



Contacts:

POV Communications: 212-989-7425. Emergency contact: 646-729-4748

Cynthia López, clopez@pov.org, Cathy Fisher, cfisher@pov.org,

POV online pressroom: www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom

POV's "The English Surgeon" Wins Christopher Award

61st Annual Christopher Awards Gala Presented April 15 in New York; Awards Honor Works That Affirm the Highest Values of the Human Spirit

"There is great beauty in watching one heroic soul insist that he can improve upon a cruel and complex world." — Elizabeth Weitzman, *New York Daily News*

Geoffrey Smith's documentary **The English Surgeon**, presented on the **POV (Point of View)** series in 2009 on PBS, has won a Christopher Award, it was announced by The Christophers. POV Executive Director Simon Kilmurry will accept the award at the 61st annual Christopher Awards ceremony, held in New York on Thursday evening, April 15, 2010. Seventeen feature films, TV and cable programs and books for adults and young people, along with their 63 writers, illustrators, directors, producers and executive producers will be honored. The Christopher Awards salute media that remind audiences and readers, young and old, of all faiths and of no particular faith, of their worth, individuality and power to make a difference and positively influence our world.

What is it like to have power over life and death, and yet to struggle with your own humanity? **The English Surgeon** is the story of acclaimed British neurosurgeon Henry Marsh, who has traveled to Ukraine for 15 years to treat patients who have been left to die; of his friend and medical colleague in Kyiv who carries on the fight despite official hostility and archaic surgical conditions; and of a young patient who hopes that Henry can save his life. Tense, heartbreaking and humorous, **The English Surgeon** is a remarkable depiction of one doctor's commitment to relieving suffering and of the emotional turmoil he undergoes in bringing hope to a desperate people. The film is a BBC/ITVS International production.

"Henry's dilemma is one of his own making; that is what's so interesting about his story," says director-producer Geoffrey Smith. "It's what lets his troubled and compassionate humanity through, and moves him to continue an often painful struggle to do good things in this selfish and flawed world. This is ultimately *not* a medical film, nor is it a portrait of a saint. Rather, it is about a man who openly wrestles with moral and ethical issues that touch every one of us."

About the filmmaker:

Born in Melbourne, Australia, Geoffrey Smith began traveling early, discovering a twin love for movies and storytelling along the way. In 1987 he found himself in Haiti, helping to make a documentary about the country's first election in 31 years. Following the discovery of a massacre of 21 voters in a schoolyard, Smith was himself shot and wounded. After struggling to recover in London, he decided to go back to Haiti to find the man who had nearly killed him — and to film the whole thing. The resulting film, "Searching for a Killer," won wide acclaim and was aired on the BBC. Smith discovered that the camera can be a powerful, cathartic tool in helping people through difficult periods and went on to build his subsequent work around that concept. The winner of numerous awards, he has made more than 22 films and has worked for all the major U.K. broadcasters.

About Dr. Marsh:

Since 1988, Dr. Henry Marsh has been the senior consultant neurosurgeon at Atkinson Morley's/St. George's hospital in London, one of the city's largest neurosurgical departments, where he specializes in the surgical treatment of brain tumors. He is also a clinical professor of neurosurgery at the University of

Washington, Seattle, and Honorary Consultant Neurosurgeon to the Royal Marsden Hospital, London and the University of Wales, Cardiff.

In the U.K., Marsh pioneered the use of “awake” brain surgery and cortical mapping in such surgery; he has conducted the largest personal series of these operations in the U.K. and one of the largest in Europe. He has written more than 80 peer-reviewed articles on neurosurgical subjects. Marsh has written and lectured widely on the impact of the built environment on hospital staff and patient outcomes. He has also delivered lectures on the neuroscientific aspects of consciousness and criminal responsibility.

Visit POV’s website, <http://www.pbs.org/pov/englishsurgeon/>, for interviews, updates, lesson plans, discussion guides, video and more. Visit **The English Surgeon** official website, <http://www.theenglishsurgeon.com/>, for information, news and ways to help Dr. Marsh’s and Dr. Kurilets’ efforts.

The Christophers, a nonprofit organization founded in 1945 by Maryknoll Father James Keller, is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition of service to God and humanity. The ancient Chinese proverb — “It’s better to light one candle than to curse the darkness” — guides its publishing, radio and awards programs. Visit www.christophers.org to learn more about The Christophers.



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and beginning its 23rd season on PBS in 2010, the award-winning POV series is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today’s best independent documentary filmmakers. Airing June through September, with primetime specials during the year, POV has brought more than 275 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV’s Borders*. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today’s most pressing social issues. More information is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

American Documentary, Inc. (www.amdoc.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation. Simon Kilmurry is executive director of American Documentary | POV; Cynthia Lopez is vice president.



Media Sponsor:

