

# Alan Kattelle Oral History Project

August 2003

Funded by a grant from the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA).

## **Project Overview:**

During the AMIA conference in November 2002, a number of attendees and members of the AMIA Small Gauge / Amateur Film Interest Group attended an open house at Alan Kattelle's home in Hudson, a small town near Boston, MA. Alan showed guests his extensive collection of amateur cameras, and entertained them with his vast knowledge of home movie history and technology. Many guests noted later that the Kattelle Open House was a highlight of the 2002 AMIA conference.

Following the gathering at the Kattelle home in 2002, members of the AMIA Small Gauge / Amateur Film Interest Group decided that an oral history should be conducted with Alan. The group submitted an official proposal to the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), which funded the project in 2003. The goal of the oral history project was to record Alan as he spoke about his collection of equipment, his knowledge of amateur film, and his experience with small gauge formats.

The Small Gauge / Amateur Film Interest Group is committed to making the information in this oral history accessible to a wider audience, especially to those who haven't had the opportunity to visit with Alan in person. As an elder in our community, Alan's

experiences are invaluable to those who are committed to the study and preservation of small-gauge film. The oral history project will allow some of Alan's knowledge to be passed on to future generations of scholars and archivists.

### **Biographical Information:**

Alan Kattelle is a retired engineer and business executive who has been collecting, writing and lecturing about amateur motion picture equipment for twenty-five years. Surely the most active octogenarian AMIA member (if not the only one), he is a respected member of the Small Gauge / Amateur Film Interest Group, and has served as an advisor and mentor to a number of archivists and AMIA members. His articles have appeared in numerous collectors' society journals, as well as the *Journal of Film and Video*, *Film History*, and the *AMIA Newsletter*. He is a charter member and past president of the Photographic Historical Society of New England (PHSNE), co-founder and past president of the Movie Machine Society, and is on the advisory board of Northeast Historic Film. His expertise in amateur film and equipment is unparalleled.

Alan collects rare and obsolete equipment of all amateur film gauges, from 8mm to 28mm. A number of the objects in his collection are quite rare; the collection includes one-of-a-kind prototypes as well as once-popular camera and projector models. Alan's knowledge of the collection ranges from the mechanical to the anecdotal, encompassing the technical and cultural significance of amateur filmmaking in the twentieth century. The oral history project is meant to accompany and enhance the information and documentation in Alan's book, *Home Movies: A History of the American Industry, 1897 – 1979*. Published in 2000, the book is an excellent resource for archivists and researchers involved with small-gauge and amateur film. In a 2001 review of the book in *The Moving Image*, Jan Christopher Horak wrote: "I know of no other publication that brings together so much easily accessible and understandable technical information on small gauge issues."

**Project Guidelines:**

This oral history project was conducted according to guidelines set by the Center for Oral History at the University of Connecticut.

Established in 1968, the Center is a respected leader in the oral history field. Transcription services were provided by the Center's TAPESCRIBE service.

This oral history was conducted by Andrea McCarty and facilitated by Chad Hunter. Both Andrea and Chad are members of the Small Gauge / Amateur Film Interest Group. The interviews were recorded onto standard audiocassette and onto miniDV cassettes. Copies of the audio- and videorecordings reside at Northeast Historic Film in Bucksport, Maine, at the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY and at the offices of AMIA in Los Angeles, California.