



OFFICIAL SELECTION

LONDON

MEET THE TOP 3 SCREENWRITERS
SELECTED FROM OUR LONDON
2022 FILM FESTIVAL.

ROUNDTABLE

WITH NATALIE DANIELS & HAYLEY JORJA

LONDON LIFT-OFF FILM FESTIVAL STARTED BACK IN 2010 WITH ITS FIRST EVER CALL FOR ENTRIES. IN LONDON'S FIRST YEAR THE FESTIVAL RECEIVED OVER 750 FILMS FROM AROUND THE WORLD AND WERE INSTANTLY HUMBLLED BY THE QUALITY AND AMBITION OF THE WORK SENT IN. FROM A SMALL CINEMA IN NORTH WEST LONDON, TO THE PRESTIGIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL SCREENING ROOMS OF SOHO AND WEST LONDON -- LONDON LIFT-OFF HAS ENTERTAINED AND STUNNED AUDIENCES WITH IT'S CONTINUOUS DELIVERY OF EXCEPTIONAL WORK, AMAZING NETWORKING VIBE AND BRILLIANT PRESS COVERAGE.

NOT ONLY IS OUR FESTIVAL A GLOBAL SHOWCASE FOR FILMMAKERS LOOKING TO TAKE THAT NEXT STEP, BUT WE ALSO PROVIDE A FREE SERVICE WHERE WE TAKE YOUR WORK TO THE MAJOR FILM MARKETS AFM, CANNES, EFM ETC... ALL WITH THE AIM OF GETTING YOUR WORK ACQUIRED BY DISTRIBUTORS.

The scripts we receive continue to surprise us! The stories we have learned, the people we have met and the ideas we have explored. The arts are continuing harder than ever to push boundaries and create new works of art we can lose ourselves in.

**LONDON
LIFT-OFF
FILM FESTIVAL**

IF THE GODS ARE GOOD

BY SEAMUS SULLIVAN



PROJECT TYPE:

Feature

NUMBER OF PAGES:

115

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:

USA

LANGUAGE:

English

"During WWII the Jervis Bay, an old cargo ship with obsolete weaponry is the only defense for a vital British convoy. When a vastly superior German warship threatens the ships, the crew of the Jervis Bay know they must sacrifice themselves so the convoy can escape."



LIFT-OFF
GLOBAL
NETWORK

L O N D O N
2 0 2 2
BEST SCREENPLAY

Q. THERE IS A LOT OF DETAIL ABOUT THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE WARSHIPS INCLUDED, HOW IMPORTANT WAS RESEARCH FOR YOU DURING THIS PROJECT?

A: Tremendously important. But I didn't do any of it. Authors Gerald Duskin and Ralph Segman did all the research for their book. Mr. Duskin, who sadly passed away before the book was published, was the impetus for the story and I'm going to quote a lot from the preface to the book, written by Ralph. "Jerry read about the naval engagement the day it was reported in Philadelphia newspapers. The morning of 6 November 1940 was chilly and blustery at his self-owned corner newsstand, where the fourteen year old, who had been stricken by polio as an infant-hawked the Inquire, the Bulletin, the Record, and the Daily Racing Form."

Mr. Duskin was forever enthralled by the story of HMS Jervis Bay's sacrifice and as an adult spent years on research. "Jerry made seven trips to England between 1984 and 1999, where he interviewed some of the few remaining survivors of the Jervis Bay, family members, and naval historians. He conducted research in the Public Record Office, the Imperial War Museum, the library of the National Maritime Museum, and the Churchill Archives at Cambridge University, poring over books, declassified papers, reports, articles, audio tapes, and photographs.

Visits to the U.S. National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Nimitz Library at the U.S. Naval Institute, the library at the Washington Naval Yard, and the Canadian Ministry of Defense added to a collection that filled an entire room's bookshelves and file cabinets."

Ralph Segman, a longtime journalist, recalls meeting Mr. Duskin when "Jerry represented the National Organization on Disability...that lobbied for and gained passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990." Mr. Duskin would invite Ralph to look over his material and the two agreed to collaborate on a book. "Living about 250 miles apart, we moved in fits and starts. It took three years to organize the material, comb through it, reorganize the selected pieces, hunt down missing elements, and work up an outline. The initial writing... and almost non-stop editing took several more years."

Ralph ends the preface remembering Mr. Duskin, "A few weeks before the publication contract was received, Jerry Duskin suddenly died. It was a shock to all of us who knew and loved him. It was especially tragic since the acceptance of the manuscript would have been the highlight of his life."

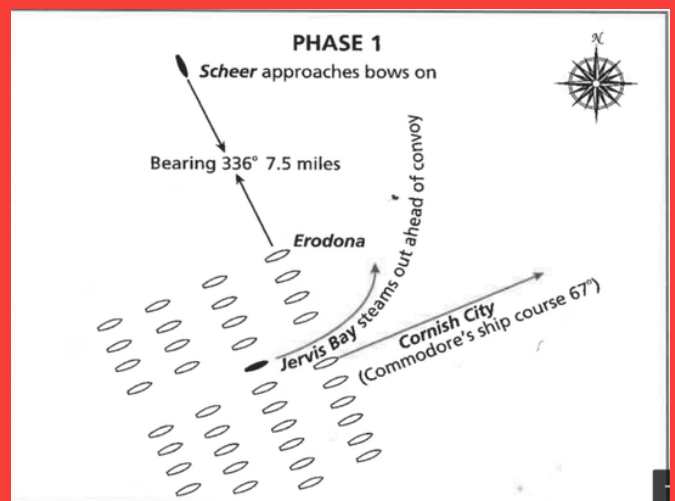
Years of research led to an incredible book, one that I believed would be a great movie the moment I read it. I contacted Ralph and we agreed to work on a screenplay. But Mr. Duskin and Ralph deserve all the credit for the research.

Q. THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST OPTIMISTIC TAKES ON WAR I'VE READ IN A LONG TIME, WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO FOCUS ON THE CAMARADERIE AND PATRIOTISM OF WAR?

A. The camaraderie gives the story genuine feeling that's set against the uncompromising brutality of war. Duskin and Segman's description of the battle is as terrifying as it is thrilling, truly showing humanity's capability to destroy as the Admiral Sheer blasts away at the Jervis Bay. But the authors also take the time leading up to the battle to depict all the training drills, talent shows, boxing matches, etc. in order to show the officers and crew coming together as a family, highlighting the best of humanity. It is this camaraderie that carries them on to do their duty on November 5 1940, it is what allows the survivors to make it through the night, and it is what matters most to them at the reunion forty years later.

The patriotism aspect of this question is a bit more difficult because there is a very fine line that separates patriotism and nationalism, the latter a major tenet of the fascism the Allies were fighting against. This is why I chose to have the crew watch Duck Soup as the movie that brings them together, one of my few original additions to the story. Primarily the Marx brothers classic generates the laughter that initially sparks their camaraderie.

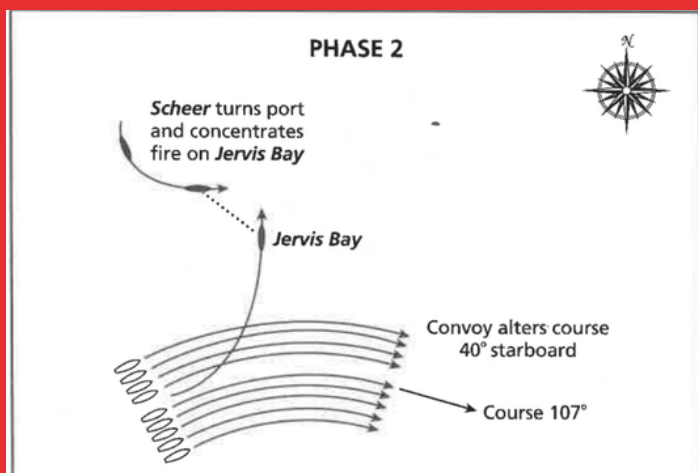
But also the fact that Mussolini banned the film in Italy made me want to include it. Yes, the patriotism of the crew does drive them, but they talk about their homes, families, jobs, and favorite pastimes. They never suggest that the state is more important than the individual nor do they suggest it is their manifest destiny to dominate others. I concede that is a semantic fine line as there ever will be, but there is a distinction.



Q. WHAT DO YOU THINK WE, FROM A MODERN PERSPECTIVE, CAN LEARN FROM THESE OLD WAR STORIES?

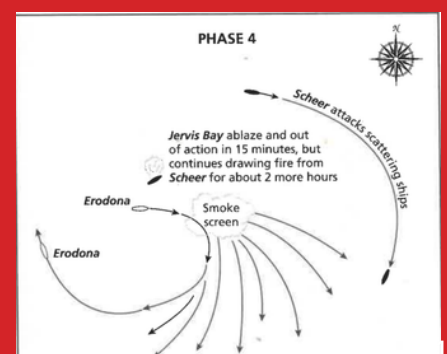
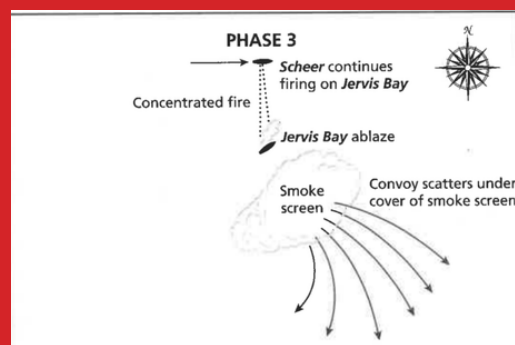
A. To remember that the war happened and why it happened. I want to tell an entertaining story with thrilling action and tension, but as a history enthusiast I also want to encourage people to read the book as well as other books on the subject. Why were they in the middle of the North Atlantic defending a vital convoy using outdated and under matched weaponry? Why was there a convoy at all? Because authoritarian governments were strangling Europe, Africa, and Asia. The Allies were caught off guard by the quick rise of authoritarianism and needed to resort to desperate measures like putting the Jervis Bay and its crew in a position they should never have been.

I want *If the Gods are Good* to be an exciting and moving action film that as many people as possible will see. But the reasons these men, young and old, fought and died needs to be recognized.



Q. WHAT IS NEXT FOR YOU?

A. I'm going to take a little time and finally read *Tracy Flick Can't Win*, I've had it checked out for almost a month. But I hope to generate continued interest in *If the Gods are Good* and I have other scripts I'd like to shop around. I also just applied to get a dual masters degree in history and library science. I've worked in libraries since graduating college and I want to further my education in that area as well as level up as a history nerd. With those two degrees I plan to be an archivist, preferably one that archives films and/or screenplays. But I'd also be interested in pretty much anything historical. Along with continuing to write, that's what's next for me. Thank you so much for the opportunity to talk about *If the Gods are Good*. Take care.





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