

## As It Is – September 17, 2013

From VOA Learning English, welcome to As It Is. I'm Steve Ember.

Today we tell about the efforts of scientists in the United States to help save early photographs from being lost forever.

We'll hear about one man's campaign to help bring peace to the Middle East.

Finally...

General: "Who are you?"

Hawkeye: "Uh, Captain Benjamin Franklin Pierce. Who're you, Sarge?"

General: "What do you think this star means?"

Hawkeye: "You're Tinkerbell?"

We remember the anniversary of the opening of the long running television program "M\*A\*S\*H. The series about the adventures of doctors and nurses during the Korean War was broadcast for 11 years. And its repeats will probably run forever.

But first, all of us who love photography in its many forms may want to take just a moment, before pressing that shutter button for your next picture, to look back...way back...to the middle of the 1800s.

## **Smile, but hold very, very still – Saving the earliest photographs...**

The invention of the daguerreotype in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to modern photography. With daguerreotypes, people could sit for just a few minutes while their image was captured in what is now known as a photograph. Before that, people had to sit long hours for an artist to paint a picture.

America's Smithsonian Institution is now working with the Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago to study daguerreotypes. Scientists say these early photos are in danger of being lost forever.

The young woman in one daguerreotype they're working on was most likely a teenager or in her early 20s when the picture was made. Her image was captured on a copper plate with finely polished, shining silver in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

"It was the first time you could go into a studio and have your photograph taken, and you could put it up somewhere and show it off."

That's Daniel Weinberg. He works at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago. He has studied many daguerreotypes. He says they are popular with collectors and historians alike.

“They’re luminous, and they’re almost three dimensional, and you almost want to step into one.”

He also says daguerreotypes were one of a kind, not meant to be reproduced like current photographs. Louis Daguerre of France was the inventor of this first photographic process. The technology was very popular in the United States in the middle of the 1800s.

“It spread like wildfire in the United States. There were hundreds of thousands of daguerreotypes made over a 20-year span.”

Ed Vicenzi is a researcher with the Smithsonian Institution. Many of the most important daguerreotypes are now stored at the Smithsonian and in the collections of the United States Library of Congress.

The images include the mysterious young woman we spoke of earlier. Ed Vicenzi calls her “Clara,” although her real name is unknown.

“We don’t know her name, her family, the state she’s from.”

What he does know is that the image is in danger of being lost in the future unless something is done to stop the breakdown of its chemical makeup.

“Daguerreotypes are actually made up of a bunch of nanoparticles on the surface that scatter the light and this is in some ways similar to the way high technology devices are made today, so we’re also interested in what did 19<sup>th</sup> century photographers know about nanotechnology unwittingly.”

“They were made at a time when the concept of nanotechnology, even the word at that time didn’t exist.”

Physicist Volker Rose is working with Ed Vicenzi at the Argonne National Laboratory. They are using the laboratory’s Advanced Photon Source to learn more about the daguerreotype.

“The technology that’s available at the Advanced Photon Source will allow me to study the very earliest stages of degradation of daguerreotype plates. They corrode over time, not quickly necessarily, but we need to learn the chemical mechanisms in order to understand how we can preserve these objects for the future.”

Ed Vicenzi hopes his efforts at Argonne will provide the answers historians and collectors need to save these images of the past. He says this will make it possible for future generations to study, understand and appreciate what life was like in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It’s As It Is from VOA Learning English. I’m Steve Ember.

## **Sitting down together in the Middle East...**

An American political scientist, lawyer and activist works continually to try to help bring peace to the Middle East. For the last eight years, Frank Romano has been trying to resolve the long conflict between Israel and the Palestinians – but not at the negotiating table. Instead, Mr. Romano organizes events that bring people together to get to know one another.

Since 2005, he has made more than 40 trips to Israel and the West Bank. His work there joins Jews, Christians and Muslims for discussions. Avi Arditti tells us more.

The talks are meant to create understanding between members of different religions.

“Some people even tell me I’m wasting my time talking about religion because this is not about religion, the conflict is about historical claims to land, not religion.”

Still, the attorney and peace activist says religion is a part of the conflict. And, he says misunderstanding and a lack of communication among religious groups have made it more difficult to end the conflict. He organizes discussions among faiths and projects to change that.

In these meetings, small groups of people of different religions get together to eat, listen to music and talk about themselves, their families and life. Mr. Romano describes what takes place:

“Now we get through ideology a little bit. The Christian says, ‘They don’t accept Jesus as their savior like I do.’ Then the Muslim will come out and say, ‘They don’t understand Mohamed the way I do.’ And the Jew will say, ‘They don’t have the same impression of Moses as we do.’ I say ‘OK. Let’s just pick the Torah, the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Quran and we’ll just look at them.’ ”

After an hour or two, Mr. Romano says the participants are extremely surprised. They know in theory that there are similarities in their faith.

“When they see it in writing, it brings home the points that they are not as different as their religious and some political leaders lead them to believe.”

Mr. Romano says they may be coming to think that perhaps they do share the same God. I’m Avi Arditti.

## And remembering the first episode of TV's M\*A\*S\*H...

[Theme from M\*A\*S\*H]

September 17, 1972 saw the first broadcast of one of the most popular shows ever to appear on television.



Alan Alda as Hawkeye in M\*A\*S\*H

Frank Burns: "You're both a disgrace to this outfit."

Hawkeye: "Aw, come on, Frank. We've all had twelve straight hours of meatball surgery in there."

Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan: "You're dismissed!"

Hawkeye: "Thanks, Mother. We gotta get up early anyway and work on MacArthur's hernia."

The long-running series M\*A\*S\*H told the adventures of American doctors and nurses serving in a mobile Army field hospital during the Korean War, fought from 1950 to 1953. The letters stood for Mobile Army Surgical Hospital.

Critics sometimes called the show “a serious sit com” – That’s TV-speak for situation comedy.

Hawkeye: “It’s inhuman to serve the same food day after day. The Geneva Convention prohibits the killing of our tastebuds.”

Trapper John: “Easy...”

The program made fun of nearly everything. But it also showed people doing their best, working against human suffering and death under dangerous wartime conditions.

Alan Alda, Mike Farrell, Harry Morgan, and Loretta Swit were among a number of stars during most of the program’s 11 seasons. Viewers saw the final program of M\*A\*S\*H on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1983. But repeats of the shows are seen on television even today.

Voice over public address system: “Five minutes ago, at 10:01 this morning, the truce was signed in Panmunjom. The hostilities will end twelve hours from now at 10 o’clock. The war is over!” [Cheering]

As It Is is a production of VOA Learning English. I’m Steve Ember. Thanks for joining us.