I’ll be honest with you. I hate DV. I hate everything about it. And that goes for HDV and the new inexpensive HD cameras as well.

I hate all of it for one very good reason: Not long ago, I was a revered craftsman of privilege and status, a special person with unfettered access to the world’s best and priciest storytelling tools. If you needed something shot and shot well in the Arctic, Turkey or the Amazon, I was your shooter. You could look up to me, hail me with accolades, and buy me lavish gifts. Then, I just might agree to tell your visual story, if you approved, that is, my rather exorbitant day rate.

Today, I am no longer that special person as almost anyone can afford a decent camera and be a Video Shooter. The tools have become so easy to use and so commonplace, it is no longer much of an issue who possesses the means to tell captivating stories- we all do. The issue now is who owns the storytelling ***craft-*** and this is a much tougher commodity to come by. It takes years of discipline, learning to see the world in an uncluttered way. Understanding the nuts and bolts of effective framing, composition and camera angles, all play a part, but so does adopting a proper philosophy and point of view. That’s why I have chosen to write this book, in one of my more magnanimous moments, to offer you, the aspiring video shooter, a new perspective and reasonable hand up in acquiring the skills to tell truly compelling visual stories.

The means of storytelling have taken many forms over the centuries. In years past, we might have etched our stories into stone, used smoke signals or simply made them part of our oral tradition. Today, the video camera has evolved into a dominant storytelling tool, as critical to communicating in the 21st century as paint and paintbrush were to Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci during the Renaissance. Thanks to DV, we’re all shooters now, and as I look around at the video storytellers today, I can see that many fundamental skills no longer come with the territory. Blame it on the technology advancing at a dizzying clip, or the seductive power of the latest technological gimmick. The film medium, for all of its relative crudeness and expense, imposed its own kind of discipline that must now be self-imposed by the video shooter.

And so in this struggle to develop one’s craft, let us not forget the storyteller’s obligation to have something meaningful to say. Like the ancient Egyptians who carved their stories into stone, if we want our work to survive the ravages of time, we have to tell stories that people care about.

So, while I hate DV, I do love a good story.

*From: “Video Shooter- Storytelling with DV, HD and HDV Cameras”, by Barry Braverman, CMP Books, 2005.*