

THIS MONTH IN THE HISTORY OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN PBS

SEPTEMBER: **COLOR** Comes to Rocky Mountain PBS

by Laura Sampson | Founder, Station's Archived Memories

One of the biggest advancements in television broadcasting was the transition from black and white to **COLOR**. Rocky Mountain PBS (then known as KRMA-TV, Channel Six) was one of the first educational stations to telecast in color.

In December 1965, the Denver School Board (licensee to KRMA-TV) applied to the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare for funds to telecast in **COLOR**. The application was approved on February 18, 1966.



Scotty Cullen

The total cost to convert to color was estimated to be \$250,442. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare granted KRMA \$187,881 to purchase the necessary equipment to transmit, tape and film programs in color. The remaining money was raised from local sources. No funds were included for color video cameras, so locally filmed programs continued in black and white.

John "Scotty" Cullen, Chief Engineer of KRMA-TV, directed a 10-month project to modify and expand KRMA's facilities to convert to **COLOR**. When the conversion was completed, it permitted film, slides and videotape to be shown in color.

KRMA announced in November 1966 that approximately 20% of its television schedule after 5 p.m. would be broadcast in **COLOR** with more color programming to be added as black and white series on the air ran their course. The funds the station had at its disposal at that time did not allow it to switch to a complete color schedule.

On December 26, 1966, KRMA-TV began telecasting approximately 25% of its evening programs in color.

The first full **COLOR** local program produced by Rocky Mountain PBS aired on February 2, 1967. It was a segment of the popular art series, "Insight." The half-hour production took viewers on a guided tour of the Denver Art Museum's "School of Paris" exhibit that featured works of Picasso, Braque, Matisse and other 20th century masters.



KRMA's first color camera

Producer-director, Dave Griffiths and cinematographer, Carlos Seegmiller, beautifully revealed the most minute details of each painting allowing viewers to truly experience and explore the

artwork. Henry James, curator of the museum's Living Arts Center, hosted and narrated the series.

In **September 1967**, KRMA-TV (Rocky Mountain PBS) began using a **COLOR** camera that allowed the transmission of live programs in color. This, in addition to the color equipment that was purchased the previous year, finally enabled KRMA to produce any type of show in color.

When interviewed by Station's Archived Memories, Bill Clarke, a former KRMA camera operator, said, "I remember when Channel 6 got its first color camera. Oh man, were people yanked about that. That was a big deal. It meant you had to change some of your lighting and you had to give more thought to the air conditioning in the studio because, quite frankly, those things were very, very sensitive."

Rick Schmidt, another former KRMA production staff from 1961-1977 said, "When I first started at Channel 6, all we had was black and white and we were so excited when we got a color camera. We only had one to begin with, one color camera. We were all so excited to do something in **COLOR**."

*Research for this article was made possible by STATION'S ARCHIVED MEMORIES (SAM). Station's Archived Memories serves the past, present, and future of Rocky Mountain PBS by assuring that the history of the station and its importance to the Colorado community will survive for generations to come. SAM is a volunteer-driven project preserving the history of Rocky Mountain PBS. To learn more about the station's history and how to research, volunteer or donate items to the archives, please visit www.RMPBS.org/SAM, contact the SAM office at Rocky Mountain PBS **303-620-5734** or email SAM@rmpbs.org.*