Foreword

In 1981, my school friend Ian Frankland brought a curiously thick book for us to see. It was called Der Kampf im Westen. Inside the covers were compartments that held 100 black-and-white photographs of German soldiers from World War II. I flipped through these pictures with the dismissive eye common to any 13-year-old looking at old stuff. The only thing I wondered about was why the pictures were printed in pairs. My friend handed me a folding metal picture holder that came with the book, and showed me how to use it. I had never seen a stereoscope before and was not prepared for the transportation I experienced when I saw the pair of images stereoscopically for the first time. I was no longer looking at “old stuff,” but was faced with a spatial reality of living people, like myself (from another time and place), but now as if I was one of them standing right there in the trenches.

As a visual artist, this experience stayed with me even though I did not fully understand the process that made the pictures. Ten years later, I found myself in a holography class run by Professor Martin Richardson at the Royal College of Art in London. As he explained stereoscopy, the German soldier pictures from Der Kampf im Westen jumped from my memory. I finally understood what I had seen, and even more exciting was that now I understood it, I could make my very own pictures in three-dimensional pictures. Thank you, Martin.

During my time at the Royal College of Art, I made several holograms. A favourite one depicts the pouring of 1000 needles over my motorcycle helmet clad head. At the same time, I was also experimenting with stereographic transparencies using a custom-made stereo camera rig that I had cobbled together. I graduated from the Royal College with a Master’s degree in furniture design, but it was that one day in the holographic laboratory that turned my interest in stereoscopic imaging into a lifelong vocation.

Somehow, through luck and my homegrown imaging skills, three-dimensional imaging became centre stage in my life during 2005 when I worked on the 3-D version of Disney’s animated classic, Chicken Little. In fact, this was the first digitally projected stereoscopic movie, and it opened the doors for the flood of stereoscopic imaging that surrounds us today; the rest is history.

I hope that Martin Richardson’s book inspires you to start making great 3-D because it definitely inspires me!

Phil Captain 3-D McNally
Disney Digital 3-D, USA