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POV's "The Way We Get By" Tells the Stories Behind the Famous "Troop Greeters" of Bangor, Maine, on Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2009, In Special 9 p.m. Presentation on PBS

Broadcast Accompanied by Diverse, In-depth Websites That Look at Military Service:

POV.org www.pbs.org/pov/waywegetby,
Regarding War www.pbs.org/pov/regardingwar
And *Returning Home* www.returninghomeproject.org

"The interaction between the young . . . and the old . . . sheds new light on the meaning of service. Along the way [the film] also stuns us with unforgettable portraits of Americans of all ages in the fullness of life." — Nancy DeWolf Smith, *The Wall Street Journal*

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Air
Date:

The Way We Get By has its national broadcast premiere on the **POV (Point of View)** series on **Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2009**, at 9 p.m., in a special presentation on **PBS**. (Check local listings.) American television's longest-running independent documentary series, POV is the recipient of a Special Emmy for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking.

Streaming:

The Way We Get By will also stream in its entirety on the **POV website**, www.pbs.org/pov/waywegetby, from Nov. 12 – Dec. 12, 2009.

The Film:

On call 24 hours a day for the past five years, a group of senior citizens has made history by greeting more than 900,000 American troops at a tiny airport in Bangor, Maine. **The Way We Get By**, directed by Aron Gaudet and produced by Gita Pullapilly, is an intimate look at three of these greeters as they confront the universal losses that come with aging and rediscover their reason for living. Bill Knight, Jerry Mundy and Joan Gaudet find the strength to overcome their personal battles and transform their lives through service. This inspirational and surprising story shatters the stereotypes of today's senior citizens as the greeters redefine the meaning of community.

The film reveals a remarkable symbiosis between the young soldiers' fighting mission and the greeters' fight to overcome infirmities and depression in making sure no soldier departs or returns without thanks. Regardless of their personal views about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the greeters, some of them veterans, turn out at all hours of the day and night to show their respect for the soldiers.

On the Web:

On **Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11**, POV will launch **Regarding War**, www.pbs.org/pov/regardingwar, a new community website that will be a gathering place for personal stories and a platform for sharing perspectives about war, current and past. A group blog will feature conversations on changing topics; the first will be "Coming Home: Veterans Readjusting to Civilian Life." Guest bloggers — including veterans, family members, psychologists,

administrators from support organizations and others — will offer insights on the challenges returning vets face, and provide tips and resources on the kinds of support that families, friends and neighbors can offer veterans.

Regarding War is an extension of a previous POV website, *Re: Vietnam* (www.pbs.org/pov/stories/), a companion site for the Academy Award-winning POV film **Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision**. The site was an early example of the Internet's potential for community-building and open exchange. *Re: Vietnam* was named one of the "best sites" of 1996 by *USA Today* and was lauded by the press for opening dialogue online about the Vietnam War between disparate communities.

POV is also partnering with **The Way We Get By** filmmakers to promote the launch of **Returning Home**, www.returninghomeproject.org, an interactive website ensuring that American soldiers, both newly returned and those whose service ended many years ago, are not forgotten. *Returning Home* provides a place for Americans to share thoughts, photos, video and sound, along with messages of support.

Regarding War is supported by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). **Returning Home** is supported by CPB, ITVS and the John D & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

More Web: The **Way We Get By** companion website, <http://www.pbs.org/pov/waywegetby>, offers a streaming video trailer of the film; an extended interview with filmmaker Aron Gaudet; a list of related websites, partner organizations and books; downloadable discussion and facilitator guides; classroom activities; an update on the people in the film and these special features:

- **Q&A with Joan, Jerry and Bill:** Learn more about the volunteers and ask them questions during the week of broadcast via the *PBS Engage* website, www.pbs.org/engage;
- **Photo Gallery of Troop Greeters:** View images dating back to 2003;
- **Support Our Troops Google Map:** Inspired by Joan, Jerry and Bill to show your support for the troops? Find volunteering opportunities in your community;
- **Share Your Stories:** Are you one of the (almost) one million soldiers who have been greeted by the Maine Troop Greeters? Or did you receive a phone call from your loved one from the Bangor Airport on one of their cell phones? Share your story;
- **Tips on Best Ways to Support the Troops:** Soldiers often need the most help after they leave the battlefield and return to civilian life. Join a group blog in which veterans, family members, psychologists and support staff offer stories and insights about the challenges returning veterans and their families face in work and daily life;
- **Virtual Troop Greeting Posters:** Join us in creating posters during the week of Nov. 9. Take photos with your posters and upload them to Flickr. Tag them #wegetby. POV will print out our favorites, add them to photo galleries on the POV and *Returning Home* (www.returninghomeproject.org) websites and hang them in the Maine Troop Greeters headquarters at the Bangor Airport.

Recent Events: **The Way We Get By** screened on Capitol Hill on Sept. 30. The event, introduced by Dr. Jill Biden, was sponsored by Maine Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins and Maine Representatives Michael Michaud and Chellie Pingree, and presented by the USO, Operation Homefront and HandsOn Network. Filmmakers Aron Gaudet and Gita Pullapilly and the film's three subjects, Bill Knight, Jerry Mundy and Joan Gaudet, attended. The film subsequently played at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Then on Oct. 2, the filmmakers and greeters met with Vice President Joe Biden during a special tour of the White House. See the story at <http://www.bangordailynews.com/detail/123832.html>

Filmmaker's
Statement:

"This is a very personal story to me," says director Aron Gaudet. "Calling home to talk to my 75-year-old mom used to be easy. With few friends and fewer hobbies, she was always there, and always sitting by the phone. Then, suddenly, I called and she wasn't home. Day after day her phone rang and rang, but she didn't ever pick up. When I finally got her on the phone and told her I'd had difficulty reaching her, she replied, 'Well, you should try me on my cell phone.' When had my mom gotten a cell phone? She explained that she was greeting troops at the airport, and it meant she had to be available to go there at all hours of the day and night, seven days a week, so she needed a cell.

"Witnessing firsthand how my mother's life changed in such positive ways, while at the same time touching the lives of troops from all over the country, convinced me this was a story that could inspire people," he continues. "I knew it could be a way to show the everyday struggles of senior citizens and an inspirational story of how these three seniors use a simple handshake to change their lives, and the lives of the 900,000-plus troops they've greeted."

The Way We Get By has become even more personal for Aron, who wed producer Gita Pullapilly recently in Maine. Find out more:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/01/fashion/weddings/01VOWS.html>.

About the
Filmmakers:

Aron Gaudet, Director/Editor

Award-winning director and editor Aron Gaudet has worked on films in the United States, Jordan and India. In 2006, he attended the Sundance Producers Conference at the Sundance Institute with producer Gita Pullapilly for **The Way We Get By**, and they were subsequently named 2007-2008 WGBH Boston Filmmakers in Residence, where they worked on the film's post-production. His other credits include "India: A New Life," a WGBH-*Frontline World* production and winner of three Telly Awards, and the short film "OUCH!" (on the art of eyebrow threading). He has won numerous awards in television, including a total of eight Telly Awards, two Vermont Association of Broadcasters awards, a Michigan Association of Broadcasters award and two Emmy nominations.

A member of the International Documentary Association (IDA) and the Independent Feature Project (IFP), he is a graduate of the New England School of Communications. He grew up in Maine and recently moved to Brooklyn, NY, from Boston.

Gita Pullapilly, Producer/Interviewer

Gita Pullapilly is an award-winning television journalist and film producer who has produced films in the United States, Jordan and India and whose stories have aired on CBS, CNN and ABC. In 2006, she was selected as a participant in the Sundance Producers Conference at the Sundance Institute for **The Way We Get By** and in 2007 she was selected as a WGBH Filmmaker in Residence for the film. She was inducted into the Royal Society of the Arts in recognition of her work in film and television.

In addition to producing "India: A New Life," Gita produced the Fulbright-funded film "Diary of a Refugee," and was the first filmmaker chosen as a Fulbright Senior Scholar to Jordan. She was born and raised in South Bend, Ind., and graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a bachelor's degree in finance and from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism with a master's degree. She worked as a television reporter before making the switch to documentary filmmaking.

Gita is the recipient of a University of Notre Dame Asian American Alumni Association Exemplar Award, two Associated Press Awards, a Michigan Association of Broadcasters Award and a Northwestern University Scholarship for Outstanding Storytelling. She is a member of IFP in Chicago and New York, the IDA, Women in Film and Video and the Color of Film Collaborative. She recently moved from Boston to Brooklyn, NY.

The Greeters: Bill Knight

On the day Bill found out he had cancer, he was still the first one to the airport. An eccentric World War II veteran, Bill knows firsthand what a thank you means to a soldier. When troops returned from Vietnam without any recognition for serving their country, Bill made a promise to never let it happen again. So now he executes each greeting with military precision, supporting the soldiers unconditionally.

Outside the airport, Bill's life is spiraling out of control. While battling his spreading cancer, he is also drowning in financial debt. With time running out and creditors hounding him, Bill is forced to make a decision that will change his life forever.

Joan Gaudet

Joan was afraid to go out after dark. Three knee operations forced her to use a walker, leaving her fearful of falling. After spending her life caring for her eight children, Joan was left living alone in an empty nest. But five years ago everything changed. Joan discovered troop greeting, and it quickly became an addiction. What she loves the most is learning about each soldier's family. But as a mother and grandmother, she welcomes them home, but can never say goodbye. Joan has to confront her issues of letting go when she discovers her granddaughter Amy (30), a Blackhawk helicopter pilot, will soon be deployed to Iraq.

Jerry Mundy

Jerry can usually be found parked near the airport runway. Sitting in his truck with his dog and best friend, Mr. Flannigan, he watches for troop planes overhead. When he spots one, if he's fast enough, he can be inside the airport before the wheels touch the ground. With troop greeting, Jerry's goal is simple- put a smile on each soldier's face. This small act helps him cope with the tragic death of his son.

Haunted by these memories and facing unexplained heart problems, Jerry must come to terms with his own mortality following the sudden death of a close friend.

DVD Release: **The Way We Get By** will be available for sale in time for the holidays at www.thewaywegetbymovie.com beginning Nov. 3, 2009 for \$19.99.

Outreach: POV works with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in the film. For a list of upcoming screening and discussion events for **The Way We Get By**, go to: http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_news.php.

POV also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a discussion guide with background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film's content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. POV partners with librarians around the country to create multimedia resource lists of related books and videos that further explore the issues. The materials are available free of charge at www.pbs.org/pov/waywegetby.

Credits: Director/Editor: Aron Gaudet
Producer: Gita Pullapilly
Executive Producer: Warren Cook
Cinematographer: Aron Gaudet and Dan Ferrigan
Original Music: Zack Martin

Running Time: 86:46

The Way We Get By is a co-production of Dungby Productions, the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and American Documentary, Inc. | POV, WGBH, Maine Public Broadcasting Network (MPBN) with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

Awards 2009: Special Jury Award, South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Festival
Best Documentary, Audience Award Winner, Newport International Film Festival
Best Documentary, Atlanta Film Festival
Best Documentary, Little Rock Film Festival
Best Documentary, Phoenix Film Festival
Audience Award, Full Frame Documentary Festival
Standing Up Competition Winner, Cleveland International Film Festival
Eric Parker Social Justice Award, Indianapolis International Film Festival
Honorable Mention, Boston Independent Film Festival

Pressroom: Visit POV's pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 22nd season on PBS, 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.

Major funding for POV is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The September 11th Fund and public television viewers. Funding for POV's *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Special support provided by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. POV is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG.

DVD REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.



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