



RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE

15 July 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with both great enthusiasm and much pleasure that I offer this letter of support on behalf of Soren Sorensen and his film *My Father's Vietnam*.

I first met Soren in 2011 when he was finishing up his master's degree in our Media Studies Program here at Rhode Island College. Simply put, he is by far the best student I have ever seen in this program. His written work is of the highest quality – truly of and for the profession – and he has consistently elevated classroom discussion, engaging with readings and comments from fellow classmates with both respect and rigor. One cannot help but be immediately taken by his dedication, passion, and wide-ranging knowledge of all things film and media related. I once travelled to another university about an hour away to see Frederick Wiseman at a screening and lecture event, and of course whom would I find there but Soren. He is the best kind of scholar: smart, curious, and genuinely interested in learning and figuring things out.

I had the privilege to screen a rough cut of *My Father's Vietnam* about a month ago. Evident in the film is Soren's strong interest in the documenting of history; he seems to have a natural inclination and drive for preserving the historical record in its multiplicity of forms. More significantly, however, he is well attuned to what is at stake in the very task of preservation – that the act of preservation is in fact an art of creation. Soren understands that history is not just what is there, but also that which remains to be found. History is, more powerfully, a process of interpretation: not only displaying and telling, but also sculpting and reshaping. One's comprehension of historical events and the actual real historical events themselves are always in tension. To be a documentary filmmaker, then, carries an enormous ethical responsibility. From what I have seen, I have every confidence in Soren. *My Father's Vietnam* promises to interrogate at the same time that it is sensitive and respectful toward a highly mythologized era in American history. One of the film's strongest arguments is entirely unspoken: personal subjectivity need not be held in opposition to objectivity.

Soren has made extraordinary investments in this film, in terms of time, energy, and money. For this project, he has traveled to interview and film subjects in Connecticut, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Arizona – all at great personal cost. He also in the process of located, examined, and scanned hundreds upon hundreds of photographic slides taken by his father, in addition to all of his father's printed articles. On top of all that, there was the added pressure of immediacy with this project: two of his principal interviewees passed away before filming was completed.

What impresses me most about *My Father's Vietnam* is the back-and-forth we get between his Soren's father's official work as a military journalist in Vietnam and the stories he and his

associates tell of their experiences there. We get reverberations and contradictions between the official and personal versions as published, photographed, and remembered. There is both resonance and dissonance between what we hear in voiceover and what we see in the photographs and newspaper stories shown. This project is not just going to be a film about the experiences his father and his contemporaries underwent in Vietnam, which in and of itself is of great importance in further informing our collective American experience. The film also explores and questions the process of history – what is both lost and found – in official printed records and in memories. This film will be – like all great documentaries – a true work of art.

In large part based on the strength of his academic and creative work, I recruited Soren to start teaching within the Film Studies Program at Rhode Island College in the 2013-2014 academic year. Within two years, Soren is now teaching four different courses in the major: “Introduction to Film,” “Introduction to Film Production,” “Film Production: Documentary Form,” and “Digital Audio Production.” He has dramatically improved the production track, as evidenced by the great increase in quality in student work. Not surprisingly, student evaluations are positively glowing. Moreover, I feel extremely fortunate that he offers our students the opportunity to intern with him. Soren is not just an extremely talented filmmaker; he has proven to be a gifted and natural teacher, a hard worker and a team player.

I am in complete awe of all the work that Soren put into *My Father's Vietnam*, and I am very excited and invigorated by the exceptional quality and artistry guaranteed for the final complete version of the film. It is a profound, humbling honor for me to be even this remotely associated with such an amazing project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vincent Bohlinger". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

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