became unbearable. It was her job filming the Buffalo Beauts Hockey games that would become the breaking point. Beth describes being consistently ignored and “othered” on the job, leading to a lie and a final bait & switch moment that was the tipping point. Footage from Beauts Hockey and the stadium will illustrate this story.

Beth reflects on the impact of walking away. She speaks about the isolation and frustration she felt during this period, emphasizing that her story is not unique. The documentary will explore the broader implications of her experiences, connecting her struggles to those faced by other women in male-dominated fields.

Beth's voiceover expresses her hope for a more equitable future as we see footage of Beth today, thriving in a different career. She discusses her transition to teaching, not film, but consumer culture and media literacy classes. The film concludes with a call to action, encouraging viewers to confront sexism in their own workplaces and support women pursuing their dreams, sending a message of determination in the ongoing fight for equality in the film industry and beyond.

**Timeline:**

<b>October</b>	<b>Proposal Submitted/Approved</b>
<b>November</b>	<b>Mid Nov – Studio Interview Shoot Late Nov – Additional Footage Shoot if needed</b>
<b>December</b>	<b>Teaching B-Roll Shoot - before semester end</b>
<b>January</b>	<b>B-Roll at home shoot Editing – Winter Break</b>
<b>February</b>	<b>Additional B-roll &amp; pick up shots if needed</b>
<b>March</b>	<b>Sound/Music &amp; Color Correction</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>Rough Cut Completed</b>
<b>May</b>	<b>Final Cut</b>

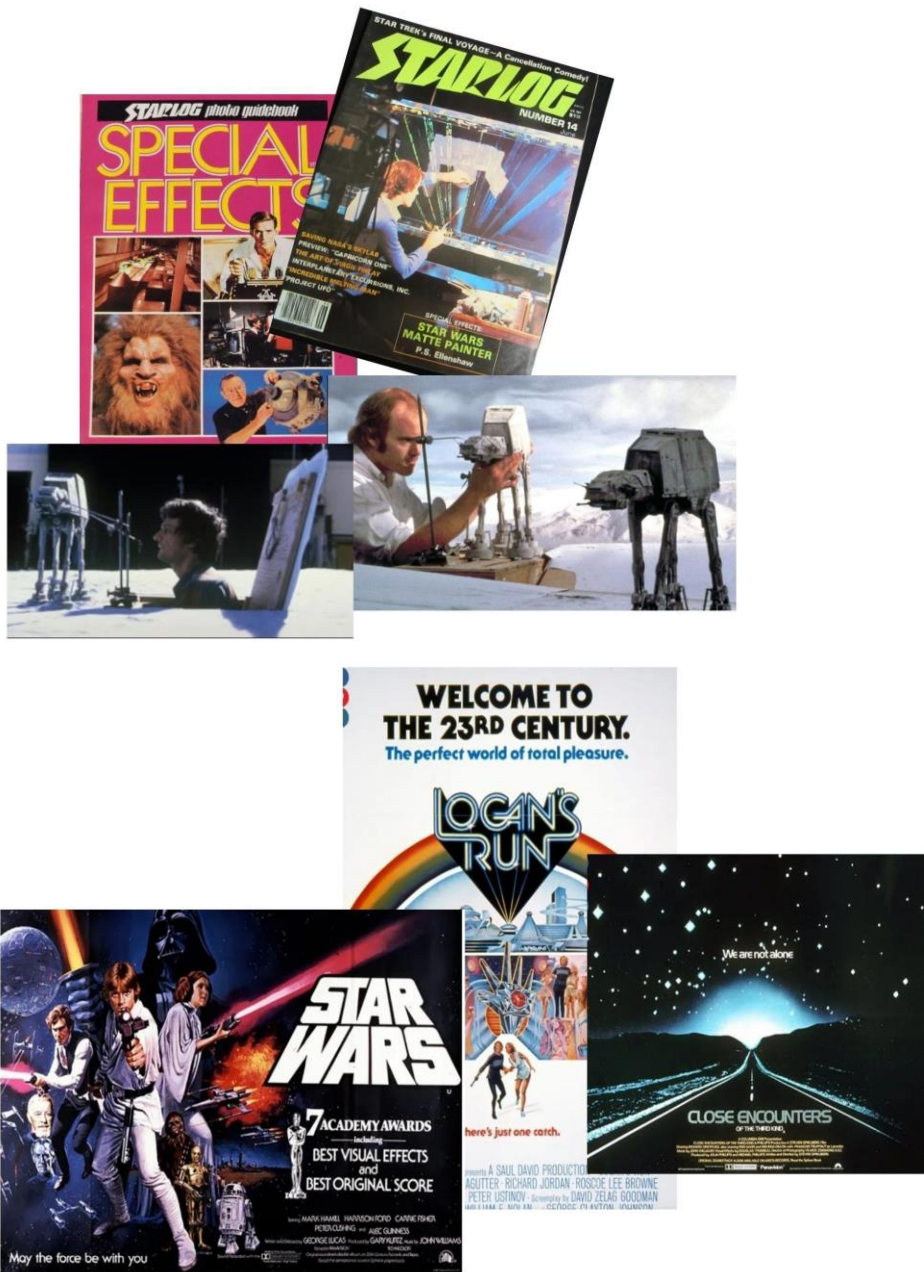
**Budget:**

<b>Equipment</b>			
	Camera	Owned	\$0
	Tripod	Owned	\$0
	Sound Kit	Owned	\$0
	Light Kit	RIT Cage – In Kind	\$0
	Studio	Brockport – In Kind	\$0
	Laptop/Hard Drives	Owned	\$0
<b>Crew</b>			
	Director/DP	Self	\$0
	Studio Crew	Self	\$0
		Mike Smith	\$0
		Marsha Ducey	\$0
<b>Craft Services</b>			
	Studio Shoot Days (2)	Snacks & Drinks	\$100
<b>Travel</b>			
	My car	Gas	\$50

## Vision:

The film will be a studio interview shoot with photos and video clips interspersed with the subject's story.

Childhood photos, movie posters & SPFX magazines from the times



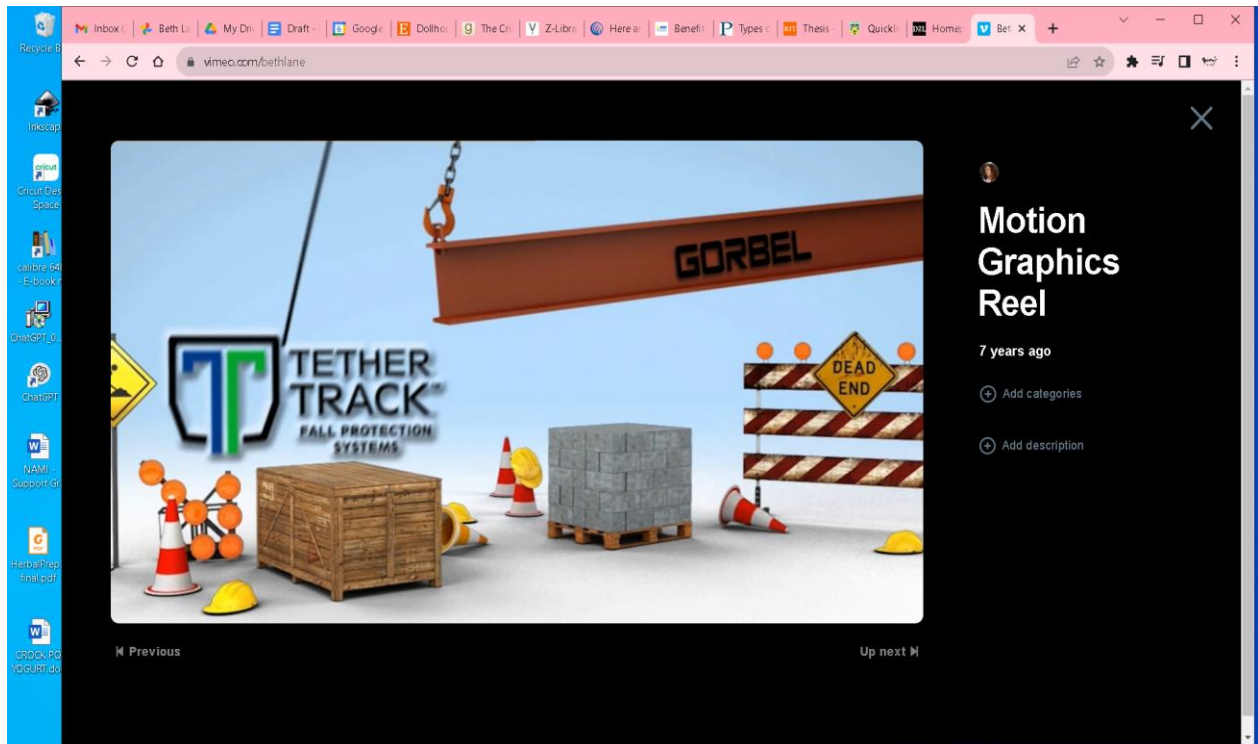
## Photos/video clips of college and film school







## Footage/clips of work interspersed with the incidents

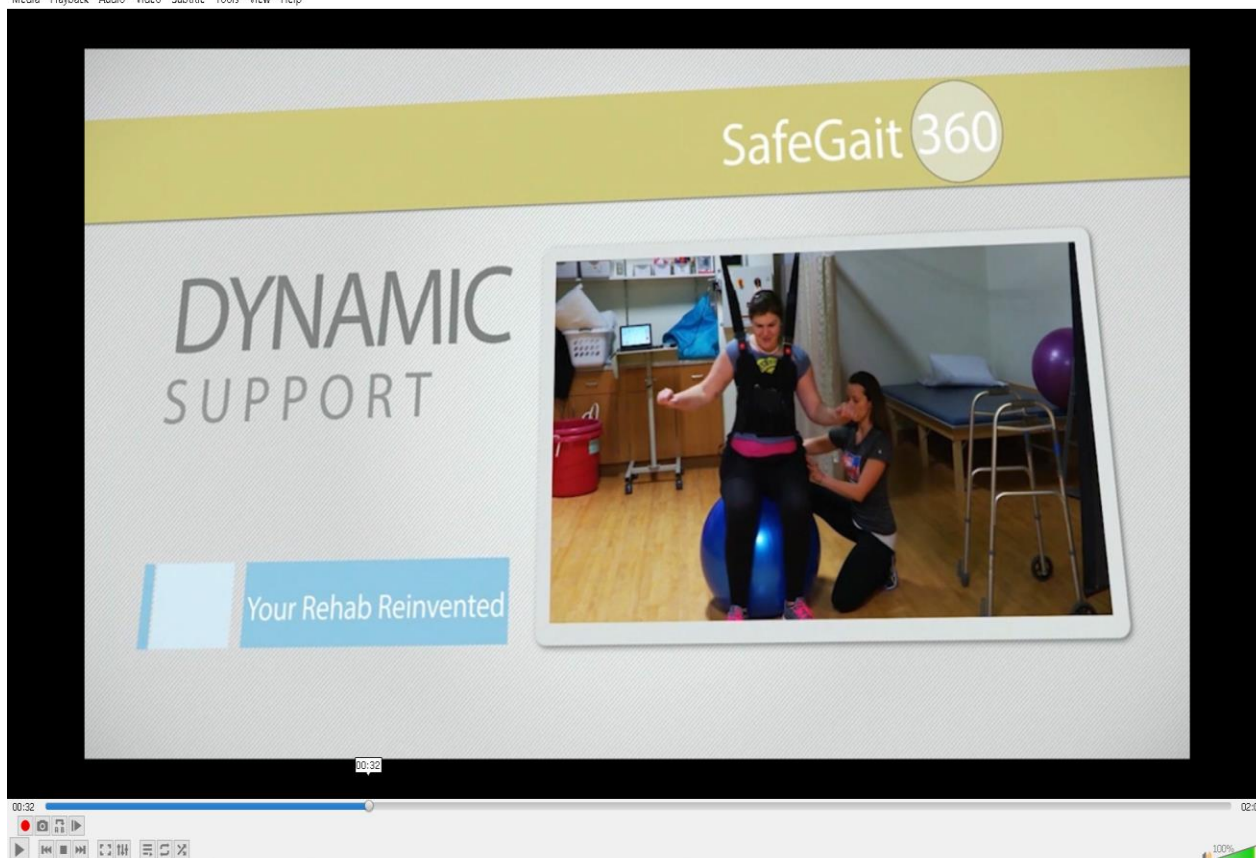


Demo Reel Commercial-Industrial\_FINALCUT.mp4 - VLC media player

Media Playback Audio Video Subtitle Tools View Help















## Footage from the final incident and then the present - B-roll of Beth Teaching



