



“THE WAY WE GET BY”

By Aron Gaudet

Special Presentation on Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2009 at 9 p.m. on PBS

Filmmaker’s Statement

This is a very personal story to me. My mother, Joan Gaudet, is a troop greeter and a character in the film. Witnessing firsthand how her life changed in such positive ways when she became a troop greeter, while at the same time touching the lives of troops from all over the country, convinced me that this was a story that could inspire people. This is a unique film, encompassing important social issues and controversial topics while telling a story that every American can support. Troop greeting may not be an option for many of the nation’s seniors, but the film demonstrates how community involvement can significantly improve the lives of the elderly in the United States.

In **The Way We Get By**, each character tells his or her own story, without the aid of external narration, through interviews and moments of vérité. Unlimited access to the characters provided an in-depth look into their lives. Keeping the camera static whenever possible allowed them to forget quickly that they were being filmed, removing any barriers between them and the viewer. The result of this shooting style is a layered story with a polished, cinematic look that enables viewers to feel they are experiencing these personal moments alongside the characters. The pacing of the film appropriately matches the subject matter, allowing each storyline to breathe as life in a small town unfolds.

Finding “The Way We Get By”

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. Her life had slowed to a crawl. 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 to me 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.

That was my first inkling that my mom had found a passion that had transformed her life. I had to see this for myself. The moment I witnessed the Maine Troop Greeters welcoming home a plane full of soldiers and Marines returning from Iraq, I knew the story could be a movie. The moment I met Bill Knight and Jerry Mundy, the two troop greeters we profile in addition to my mom, I knew the movie could be something more: a way to show the everyday struggles of senior citizens and an inspirational story of how these three seniors used a simple handshake to change their lives and the lives of the more than 900,000 troops they’ve greeted.

— Aron Gaudet, Director

