

Crestview film sleuth honored

Film archives advocate saluted by Society of American Archivists

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There are hundreds of thousands of great documentary films stored in the vault of the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Md. Thanks to Crestview author Phillip W. Stewart, finding a particular reel stashed among miles and miles of celluloid is much easier.

Subjects among the more than 360,000 reels include U.S. Army Signal Corps battlefield films, decades of Universal Newsreels and corporate films tracing the rise of America's industrial might.

For his research and documentation efforts, the local film sleuth was named a 2012 recipient of the J. Franklin Jameson Archival Advocacy Award given by the Society of American Archivists (SAA).

"The award honors an individual, institution or organization that promotes greater public awareness, appreciation or support of archives," the society stated in a press release.

The award is named for noted American historian J. Franklin Jameson. Stewart is one of three recipients to receive the award in 2012.

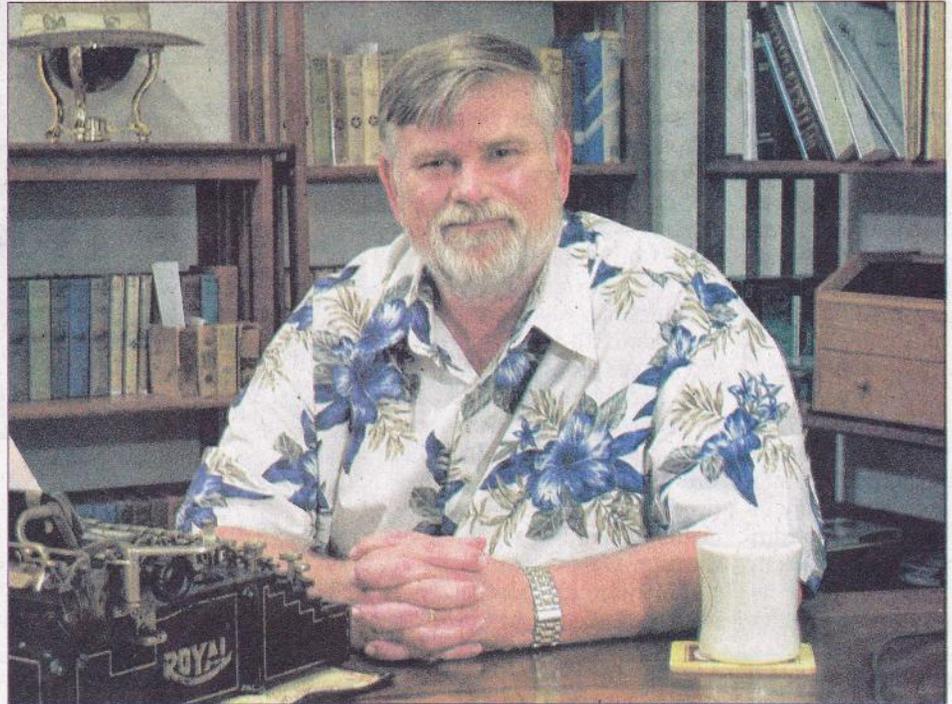
"It did come as a surprise," Stewart said. "I was pleasantly pleased, I might add."

Stewart has published eight books that assist writers, researchers, historians, film and video makers, content producers and the public in finding historically rich, celluloid-based moving images preserved in the motion picture holdings of the National Archives and Records Administration.

"From the generic (what's in the vault and how do you find it) to the specific (story titles of the Universal Newsreels), and the detailed (scene-by-scene descriptions of 36 World War I aviation titles), Stewart's publications inform and invite others to explore America's film vault," an SAA release stated.

Stewart's titles include "America's Film Vault, A Reference Guide to the Motion Pictures held by the U.S. Archives," "Battlefilm, U.S. Army Signal Corps Motion Pictures of the Great War;" and "Aerial Aces of the Universal Newsreel, A Researcher's Guide to the Aviation Related Stories Released Nationally by Universal Pictures, 1929-1931."

Stewart and his wife Margaret settled in Crestview from New Jersey when he took a civilian job at Eglin Air Force Base's Parks Photo Lab until he got "caught in downsiz-



SPECIAL TO THE NEW BULLETIN

Crestview resident Phillip Stewart has been awarded a national award by the Society of American Archivists for his guide to the National Archives and Records Administration's documentary film collections.

ing last December," he said.

The loss of his Eglin job gave Stewart time to plunge into writing more guides to the national film archives.

"For every door that slams in my face, a window opens somewhere," he said. "I'm working on a World War II book, but it'll be years before I get through all that stuff. I always have three or four projects going. I'm working on another World War I book. It'll be 'Battlefilm II.'"

Stewart's website, www.pwstewart.com, explains his passion for archiving America's documentary film heritage.

"The wealth of visual information is almost overwhelming," the website states. "This wide-ranging 108,600-plus title film collection, made by or for Uncle Sam, along with a healthy sprinkling of donated films, superbly documents American activities in peace and at war throughout the 20th century. To me, a vast majority of this footage is Americana in motion.

"However, there is a problem. From my point of view, the problem is that most citizens of our great country do not know this extraordinary collection even exists,

that they can research the collection free (at NARA or via the web), and that viewing titles is also free with a visit to College Park."

Stewart's focus is now on an incredible film collection that dropped into the NARA lap but has never been properly documented.

"My latest project is the Henry Ford Collection," he said. "Ford Motor Company gave it to National Archives, which never completed the cataloguing process. I started going through films and catalogs and writing descriptors. Volume I, 1914-21, is complete. It's all enough to keep me rather busy now that I retired from Eglin."

Stewart plans to take a break from cataloguing films and writing about them to accept the Society of American Archivists' award during the society's annual meeting, held this year in San Diego Aug. 6-11. Then it's back to writing.

"I kind of made it my passion," Stewart said. "There's a lot of film archives out there. We as American citizens own it. We ought to know about it, and we ought to use it."

