

OBITUARY

Father of U of R film department dies

By Leader-Post staff

Academy Award winner Jean (Hans) Oser, 94, who was instrumental in establishing the University of Regina's film department and the Saskatchewan Filmpool Co-operative died Wednesday.

A private burial service was held Monday, however a memorial celebration of his life will be held next month.

"He was an absolute inspiration to my life personally, the film industry and the province as a whole," said Valerie Creighton, CEO of Saskatchewan Film and Video Development Corporation.

"He was an enigmatic man, he was humorous, he was full of life and he was absolutely an encyclopedia of film knowledge and information," she said.

His greatest legacy was the hundreds of film students he taught, mentored and encouraged to pursue their life-long passion for the cinema and his contributions to the film industry in Saskatchewan, said university film professor Christine Ramsay.

"Twenty people would be registered for his film class and 100 would show up just to hear his lectures. He had a knack of making film history come alive," Ramsay said.

Born in Strasbourg, Alsace, and raised in Berlin, Oser was introduced to show business at an early age by his parents. His career as a film editor, teacher and mentor in the film industry began in the late 1920s. In Europe, he was a specialist, becoming one of the first

renowned editors in sound film and worked on some of the classic films of European cinema.

He left Germany in 1932 and served in the French Foreign Legion station in Morocco until his discharge following an accident in which a gun exploded in his hands.

In the mid-1940s, Oser and his wife Ellen Ferra emigrated to the U.S. where he worked as an editor for Paramount Pictures as well as served in the U.S. army in the motion picture unit.

In 1953, Oser won an Academy Award for his short film, *Light in the Window*, a profile of painter Jan Vermeer.

At the urging of a friend, Oser left the bright lights of New York in the early 1970s and came to Regina to help establish a film department at the university. In 1989 the university granted him the title of Professor Emeritus and in 1990 he was presented with the Saskatchewan Arts Board lifetime award for excellence in the arts.

Saskatchewan's film industry wouldn't exist today if it weren't for Oser's contributions, said award-winning film producer and former student Larry Bauman, head of Camera West Film Associates Ltd.

Oser tried to instill his passion

in his students, said friend Belinda New, who produced *A History of World Cinema — A Personal View By Jean Oser*.

"If you asked him about his Oscar he would just sort of brush it aside more or less because he didn't care as much about that as he did about teaching.

"He loved the students; he loved to create 'film nuts,'" New said.