

Documentary filmmaker has philosophical view of his life

Vladimir Kabelik is a modest man, a spiritual and creative man. He wears his emigre status like a cloak. There is an air of sadness about him-or maybe it's just 'no nonsense'.

"You live through tough moments in your life," he explained, "and it gives you a sort of buffer zone around you."

Born in Zlin, Czechoslovakia some 43 years ago, the documentary-maker and teacher of television production at Sheridan College escaped with his wife and children from their 'occupied' homeland in 1981. It was a difficult decision to leave-and a frightening, emotional experience. But Mr. Kabelik is not a man to rush into things.

"I don't like to jump to conclusions," he said recently in precise, though heavily-accented English.

He is speaking in general terms. "I am not looking for big victories. My goals are not high-high. I think if one goes in the right direction, step by step in small steps, the only thing you must not do is stop. In a few years, when you look back, it is a great distance. This is my philosophy."

It took him 18 months to complete his most recent documentary which aired this summer on Vision TV. The feature-length video, "a filmmaker's search for reincarnation" is titled, "Coming Home." Through interviews, Kabelik surveys the beliefs of various religious



Profile
Karen ALTON

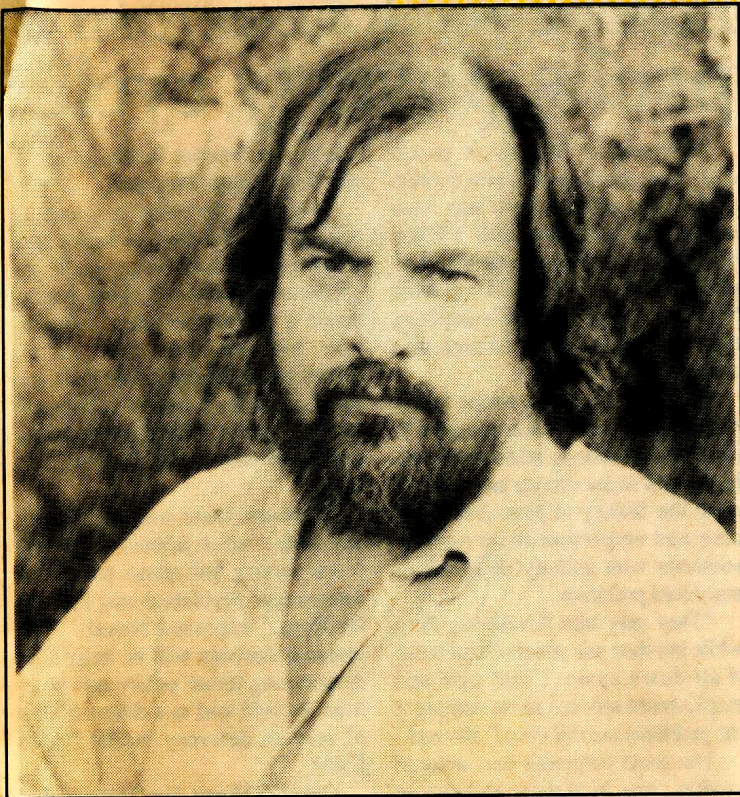
denominations on the issue of 'life after life.' He examines the practice of 'past lives regression therapy' through hypnosis and explores the nature of near-death experiences.

A fascinating topic. Still, the artist himself says, "Lots of people can't handle it."

He is not worried. Realistically, he commented, "You are never able to satisfy everybody." (So you must satisfy yourself.)

"Documentary makers are

(See 'Instructor' page 13)



Vladimir Kabelik: at home in Canada.

(Photo by Rizio Vertolli)

Instructor's second love is photography

(Continued from page 1)

always striving to deliver something with a message," Kabelik explained. "Mostly what you see on television is entertainment and a message may come along only in a secondary way. I am not in the business because of entertainment. I am in it to solve problems and explore themes."

"There is nothing wrong with finding more interesting ways to put your message across," he added, "but we all have our personal limits-as to what is acceptable. We have different tastes. Film is not like making cars-each one is different, each filmmaker is different. We have a point (if we are honest), beyond which we will not go (to sell an idea)."

Kabelik comes from a line of filmmakers-both his father and grandfather were bitten by the bug. He calls it a disease.

"Yes," he said with cheerful cynicism. "I was the third idiot."

Raised in the beautiful city of Prague, Vladimir studied at the Prague Academy of Film and Television Arts. He married his wife Eva and the couple had two sons, David and Adam (now 18 and 14), while Vladimir worked as a director and writer in the Kratiky Film studio. As a freelancer, he produced for Czech TV and Radio Prague. But it was a time of occupation and oppression in his country. By 1976, the repressive atmosphere became unbearable for the filmmaker.

"The system was melting down-crushed by circumstances. I realized we were at a dead-end," he said. "When you see your friends detained by the authorities and kicked out of the country, then you start to think seriously about your own goals in life and the future of your kids."

It took the family four years to plan and execute their escape through Hungary and Yugoslavia to Austria and then Switzerland, where they were granted political asylum.

But Canada was always their final destination, both Eva and Vladimir maintained. They believed this country to be a free and democratic country and they knew a core of Czech intellectuals had already settled in Toronto.

Declared the soft-spoken Kabelik, "I felt intuitively, if this country was bad, these people (Czech intellectuals) would not be here."

The filmmaker has few regrets-and no complaints-although he did say with a hint of lost illusions, "Dreams are dreams and reality is reality. We cannot change it."

The Kabeliks have lived in Oakville since 1986. It is a cosy town, they say, a nice, safe place to raise a family. Still, they miss Prague sometimes, the architecture dating back a

thousand years and the culture.

"Prague has a certain magic," said Kabelik. "I do miss it, but I do not cry. I find solace in the lake here-so quiet and beautiful."

Though he has been a professor at Sheridan College for a decade, Vladimir Kabelik continues to grow into his job.

He said ironically, "I started to understand the job lately. At first I thought my job was to teach film and television-and it is-but I have come to the conclusion that film and TV will pass. What remains are the people, their thoughts and their spiritual strength."

"It would be a sad story to teach film and television," he added, "and not to have some personal attachments. Not to share values and experience. To me, that makes no sense."

As for his own craft, which he is encouraged to pursue as much as ever, "I like what I am doing. It is beautiful but exhausting and sometimes scary."

"My second love is photography," he said. "When I am tired of film and TV-and I am sometimes-I can always call on 'stills' and they will bring something nice inside."

"In my early years," he added, "I learned more about art from photographers than from filmmakers."

While he admits the broadcasting business is an expanding one, it is also constantly changing. In his career he

has moved from film to video tape and is now making the transition to computer disks. It takes a flexible mind to make these leaps in technology and tools. Only a small percentage of students in his course, he feared, would actually end up making a living in the field in the long-run.

"They will go through cruel disappointments," he noted, cautioning all to 'think three times' before starting out.

Until recently, Kabelik was a partner in a commercial TV enterprise called Cutaway Productions. It was a useful money-maker, he said. Last year, however, he turned his back on commercial TV to concentrate on more meaningful and thoughtful documentaries for his own company, Artcore Productions. He knows this will mean less money but he's hoping for more personal satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Vladimir's wife Eva, who was a lawyer in what is now the Czech Republic, is hoping to find success in her new career as a maker of ceramics. The couple would love to have a dual show at a local gallery featuring Eva's ceramic art objects and Vladimir's photographs. (This dream may become a reality.)

"For me what is important is the present," said the Czech expatriate, "to be lived without big mistakes-and with as much honesty as possible."