

"THIS FILM HAS A DEEP SOUL, UNLIKE ANY OTHER WORLD WAR II DOCUMENTARY I HAVE EVER SEEN"

— BRUCE JENKINS, FORMER CURATOR HARVARD FILM ARCHIVE



I WANTED TO BE A MAN WITH A GUN

THREE AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN WORLD WAR II

I WANTED TO BE A MAN WITH A GUN,

Three American Soldiers In WWII

Directed by: William Farley

Runtime: 90 minutes, Color and Black&White

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www.manwithagunfilm.com

I WANTED BE A MAN WITH A GUN, Three American Soldiers In WWII

A feature length documentary that reveals the devastating impact on all those who experience frontline combat.

Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/537427132>

Log Line

Three American soldiers, two Jewish and one Christian, recount their experiences in WWII through the prism of their 90-year-old selves.

Synopsis

"I Wanted To Be A Man With A Gun" is a feature length film constructed from the stories of three WWII veterans fighting on the European front. As they recount their experiences through the prism of their 90-year-old selves, they reveal the shocking reality of combat that still weighs heavy in their lives.

Each soldier represents a unique and sometimes disturbing perspective in their experience of war - and how they respond to the challenges of surviving combat.

Harold Kozloff, a college student drafted into the Army, hated the Germans and killed them with impunity. Harold who was of Jewish heritage, who killed without conscience, yet the brutality of WWII touched his life forever.

Leo Litwak was also Jewish and drafted into the Service. He became a medic in the infantry. While he hated Nazism, he saw many German soldiers as victims of circumstance. Following the orders of the Geneva Convention he treated their wounds with the same consideration he practiced while working on American G.I.'s, but not without consequence.

Paul Mico, attempted to join the Army but was rejected because he was only seventeen. Later he was drafted and became a Squad Sergeant in the 29th infantry. He gives the film historical context from the Normandy invasion to the German surrender. His soft-spoken musings soon become shocking as he reveals how his squad dealt with unarmed prisoners. The impact of which indelibly changed his life.

The soldiers do not censor themselves in telling their stories, including how they reacted to the Anti-Semitism of their fellow G.I.'s; their rage unleashed against the Germans directly involved in the persecution of their religious brethren; and the horrific consequences of the war to their lives. This documentary employs a haunting original score integrated with rare archival footage, ultimately revealing that even in a justifiable war no soldier escapes the trauma of the requirement to kill or be killed.



News

Review from FilmFreeway:

The Veterans Film Festival, Nov 1st, 2023

This documentary stands as a remarkable testament to the meticulous craftsmanship and profound importance of capturing the life stories of these three World War II veterans. The endeavor to preserve their experiences for posterity serves as a noble and invaluable mission, ensuring that these accounts endure for generations to come.

The documentary succeeds admirably in rendering the lives of these veterans with a vivid and rich tapestry of character. The individuals portrayed are imbued with a remarkable depth of personality, which breathes life into the overarching narrative. Their distinctive qualities not only enhance the storytelling but also create an immersive experience for the audience. In a masterful feat of direction, the filmmaker expertly maintains a continuous engagement, holding the audience's rapt attention throughout the duration of the documentary.

The strategic use of contemporaneous news footage serves to anchor the audience in the historical context surrounding these veterans' stories, providing a comprehensive and immersive experience. The incorporation of actual battle footage further solidifies the connection between the audience and the men recounting their experiences. It imparts a sense of immediacy and authenticity, allowing viewers to empathize with the veterans on a deeply personal level. Moreover, the documentary sheds an unflinching light on the harsh realities and traumatic experiences that veterans confront.

The director's portrayal of the horrors of war adds a sobering dimension to the narrative, forcing the audience to confront the profound human toll of conflict. In essence, this documentary features what may well be some of the most consequential interviews in the realm of wartime narratives. These veterans, having borne witness to nearly all the pivotal events of World War II, convey their stories with an unparalleled depth of heart and emotion, compelling the audience to invest deeply in their accounts.

This documentary, therefore, emerges as a work of monumental importance. It serves to challenge conventional perceptions of war and underscores the moral imperative of reevaluating the romanticized notion of conflict. In a world where the lessons of history are often overlooked, this documentary stands as a potent reminder of the sacrifices, triumphs, and tribulations of those who served during one of the most pivotal periods in human history. In doing so, it beckons us to question our views on war and to reevaluate our collective responsibility in preserving the memories and experiences of these remarkable individuals.

--- Tyler Little, Director of The Veterans Film Festival

Director Statement

Whether a war is justified or not, killing the enemy has a profound impact on the soldier who is obligated to take the lives of other human beings. Combat turns the soldier's mind to his own death and the suffering it will bring to his family and friends. This shadow lingers. He cannot help reflecting on the pain he inflicts on the loved ones of the person he has killed. The pain is profound. The long-term ramifications of killing affect his ability to be fully in touch with his own deepest feelings.

It is quite common to hear the children of veterans say, "he would never talk about the war." What these three men left on the battlefield was more profound than their innocence- how they survived combat. They suppressed their emotions, developed a mask of stoicism, and spent the rest of their lives in trauma they had buried. Finally, in their old age, they shared their experiences. I believe this film can awaken veterans and the rest of us to some understanding – that they are not alone, past wars still impact their lives and those of their families and communities. That means the rest of us.

--- William Farley

Awards

"I WANTED BE A MAN WITH A GUN" has played 2 festivals:

United Nations Association Film Festival: **Official Selection**

SF Veteran Film Festival: **Official Selection**

Social Media

<https://www.facebook.com/william.farley.9277583>

<https://www.facebook.com/manwithagunfilm>

<https://twitter.com/manwithagunfilm>

<https://www.instagram.com/manwithagunfilm>

www.manwithagunfilm.com

Interviews

<https://vimeo.com/844410164/cefdcff50>

(MEDIA BURN, documentaries with a social justice lens)

"I've seen the entire cut of the film, and I've seen what we've just watched today two or three times, and I think there is such a strong through-line, the centrality of language, the power of sound, of people simply telling their truth." Bruce Jenkins in conversation with William Farley.

Bruce Jenkins is a Professor of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has served as the Stanley Cavell Curator at the Harvard Film Archive, and the Director of Film/Video at the Walker Art Center.



US Army 1964 to 1966

Interview with Michael Fox and Director William Farley

1. Why don't we start with you telling us how you started on this project?

I received a commission to make a documentary about, Elaine Badgley Arnoux, a painter in her late eighties whose subject matter was catastrophes of the 19th and 20th centuries and portraits. We were in her studio shooting and between setups, her husband, Harold Kozloff told me three horrific stories about what he did in World War II. A couple of years went by and his stories kept coming back in my mind, so I called Elaine and asked her, do you think Harold would ever be interested in telling his stories about World War II on camera? And, she said, "He's been waiting his whole life to tell his stories on camera".

And that was the beginning of it. I did one interview with Harold but really didn't know what to do with the material, his stories were way too violent for me and very controversial, I had no idea what to do with them.

I had been friends with the author Herbert Gold, for many years, we went to movies together and he mentioned his oldest and dearest friend, the writer Leo Litwak several times, who had been a medic in World War II. I thought, out of my appreciation for Herb I would interview Leo. It turned out that Leo was a fabulous storyteller. And then in the community of filmmakers, the word got out that I was making a film about World War II, and fellow filmmaker Jim Mayer, told me that his neighbor Paul Mico was starting to tell his stories about World War II and it turned out that Paul was also terrific storyteller, and they all agreed to be interviewed. And that is how this film came about.

2. Is that generally how you've developed your projects over your entire career, as opposed to, I don't know, a more systematic approach?

I have written several narrative film scripts and made two feature length fiction films. Throughout my life, stories have appeared like found objects, which has inspired me to make movies from them. I was a sculptor before I started making films. I never really saw what I was doing as a career. I was, born with a very, very, large curiosity. I was told by friends years later, you were always asking "why". So, being inquisitive was always part of my temperament. My creative life is part of my pursuit of knowledge to find out more about myself.

Growing up, I was sent to the movies every weekend because my mother wanted to get me out of the house. Every Saturday and Sunday afternoon I was given the money to go to the movies. Being saturated with viewing fiction films, I unconsciously developed a really outlandish view of the hero. When Harold, Leo, and Paul presented their stories to me I realized that this might be the perfect opportunity to fully purge what remained in my psyche in regard to the myth of the hero and war. I was deep in the romance of war.



3. Going back to this film, you had these three interviews, and then the question becomes how to present, illustrate, augment their stories, and bring your experience and skills to telling their stories. So how did that thought process develop?

In making a film, I like letting the subject being interviewed tell the story they are comfortable with sharing, that's how I start. I let them tell me what they want us to know, after that, I see my role as asking questions from the perspective of "a kind of every man", as a former soldier who never saw combat. I was interested in knowing what it was like to be in a situation where someone was trying to kill you. And how do you survive and be brave at the same time? So that was the second tier of how the story was developed.



Paul Mico

Harold Kozloff

Leo Litwak

4. And then in the post-production process, when you're working with an editor, does, something else emerge?

Before working with my editor, Richard Levien I had transcribes made of my first interview with Harold Kozloff. I would write down all the questions I asked him and his response, as well as his memories triggered by my questions. I would use that material as a common thread in my follow up interviews with Leo, and Paul.

I have worked with Richard on several films. He has produced, written, edited, and directed his own films. What he has contributed to my films is really beyond measure. As we began to define chapters to frame the story structure, like "Backstory" of the three men, "Into Combat", and finally "Coming Home". I would give Richard footage culled from numerous film archives, and we would edit this material into scenes which either illustrated or illuminated the stories Harold, Leo, and Paul were telling. Richard's editing created a level of continuity, which allowed the audience to seamlessly encounter the chaos of war in the context of three men's personal experiences. Richard is truly a great collaborator.

The addition of composer Beth Custer's interpretation of the story brought the film to its full emotional potential.

5. So, you mentioned you, I think you said you started as a sculptor in your artistic life. I'm curious to know how the arc of your movement when you began, became interested in making films.

I was a sculpture major in graduate school and I needed an elective for my degree and signed up for a class called The History of Cinema. And at the end of the class, the professor said, you have two choices. You can write about the films that I showed, or you can make a film. I was very cavalier. I said I'll make a film. I never had made a film in my life. Anyway, I made a short film, the first time I saw it screened was at the Monterey Film Festival. I had never seen the film in front of an audience before and when I saw them laughing at what I thought

was funny. I became enchanted and for the last fifty years, I have not been able to break the spell. The film became a hit on the midnight circuit. After that, my career as a sculptor was over.



6. Also from the first reel, from the beginning, the whole piece has, I don't want to say, it has the feel of an art film. It seems to aspire to be a work of art. I get that from the beginning, which puts it on a different plane from, shall we say, just oral testimony or oral history film.

From the beginning of making films, I was interested in cinema language and how filmmakers told a story. The work of experiential filmmakers like Stan Brakhage, Bruce Connor, Maya Deren, James Benning, Les Blank, Alan Berliner, Pat O'Neill, Jay Rosenblatt, and Chick Strand, always inspired me, to name a few. In regard to Hollywood filmmakers, the names that jump out at me are Orson Wells, Stanley Kubrick, Sidney Lumet, John Boorman, and William Wyler. And dozens more that also give me permission to invent my own personal vision in the telling of a story.

I have always had great respect for the intelligence of the audience, and believe that the viewer of my films deserves the opportunity to discover the hidden dimensions of my attempt to tell stories that inform and inspire us.

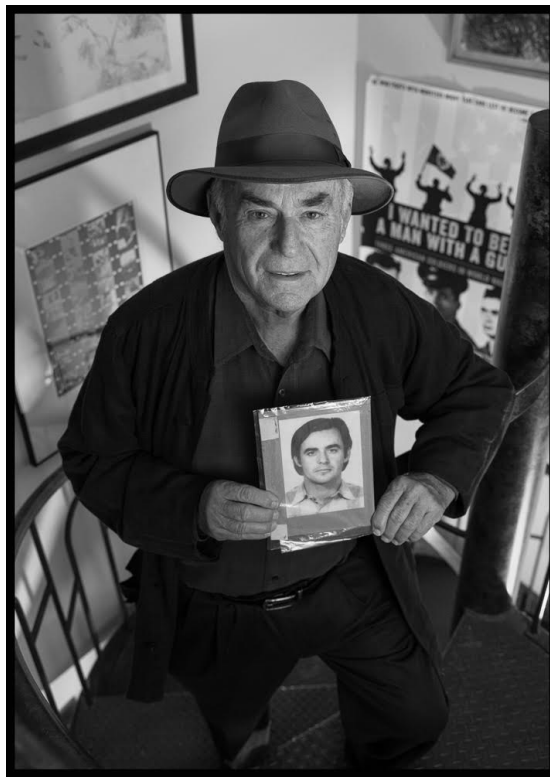
The Cast and Crew

WILLIAM FARLEY (DIRECTOR)

I was in the M.F.A. program at California College of the Arts as a Sculpture major, and I took an elective class on the History of Cinema. At the end of the semester, the professor offered us a choice, either write a paper about the films he had shown or make a film. I knew nothing about making a film, but I was innocent and ambitious and decided to give it a try. The film was accepted at a local film festival, and standing in the back of the theater watching it play, feeling the enthusiasm from the audience, swept me away. For the next half century, I made experimental films, documentaries, and feature-length narrative movies. I took on the liberties of being an artist and used film as the medium to investigate the world.

I am inspired by a wide variety of subject matter - whatever captures my imagination and fuels my sense of story. I have lived a life of exploration. And I have been fortunate enough to have my films shown nationally and internationally. The list includes The Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), Sundance Film Festival, New York Film Festival, and many more. My work has received awards at the Mannheim International Film Festival, the Chicago Film Festival, and the Ann Arbor Film Festival among others. My films have also been broadcast on public television in the U.S. and abroad. It has been a great privilege to travel the world capturing stories.

photo credit Max James Fallon



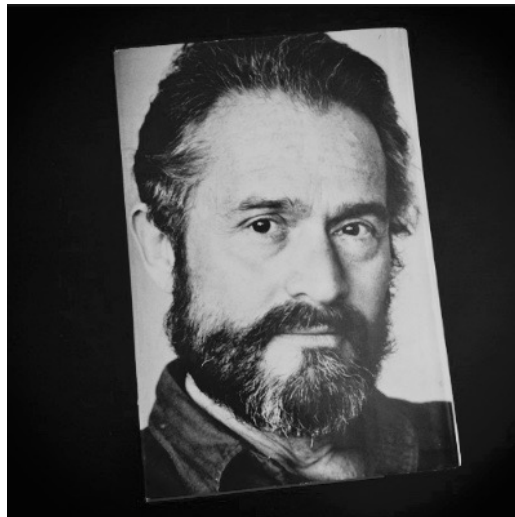
William Farley, Director

HERBERT GOLD (PRODUCER)

San Francisco literary icon Herbert Gold was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1924. After several of his poems were accepted by literary magazines as a teenager, he studied philosophy at Columbia University, where he befriended writers who would define the Beat Generation, from Anaïs Nin to Allen Ginsberg.

Herb won a Fulbright fellowship and moved to Paris, where he did graduate studies at the Sorbonne and worked on his first novel, *Birth of a Hero*, published in 1951. Since then, he has written more than thirty books, including the bestsellers *Fathers* and *The Man Who Was Not With It*. He has received many awards, including the Sherwood Anderson Award for Fiction, the Commonwealth Club Gold Medal, and the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Literary Award. He has also taught at U.C. Berkeley, Stanford, Cornell, and Harvard. He has many children and grandchildren and has recently returned to writing poetry.

Friends for many years, Herb and director William Farley often go to movies together. When Farley began research on his war film, Herb suggested he interview his childhood friend and fellow World War II veteran, Leo Litwak. Upon seeing Litwak's interview Herb wanted to get more involved, so he ended up helping Farley produce, "I wanted to be a man with a gun."



Herbert Gold, Producer

DOUGLAS HOLLIS (PRODUCER)

Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1948, from an early age I had a deep interest in Native American culture. I began to meet Indian people, first in Michigan and the Midwest, and later, at the age of twelve, I began traveling in Oklahoma to live for periods of time with Indian families. I received a unique worldview from these people that has strongly influenced my life and art ever since.

In the early '70s, I began working with natural phenomena and searching for new ways to talk about landscape. This search ultimately led me to my current work with wind- and water-activated sound structures, and to the specific, environmental dynamics of sites. This series of wind-activated, 'sonic architecture' works has continued to evolve over several years.

The early 80s were a pivotal period for me, primarily because of the major permanent commission of A SOUND GARDEN for the N.O.A.A. in Seattle, Washington. Throughout the 90's I have gone on to complete many large-scale projects in Seattle, Portland, Houston, Council Bluffs, and Arlington to name a few.

I continue to make places that have an oasis-like quality, where people can pause to catch their spiritual breath in the midst of their everyday lives.

I have been enjoying William Farley's films since the mid-seventies and occasionally lending a hand to help him with his work. As we know, most creative endeavors are collaborative efforts. "I Wanted to be a Man with a Gun" is my first film project as a Producer.



Douglas Hollis, Producer

Richard Levien (EDITOR)

Richard Levien has been writing, directing, and editing award-winning films for 15 years. Levien's first feature as a writer/director was "Collisions", about a twelve-year-old Latina whose mom is taken away by immigration police. It won the inaugural SFFILM Rainin Grant, for screenwriting, and three further SFFILM Rainin grants. "Collisions" premiered at Mill Valley, winning the Indie Audience Award. It went on to win 13 awards from 19 festivals, was broadcast on Fuse, and won an Imagen Award (the premier Latino entertainment awards) for "Best Young Actor – Television" (Izabella Alvarez). It was also nominated for two other Imagen Awards, for "Best Primetime Program: Special, Movie or Limited Series" and "Best Actor – Television" (Jesse Garcia), and a NAMIC Vision Award in the "Original Movie or Special" category.

Levien's short "Immersion", about a ten-year-old boy from Mexico struggling at his new school in the U.S., premiered at Slamdance and won Best Bay Area Short at SFIFF. "Immersion" is used by more than 50 school districts and universities to support education about English Language Learners.

Levien's editing credits include Barry Jenkins' ("Moonlight") short film "Remigration," and feature documentaries, "A Fragile Trust" and "D Tour", broadcast on Independent Lens. Levien has edited several of Farley's previous films, including "Plastic Man, the Artful Life of Jerry Ross Barrish," which debuted at the Mill Valley Film Festival. His motion graphics work for the Center for Investigative Reporting earned him a national Emmy nomination.

Levien is from New Zealand. He has a PhD in theoretical physics from Princeton University.



Richard Levien, Editor

BETH CUSTER (COMPOSER)

Beth Custer has created music for theatre, dance, and the concert stage including for The Joe Goode Performance Group, Campo Santo Theatre, Cal Shakes, ROCO Dance, Harupin Ha, Overtone Industries, AXIS Dance Company, Zeitgeist and Left Coast Chamber Ensembles. She has scored many films including those of William Farley, Judith Ehrlich, Brad Coley, Cathy Lee Crane, Laretta Molitor, Melinda Stone, George Spies, Koohan Paik, and KQED's 'Independent View' and 'Deep Look' series which won her an Emmy.

Beth is a member of the ensembles Club Foot Orchestra, Trance Mission, Eighty Mile Beach, The Beth Custer Ensemble, and Clarinet Thing. She also plays in David James's GPS and Russian Telegraph ensembles and with Will Bernard. Her awards include Meet the Composer New Residency, Headlands Arts Center, Montalvo Arts, and Civitella Ranieri artist residencies, and she's six times an SF Arts Commission Individual Artist grantee.



Beth Custer, Composer

Reviews

<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/william-farley-band-of-brothers-documentary-ww2>

For years, Farley met veterans of WWII who said they couldn't remember the war or didn't want to. Then he found his star subjects, who seemed as though they'd been waiting all their lives to relive their experience in uniform.

--- *Jonah Raskin, writer, and professor emeritus at Sonoma State University, is the author of 14 books, including biographies of Jack London, Allen Ginsberg, and Abbie Hoffman.*

I Wanted To Be A Man with a Gun is a searing reminiscence of three "average" G.I.s during WWII that will put the lie to the quaint notion that there are "good guys" and "bad guys." Watching these decent fellows remember killing prisoners, and witnessing atrocities...should serve as a caution, that each of us, if we fail to monitor and control our darkest impulse, can become the monster we think we are hunting.

--- *Peter Coyote, actor, writer, Zen Buddhist priest*

At long last, three World War II veterans break that rule of disengagement with brutal candor and shattering clarity in, *I Wanted to Be a Man with a Gun*, William Farley's beautifully crafted documentary fuses the specific horrors of its subjects' battle cries with the universal trauma of adolescents dispatched to kill into an unerringly timeless reckoning on the reality of war.

--- *Michael Fox, KQED Arts and Culture*



This is a masterpiece. We rarely, if ever, witness soldiers discovering their real culpability and wounded emotions regarding what they did in combat. *I Wanted To Be A Man With A Gun* is an eye-opening portrait of the cost of war on those who are asked to fight in our name.

--- *Sean Kilcoyne, U.S. Marine Corps & Vietnam Veteran*

William Farley's film provides a unique and moving perspective on the experience of war and the scars it leaves on those who participate. We need more truth-telling about the evil of war, and *I Wanted To Be A Man With A Gun* forces us to look at this legacy with open eyes.

--- *Judith Ehrlich, Director & Oscar nominee; --- Daniel Ellsberg: The Most Dangerous Man in America*

Joining the pantheon of classic anti-war movies is the documentary *I WANTED TO BE A MAN WITH A GUN*. Writer/director William Farley's three WWII soldiers pour out their souls to Farley's camera, revealing how the process of battle dehumanized them and haunted them throughout the rest of their lives. Farley's trio of survivors have given us this masterpiece of truth-telling!

--- *Rick Schmidt, Filmmaker and author, Feature Filmmaking at Used-Car Prices*

I Wanted To Be A Man With A Gun is riveting, moving, and profound. It shows the great truth that war is not glamorous, but brutal and ugly.

--- *Lucy Lang Day, Author, Married at Fourteen: A True Story*

I rank "A Man With A Gun", around the order of magnitude of "All Quiet on the Western Front" and "The Best Years of Our Lives".

--- *Gary Gach, Author, Pause Breathe Smile: Awakening Mindfulness When Meditation Is Not Enough*

To hear directly from three ordinary Joe's who served in the front lines during WW2 is very moving - and enlightening. They know what they're about to say might not put them in the best light - but they go ahead and say it anyway.

--- *Len Nathan, preview audience participant*

I was fifteen years old the afternoon my father drove me to the airport to send me to a distant boarding school, happy to get rid of the biggest problem in his life, me. As I got out of the car I turned to say goodbye, and I was shocked to see him crying. After viewing I Wanted Be A Man With A Gun, I understood for the first time how my father, a frontline combat veteran lost his ability to express his deeper feelings.

--- *Bran Newsham, Author, Take Me With You*



This film has a deep soul, very much unlike any other World War Two documentary I have ever seen.

— *Bruce Jenkins, former curator of Harvard Film Archive*

Credits

Produced & Directed by William Farley

Produced by Herbert Gold & Douglas Hollis

Written by William Farley, Richard Levien, Adam Keker

Story Consultants Rick Schmidt, Thomas Schlesinger

Cinematography and Interviews by William Farley

Music by Beth Custer

Edited by Richard Levien

Additional Editing Bruce Mitchell & Luke Reppe

Director of Photography William Farley

Additional Cinematography Barry Stone

Associate Producer Richard Levien & Adam Keker

Concept Advisor Rick Schmidt

Colorist Gary Coates

Location Sound and Mix by Philip Perkins

Outreach Advisor Kevin White

Archival Footage: National Archive, Signal Corp Newsreels, Pathe News, Cspan, YouTube, Spielberg's, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, online

Featuring

Harold Kozloff

Leo Litwak

Paul Mico

Roxy Mico

Herbert Gold

Elaine Badgley Arnoux

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