



KENTUCKY

Alumni

FALL 2008

Brian Cury
A Watchful Eye

UK
Alumni Association
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY



>>> Keeping A Watchful Eye:
Brian Cury combines his love for
movies with fascination for computers.
By Beverly Bell

Photos: © 2008 Steve Hockstein

Flocks of sunlight glisten on the steely blue waters off of Waikiki Beach in Hawaii. Hundreds of people swim in the ocean and walk along the sand, enjoying the perfect 84 degree day. As slender palm trees sway in the breeze and the tide laps at the shore, it's obvious why they call this land paradise.

Click

A horse-drawn carriage moves slowly through the jammed intersection of St. Peter and Bourbon Streets in the New Orleans French Quarter. Tourists pass in front of the famous Cat's Meow, the U.S. birthplace of karaoke. As the night gets later, the crowds get thicker and the Big Easy shows once more why "laissez le bon temps roulet" is the city's mantra.

Click

In northern Arizona, the Chapel of the Holy Cross juts out from one of the buttes of Sedona. Standing some 250 feet above the valley, the chapel is literally wedged in the red rock. The marvel of its architecture is rivaled only by the sense of awe it inspires and the beauty of the surrounding flat bluffs.

Click

Where do *you* want to go? The barrier islands of South Carolina? Trafalgar Square in London? Or how about the historic city centre of Prague? Whatever destination whispers to you, there's a good chance that 1981 University of Kentucky graduate Brian Cury can take you there.

With a click of your computer mouse, Cury's company, EarthCam Inc., makes it possible for you to visit places you might not ever get to see in person. Live feeds over the Internet bring exotic locations right into your living room and even to your mobile phone.

But that's only one part of EarthCam. A major and rapidly growing revenue stream at the New Jersey-based operation comes from selling technologies to international industries and government agencies, for everything from documenting large construction projects to providing real-time traffic data. The third segment of the business speaks to the changed world since September 11, 2001: EarthCam provides security cameras to cities and corporations in the United States and beyond.

When Cury created his company in 1996, he meshed his love for movies, his admiration for Hollywood innovators and his fascination with computers. At a time when many were still trying to figure out exactly what the World Wide Web was, Cury recognized that the Internet was the next great frontier. He established EarthCam in 1996, pioneering the Webcam industry. Today the company is recognized as the leading international technology and product provider of Internet-based Webcam monitoring.

Love at First Sight

It would be fair to say that Cury has watched the world through the lens of a camera for most of his life. Beginning when he was just a child growing up in New Jersey, he made short films with an 8mm camera. In those days, he knew two things for certain: movies were his favorite hobby and one day, he would attend UK.

Family ties brought Cury's father, Buddy, and brother, Bruce, from Brooklyn, N.Y., to the Commonwealth, where they attended UK. Cury also has other family members who attended UK, he says, including cousins and aunts and uncles.

"It was a family tradition," Cury says. "While growing up, I was told that I was going to the University of Kentucky." Cury's first

visit to the campus was at freshman advising. "A few weeks later, I was on a plane to Lexington."

Initially, Cury majored in computer science, but after explaining his interests to the dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, Cury was able to thrive with a more customized academic track in film and television, making the dean's list.

From there, it was on to graduate school at New York University. After stints with "Saturday Night Live" and MTV Networks in various capacities, Cury created his own television production company. His goal of making movies and TV shows was on track, except for one thing: he realized he needed a business where he had more control over the finished product. In television, there were too many other people determining his future. So he turned his focus to technology and EarthCam was born.

Altered Paradigm

"A lot of things changed in my business after 9/11," Cury says. Prior to then, his company focused on entertainment work, such as shooting behind the scenes at Superbowls. When the United States was attacked in 2001, it created a shift in who wanted to use cameras and how.

Recent Polls At EarthCam.com

How often do you visit EarthCam?

- Daily: 27%
- Weekly: 19%
- Monthly: 9%
- First time visiting: 45%

What new camera do you like best?

- Hawaii: 31%
- Nashville: 5%
- New Orleans: 14%
- Niagara Falls: 50%

Which animals do you watch most?

- Dogs, cats and fish: 28%
- Pandas: 14%
- Penguins: 16%
- Tigers and other wildlife: 42%

What famous site would you like to see live on EarthCam?

- Grand Canyon: 39%
- Great Wall of China: 21%
- Stonehenge: 22%
- Taj Mahal: 19%

Courtesy: EarthCam.com

Promoting an event became less important than protecting lives. Travel became more cumbersome, so corporations looked to cameras to monitor and manage construction projects. Government officials turned to EarthCam and its technology to keep critical infrastructure, such as tunnels and bridges, safe.

Cury doesn't disclose sales figures, but if the list of EarthCam's clients is any indication, business must be very good. WalMart and Walgreens use EarthCam equipment at the sites of their new locations under construction. Coca-Cola, Panasonic and Prudential hired the company to monitor their massive billboards in Times Square. Disney contracted with EarthCam to view live and record the filming of *"Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest"* and *"Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End."* Today EarthCam equipment is transmitting and recording live images of Paramount's *"Transformers 2"* currently in production on a remote desert location.

Both the New York Giants and the Orlando Magic purchased EarthCam technology to not only document the building of their new facilities, but also to provide status reports to devoted fans. Jet Blue Airlines has EarthCam cameras in place as its terminal at New York's Kennedy Airport is being completed. NASA has EarthCam recording space shuttle landings. Other customers include the Dubai International Airport, Las Vegas casinos and state departments of transportation. EarthCam also is monitoring the rebuilding at Ground Zero.

Some of this technology also has come to the UK campus. Currently, there are 15 EarthCam cameras in operation at UK. They range from those at the Johnson Student Recreation Center, various parking structures and student dorms, and the Patient Care Facility currently under construction. Two others that were donated by

Cury are waiting on additional funding for installation. This includes one that's referred to as the "Mom Cam" where students will be able to rendezvous with their parents and friends for a real-time "hi!"

Ed Steverson with the university's facility planning department was the first to suggest the idea of Webcams. After purchasing cameras from another outfit that provided no customer support, Steverson contacted EarthCam for help. He didn't know that a UK graduate was the president of the company. When Cury learned that it was his alma mater on the phone, he took over personally, lending his company's knowledge and expertise to get the cameras up and running — all at no charge. That was the start of a strong business relationship that has lasted for some nine years.

"These guys are industry leaders," says Steverson.

On Guard

Of course, as the demand for cameras has grown, so have the privacy concerns.

Cury responds to those concerns by stressing that his company's Webcams are mounted in very public places. "You don't have an expectation of privacy," in an area like Times Square, says Cury. "It's not like we're zooming in on people and following them around the streets." Instead, he believes these "slices of life" help improve understanding by showing people around the world what another society looks like.

As for the security cameras that EarthCam installs, Cury says the technology is a way to protect citizens, property and investments. "People need to understand that it's a new world out there. The reality is that we don't have the next door neighbor watching



University of Kentucky alumnus Brian Cury, CEO & Founder of EarthCam Inc., far right, talks with staffers (l-r) Amanda Valentin, executive assistant; Juan Navas, systems programmer, and Julie Kilpatrick, marketing assistant at the company's Hackensack, N.J. headquarters.



Photos: UK Facilities Planning

Brian Cury, third from left, visited UK last year to present the university with EarthCam equipment to help monitor construction around campus. Greeting him that day were, left to right, Tom Harris, associate vice president for external affairs, Kumble R. Subbaswamy, provost, Cury, and Ed Steverson of facilities planning. At UK, a camera focuses on the UK HealthCare project.

like we used to have years ago,” he says. Now, cameras are used and in the process, they safeguard jobs, enable cost and time-saving management of major construction projects, and most important, can save lives.

Cury also points out that security cameras are much more common in other countries. For example, there are approximately 6,000 cameras currently operating in New York. That contrasts

with more than 400,000 in London, part of more than four million throughout Britain.

New Technology/Old School Values

For a man who makes his living from creating and using the latest technology, Cury is amazingly old-school about certain things. He loves classic movies like *“Casablanca”* and *“Citizen Kane.”* He respects the genius of legendary directors such as Woody Allen, Stanley Kubrick and Ingmar Bergman. He believes in passion for the work, whatever that work is. He worries about whether the technical and programming skills of recent graduates are adequate.

And if this bachelor ever has children, they will go to UK, just like their father and grandfather before them.

That loyalty to UK is because of his own experience on campus. He remembers former theater professor John Lynaugh who cared about films as much as Cury did. “He made me excited about theater, about being passionate about the art and about the craft. I respected that.”

Cury recalls another former professor, Charles Dickens, as “interesting and articulate.” Dickens also stands out in his memory because he was in *“The Estate,”* a movie that Cury wrote and shot in his senior year at UK. “There was so much that I learned at UK that still helps me in business today,” he says. “I loved it.”

When Cury was a kid growing up during the Apollo moon missions, he wanted to be an astronaut. Now, his company travels through space and time, providing a bird’s eye view of the world to the world. And the man who dreamed of making movies and television shows, now uses the world as the stage, everyday people as the actors and the Internet as a theater for billions.

Tickets please.

Beverly K. Bell is a freelance writer in Lexington.

Brian Cury Tidbits

- Years ago, a couple asked Cury to videotape their wedding since he worked in film. He reluctantly agreed. While taping the traditional father/bride dance, he accidentally backed into the wedding cake and knocked it over. He never taped another wedding.
- Best movie he’s seen lately – Ingmar Bergman’s 1957 film, *“The Seventh Seal,”* which features a chess game between the movie’s main character and Death.
- After filming his comedy-murder mystery, *“The Estate,”* at UK and then later editing it at NYU, he returned to Lexington and premiered it at the downtown Kentucky Theatre.
- When Cury worked for *“Saturday Night Live,”* prominent cast members included Eddie Murphy, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, and Joe Piscopo. Cury’s main job was to make sure the cast, guest host and band had what they needed in their dressing rooms. He also was in charge of getting beer and wine for the set. “I was a very popular guy.”
- Early in his career, Cury also served as manager for comedian Larry “Bud” Melman, a regular who appeared for years on both of David Letterman’s late night talk shows. Melman, who died last year, was known for his thick glasses, unpolished on-camera banter and silly skits.
- Cury refers to himself as an inventor and the description fits. He holds three patents, he says, all dealing with camera technology.



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Learn about Webcam systems at www.EarthCam.net