

INTRODUCING...

lois siegel

overdosed on energy

Lois Siegel has more than her fair share of adrenalin. At 32 she has done more, is doing more, and has more projects and ideas jotted down in her many notebooks than most of us can even think about without running out of breath. She makes films, does photography, teaches Film Production at Concordia University and Film Production, European Cinema, Documentary Film, and Comparative Literature at John Abbott College; she writes — articles, scripts, stories; she sleeps occasionally, and always manages to find time for friends. She also reads voraciously, paints, plays piano, and... that's not all!

This past winter she completed her first play. In April, for three evenings, Lois presented a selection of her films at Montreal's Le Cinéma Parallèle, afterwards meeting with the public for discussion. This past summer she completed her twelfth film — *Dialogue of an Ancient Fog*, in both French and English. Most recently she completed a film vignette for the National Film Board's Canadian unity series, on Quebec's Fournier family, entitled *Stunt Family* or *Les Cascadeurs*, depending on your choice of tongue. In this she had the enviable opportunity to direct Donald Brittain, who did the English narration.

Born in Wisconsin, Lois became a Canadian citizen June 20, 1978. She has lived in Montreal since 1971 and loves the city's vitality.

She's always been a paragon. A star student in her younger days, and eager to learn new things, she bought a camera on a whim and taught herself photography (with a little help from her friends), working alone in the university darkroom from midnight 'til dawn. One year after that she was teaching a creative course in photography. Classes were held in salon-fashion in her home, with an improvised darkroom in the front closet. A few years later she talked her way into becoming Assis-

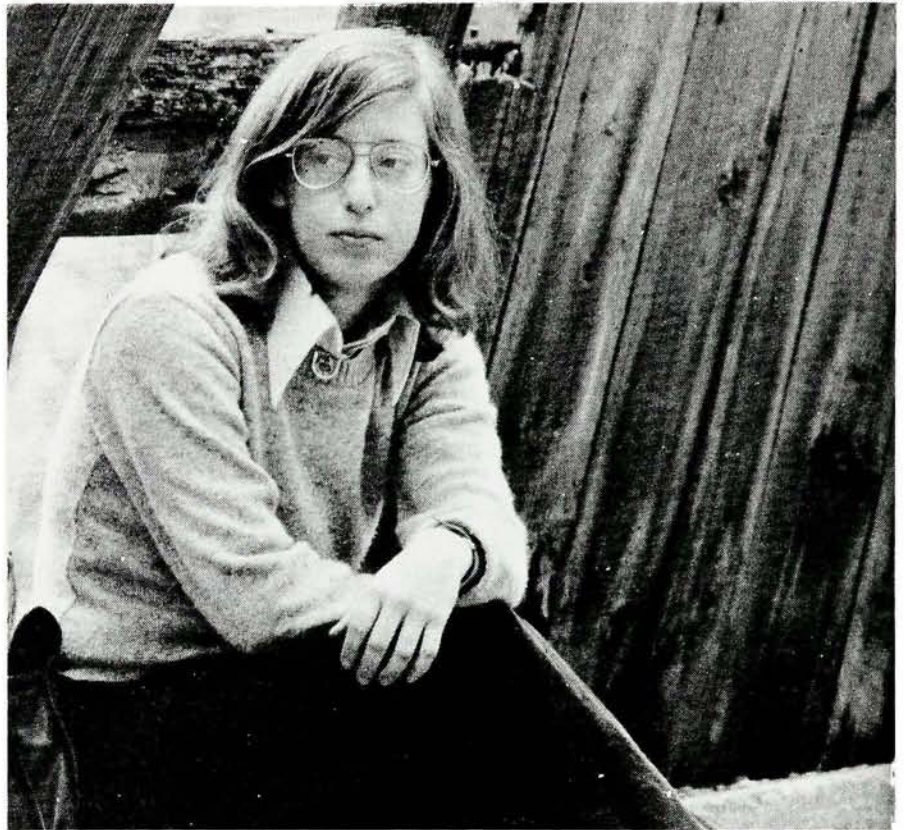


photo: Jane Dick

tant Director of the Choate Summer Film Institute in Connecticut, teaching the offspring of the very elite. Introduced to film via friends, she says, "A good way to learn about film is to teach it." Among other things, the lady has chutzpah.

Lois loves to teach. She has a genuine interest in her students and a talent for making the complex clear. She teaches because she likes it, because it gives her flexible hours so she can freelance, and it helps finance the making of her own experimental films, of which she has made a dozen so far. "Teaching helps me keep up with what's happening now and I love being around young people. It's been very good for me. It forces me to keep up with things and to become more articulate about what I'm looking at."

She learns about film wherever she can — by teaching it, by working at various jobs on many professional films — commercials, documentaries, and features. She put in an apprenticeship at the NFB's Studio 'D' and subsequently became 2nd Assistant Camera on several of their productions.

She regards everything she does as a learning process. Given the opportunity to do or try anything interesting, she is hard put to say no. So, she says yes. While working on Frank Vitale's *East End Hustle* and Alan 'Bozo' Moyle's *The Rubber Gun* "they'd say: well, we need this location in twenty-four hours. Can you get it for us...? And you say, 'sure.' You don't think about it... you just do it." Once, in the wee small hours, she negotiated the use of a factory in exchange for the use of two slide projectors. Resourceful, too.

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"Fascinated with working with form" she has been relatively lucky as an independent experimental filmmaker. Her films have had lots of international exposure, she gets invited to festivals and symposiums, and her fifth film, **Painting with Light**, was commissioned especially for the Fifth International Experimental Film Competition in Belgium, 1974. Some of her other films include **Faces**, **Boredom**, **Recipe to Cook a Clown**, and **Solitude** — a film designed to make "people contemplate their own solitude," and judging by audience responses it succeeds admirably. "I learn a lot from people's reactions. Not that I make my films with an audience in mind..."

If you can believe her she swears she's "a slow learner — especially at technical things. It took me three films to learn how to use a light meter. I used to invite friends to come and take the light readings." But like a true adventurer she'll try things "just to try them."

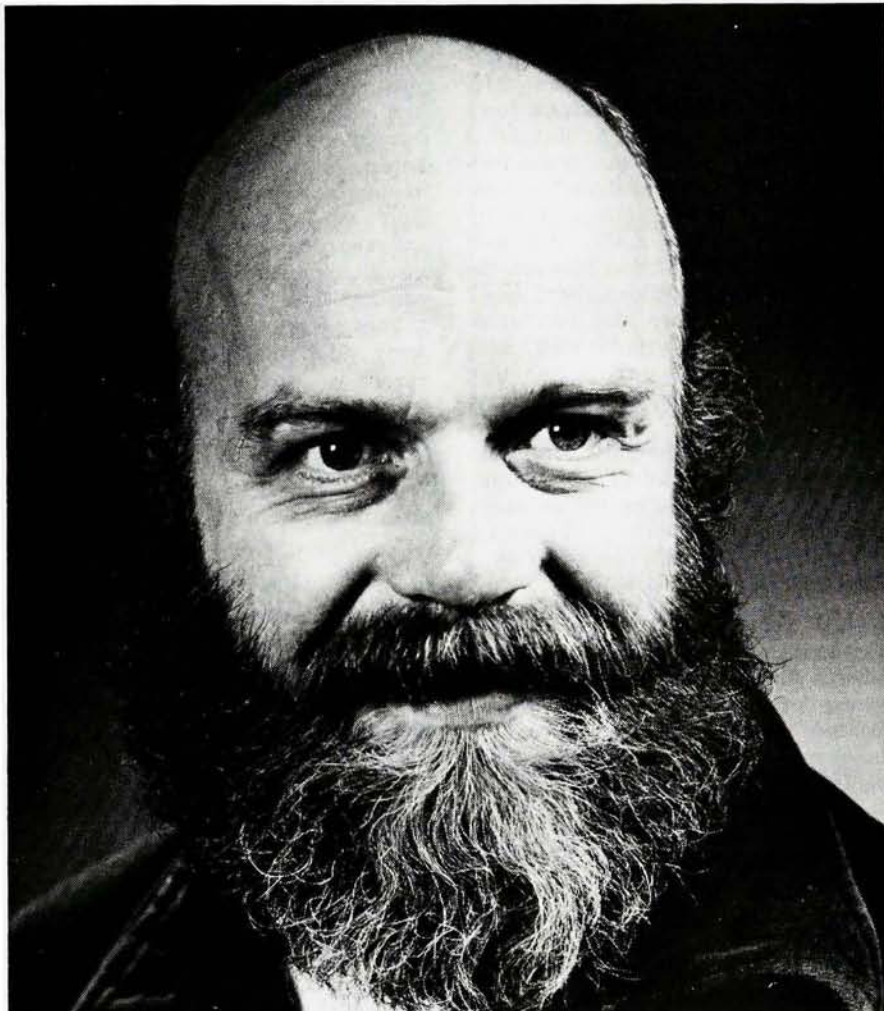
In addition to a million other current involvements, in December Lois will be shooting a 35mm theatrical short for Productions de la Chouette, with the aid of the Institute du Cinéma de Québec. In her spare (!) time she's working on a "no-budget feature," **A 20th Century Chocolate Cake**. It will be a docu-drama and an experiment with structure. It is being made with the collaboration of Greg Van Riel, star of **Recipe to Cook a Clown**.

She has just published a book of photographs, **Faces**, accompanied by a bilingual poetic text, and representing ten years of her work.

Lois Siegel does things. As she says, "You have to be completely self-dependent because nothing is guaranteed in this world. Absolutely nothing... you're thrown back on yourself." But she gratefully acknowledges the enormous support she has received from others. Her friends, students, and some of her audience members frequently volunteer to help with her films. Other independent filmmakers in the city are generous with their talent, equipment, and whatever else they have that may be needed. And a big influence in her life has been "people having concern about what you're doing and giving you a chance to try what you have to... People have put up with a lot of my mistakes and boy, do I appreciate that."

So do the rest of us, Lois.

jim long



Communication Is The Theme

No one was more surprised than Jim Long when the Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association (AMPPIA) voted him in as President at that group's last annual general meeting in October — he wasn't even there. Jim was tied up with other business when the membership voted him in an absentia, replacing former President, Ron Brown.

The film industry in Alberta is still relatively new, undergoing what Jim

describes as "growing pains," and he himself is not untypical of the cross-section of up and coming Alberta producers — people who have left the sheltering wings of large corporations such as CBC or ACCESS to venture out on their own. Jim began his media involvement in 1961 as a telecine operator at CHCA-TV in Red Deer, Alberta, where he ended up as Director of Client Services. After moving to CBC TV in Edmonton, he became a writer in the promotion department for five years, then went on to the position of Production Assistant for another five years, a role which brought

him into closer contact with the actual functions of directing a variety of programs, including film documentaries.

After a year of freelance work, which included directing, camera, sound, and film editing, Jim ventured into the world of the independent production company, as Secretary-Treasurer of Interquack Productions Ltd. He is now President and driving force of the one-man operation. But he is not alone: he shares office space with Tinsel and Sham Productions, another Edmonton company. It's a friendly office, spacious and sunlit, lush with hanging plants. Interaction between the two companies is evident, from quick consultations between the two presidents, to shared secretarial staff, right down to the communal coffee urn. "We're small, and we can't do everything at once," Jim explains. "So if one of us is out filming, the other can be doing the deskwork; or we may help each other round up the necessary craftspeople for a project. But we are independent — we still compete on the same bids."

It is this type of cooperative camaraderie which emerges from many Alberta film companies and is an ambiance into which Jim fits well. The bearded, gentle-mannered, 36-year-old shows none of the self-importance one might expect from a busy producer. He is low-key, casual in a T-shirt, and completely unpretentious. There is no hype, no pressure, no pushiness: "Maybe you could just watch me work instead of interviewing me," was his initial reaction to talking about himself. He is an outdoors man, who loves fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing and so on, but finds little time for them with Interquack to tend to. Now, with the added duties of AMPIA, he is philosophically resigned to having even less. "AMPIA work can take up to three days a week; and this year we are going to be very busy. During its first five years, AMPIA was more or less a vehicle of communication, or a lobby, to make the government aware of what is going on and what is needed by the film community here. Now, it is becoming an effective industrial organization. We have to establish an ongoing system of communication," he explains; and there is going to be a lot of groundwork involved.

Communication is a theme that comes up a lot in Jim's conversation. Previously, as a member of the AMPIA board of directors, his main effort

was to work on a by-law revision which would allow independent craftsmen (that is, not employed either by TV or by government) to have a direct voice in the affairs of the organization; a voice which they did not previously have.

And, communication has been the most satisfying aspect of Jim's past film work. "Any film that really gets through to the audience is satisfying. Entertainment shows are always fun to do, because you can see the effect right away. And motivational films are rewarding; you communicate to a specific audience with emotion; if you can affect them positively, it is a good feeling." Jim has worked in many different functions on virtually dozens of production films for TV, government, and the private sector.

Jim Long is already busy with plans for two upcoming AMPIA projects; tentatively in February, there will be a series of sessions for filmmakers on the business aspects of the industry — marketing, legalities, and so on, probably to be held in Edmonton; and later, early in May, AMPIA plans a basic film workshop dealing with such facets as camera, sound, continuity, lighting, and so on. Participants in the seminar will be broken up into several film crews, each one producing a film based on one script.

As far as Jim's goal for his coming year as President of AMPIA, he sums it up by saying he hopes to be able to promote a positive climate for growth of the film industry in Alberta.

Martha Jones

lisa langlois

eating her cake

Lisa Langlois is 19 and looks the role of ingénue. She's young, fresh-faced, smiles easily, and is generally bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. She is also a determined and serious actress who knows what she wants, and will probably get it.

She has been working professionally for two years now, ever since a dance teacher suggested that she find an agent. Probably best known by the general public for her work in commercials — Quench, Get Cracking, pushing burgers and fries under the ubiquitous golden arches of McDonaldland — and for roles in several television dramas and documentaries, she has also in the past year and a half, had supporting roles in three feature films, *Blood Relatives* and *Violette Nozière* by Claude Chabrol and most recently finished shooting on Nicolas Gessner's *It Rained All Night the Day I Left*, shot in Montreal and Israel, and in which her role is pivotal.



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In addition to her training in dance, as a girl Lisa got involved in anything theatrical she could find — from school and community plays and musicals to Grey Cup half-time shows. She was also first runner-up in the Miss Teen Canada pageant of 1973.

Lisa always wanted to be an actress, “to perform. I love entertaining, I love being a ham.” She has taken some acting classes, but most of her training has been on the job. She auditioned for her role in *Blood Relatives* (competing with Sissy Spacek and Jodi Foster) and Chabrol then offered her the role of Isabelle Huppert’s schoolgirl friend in *Violette Nozière*. Then came the offer for *It Rained All Night...* and — “knock on wood” — there are already two potential film roles on her horizon — one in January and the other for summer '79.

The youngest child of five and the only girl, Lisa grew up in Dundas, Ontario where she was raised by and still lives with her mother. Schooled in French, they spoke English at home. Although she likes small town life and wants to stay close to her family, Lisa longs for the excitement of big city life and more travel. If she could have her way she’d take her family, friends, dog, and half her Dundas household with her wherever she goes. “I want to have my cake and eat it too,” she says cheerfully. Although she’s alone a lot, lives “out of a suitcase and can’t say a definite yes or no” to any plans with friends, she doesn’t consider these as sacrifices she has to make. “I’ll do anything for my job. It would bother me about letting my friends down... But,” she emphasizes, with no regret, “I love my job.”

This doesn’t, however, prevent her from being nervous. She needs support and encouragement in her work and is always concerned about doing “a good job.” She likes the spontaneous energy of acting for film, but “in film you are not really in control of your performance because they might take two or three takes... and it’s not you who chooses.” So far though, she has agreed with every choice her directors have made.

“Right now I’m working and I’m thinking, well, what comes after this? You never know whether this will be your last job or whether there will be more that will come. It kills you when you are not working and it kills you while you are working, ‘cause when you are not working you are thinking,

what am I going to do?, but while you are working you are thinking, well after this film — what happens...? ...Acting is insecure. Your whole life is insecurity. You have to be a very strong character to deal with it...”

Lisa has, so far, the strength. She also has the wholehearted support of her family. As for the roles she has been given, she says, “I’m getting enough variety, but I am not satisfied with the variety I am getting.” Still, she is willing to pay her dues. Alert and thoughtful, she regards each role as a learning experience and picks up what she can from the more experienced professionals around her, confident that with each passing year her own life experiences will be richer and the roles available to her will multiply. “My biggest problem right now is that I look too innocent. I only get cast for certain types of roles.” She prefers not to wear make-up for film — “I don’t want to look like a doll on screen.”

Her friends think acting on a film set is very glamorous. “It’s not... All you do is sit and wait. You have to be very patient.”

Lisa has had plenty of work in Canada thus far and wants the feast to continue, but is anxious to further her career. “I’ll go wherever I can work and wherever it can help my craft... Since I’ve been in the film industry I don’t think of nationality as much as I used to. I used to think, well I’m Canadian... but now I consider myself as international. I don’t consider boundaries anymore, or borders... I don’t think, now I’m doing a Canadian film or, now I’m doing a French film. I’m an actress — I’m acting.”

Spend a few hours with Lisa — she is 19 and much like many other young women her age, though she has more patience and direction than most. Then watch her at work — she not only admires discipline in others, she practices it herself. Acting is all she wants to do and she gives it her professional all.

Has a professional acting career changed Lisa Langlois? Not essentially. “I’m more worldly now... and my writing is more colorful.” Acting is unquestionably her first love but she likes to write too and can foresee herself doing a screenplay sometime in the future. “I’ll do it in my free time,” she explains, then pauses to re-think what she has said. “Free time!?” If Lisa has anything to do with it, she won’t have any.

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