



News

When television began in WA, the tools for news-gathering were few and expensive; initiative was the key to getting the big stories in Perth.

Darcy Farrell was Channel 7's first news director, the man who put the first 15-minute news bulletin to air. And the difference, he says, between what he had to work with and what is common in newsrooms today is as vast as that between a Tiger Moth and an F18 fighter jet.

Think of it this way. When American president John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas, Texas, in 1963, there was just 26 seconds of footage available, recorded by Abraham Zapruder on his 8mm film camera. Footage of the fateful presidential motorcade in Dallas took 24 hours to reach Perth, via Sydney, before it was shown.

When the Twin Towers came down 38 years later, the vision, from professionals, from private citizens, from tourists with a handycam, was whizzed around the world in seconds. At one of the State's most high-profile recent court cases, crucial evidence came from the camera in a mobile phone. Such is the speed in development of visual communication.

But back in 1959, Seven's newsroom had three new 16mm film cameras with 400ft (122m) magazines and a lot of enthusiasm. "At the time, there were probably only a handful of film cameras, mostly 8mm, in the whole city," Mr Farrell said. Not that there were many television sets, either.

Mr Farrell was one of the handful of young enthusiasts who had grasped the enormity of TV's future. And considering a fair number of the original staff members

The early days of news — David Farr reads and film editor Jim Healy changes records, cued by Darcy Farrell. The cameramen are Digby Milner and Tom Hall, and the program is a news review being recorded at Newspaper House, home of WA Newspapers.