

LIVING

In the camera's eye

For more than 30 years, Andre Gariepy has seen the world through a lens

BY FRED SIMPSON
Staff Writer

Globe-trotting freelance video cameraman Andre Gariepy is always out of a job between phone calls.

Not to worry.

When the phone rings, which it does frequently, he could very well be off to the four corners of the globe.

"Since last November, I have been to Barbados, Mexico, India and across Canada," said Gariepy, as he took a breather from his travels one afternoon while resting in the living room of his Richmond Hill home.

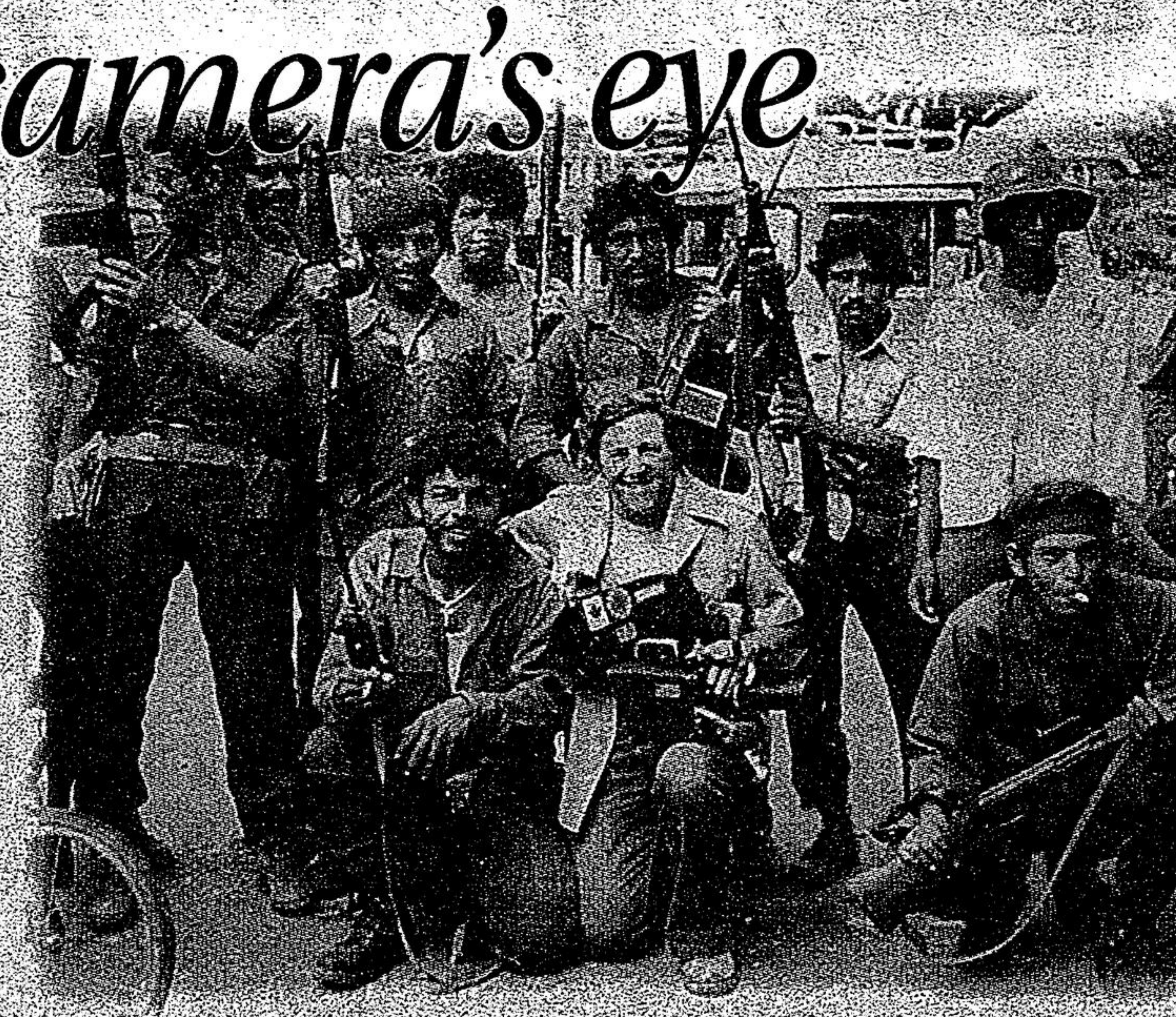
For more than 30 years, his jaunts have taken him to Afghanistan during the Russian invasion in 1979, to Beirut, to Russia six times and "you-name-it, every other country."

On the Afghanistan junket in 1980, Gariepy was accompanied by Dan Rather, CBS reporter.

Gariepy also drew assignments with Mike Wallace of 60 Minutes fame.

Among the most grueling and frustrating of his many junkets were stops in Ethiopia, India and Mexico.

He was there to film a documentary, Hostage to Justice, which was recently aired



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Andre Gariepy with soldiers in Nicaragua (left). Holding a photo of himself taken by Boris Sprenko at the '76 Olympic Games in Montreal (above). With actress Andie MacDowell (below)

on CBC television.

"In India, for example, for our story we needed to shoot the prison and courthouse and the airport where this fellow was arrested for smuggling drugs," Gariepy recalled.

There was one major problem.

"You have to get permission from the authorities to take any photos of government buildings," he said. "There are big signs all over warning against taking pictures."

"But in countries like this, you ask permission and it takes a year before you get it." Undaunted, Gariepy proceeded to videotape the buildings while slinking behind parked cars and anything else that would conceal his intentions.

Armed with a "little handy camera," he checked into a phone booth at the airport and shot through the window while he pretended to be on the telephone.

"I was very fortunate on this occasion because I got pictures of military guards and it provided excellent footage for the documentary."

All in a day's work for Gariepy, which, translated, means sometimes staying out of jail in far away countries.

"I have always loved adventure," says the 56-year-old Gariepy, who first learned his

trade from his father, who was a news photographer for years in Montreal.

"I never know where I'm going until the phone rings. My bags are always packed."

"You have to have a sense of adventure. If you are a homebody, forget it. You would be so miserable."

It was while on an assignment for the CBC during the Sandinista People's Revolution in 1979 against the Somoza military regime that Gariepy got a taste of the adventure he thrives on — but it almost cost him his life.

"The reporter I was with had a story about the revolution, but I had no pictures showing the fighting," Gariepy said.

He subsequently attended a government party, where he described his plight to Somoza himself.

"I told him that you have a revolution here but I don't have any pictures of it," Gariepy said.

"He took my name and three days later I was sitting at a bar when this military guy came in carrying a huge machine gun."

He told Gariepy to meet him outside the bar "tomorrow morning at 9 and you can come along with us if you want to take some pictures of fighting."

At the appointed hour, Gariepy found himself riding on the back of an army truck loaded with soldiers and heading into the bush.

"We came to this little village, surrounded it and they began killing everything — men, women, children, cats, everything, everything that was alive," Gariepy recalled with horror.

"I couldn't believe it. I had tears in my eyes as I stood shooting the massacre. Only a few feet from me, some children were running by and they shot them down, too. It was unbelievable."

There was a man standing at the side of the wall and the military machine gunned him down. Then we got back in the truck and came home.

Gariepy had his war photos, but the story doesn't end there.

"Two weeks later, the same guy comes in, taps me on the shoulder and tells me that tomorrow we are going to this village. Only this time he tells me where the village is."

Gariepy and his newsman found themselves faced with a dilemma.

See PHOTOGRAPHER, page 19.



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