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The Family Tree

Documentary Proposal



“It’s never too late – never too late to start over, never too late to be
happy.”
-Jane Fonda

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LOG LINE: The story of a man pursuing his American Dream at the age of retirement of having a family-owned, organic Christmas tree farm, and the local government doing everything they can to thwart his efforts.

SYNOPSIS of TOPIC:

This feature-length documentary looks at cultural shifts in retirement, the power of community, sustainable farm practices, the importance of traditions and shines light on the struggles land owners face when trying to establish a new farm as a result of land legislation. My goal is for viewers to see the film and be encouraged to not only support their local farmers and become more active in their local governments, but also to pursue their dreams no matter what stage they are at in their lives nor what obstacles they face.

I began filming in February 2014 soon after I learned of my father's struggles to establish a Christmas Tree farm, which is something he's wanted since having grown up on one as a child. As his daughter... (put here why you are the only one who can tell this story) Terry A McHugh faces a unique struggle: not only is he pursuing his life's dream while most others are retiring, he has also been caught in the cross-fire of land legislation changes as a reaction to the New York Brewery Law. His pursuit for this began in 2012 and has been delayed due to acreage issues and a moratorium being placed on the district that Terry and the land he owns resides in, in order to re-evaluate the acreage minimum needed in order to build an agricultural structure. This entire story thematically pulled together through the filter of it being a Christmas story.

Through Terry's story, we look at dramatic shifts today's world is facing with the idea of retirement. Today's culture is showing us that retirement as we have known it is becoming a thing of the past. ...most recently changing the age of retirement from 62 to 70...In reaction to a survey conducted by the Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder.com, Rosemary Haefner (VP of HR at CareerBuilder.com) says that many retirees will pick-up part-time jobs because they enjoy working as a means of fulfillment. She also says that a number of those who would retire keep their jobs because they have to, due to the losses incurred in the recession. Terry's boss, a now

101-year-old wealthy industrialist says that the reason he will never retire is because he feels as if not working is boring.

His story also shows us one hopeful farmer's experience in trying to establish a farm at a time when one would think that this would be encouraged due to the Pride of New York Program. This program aids farmers with branding and marketing to encourage New York residents to buy local. The New York Brewery Law, which became effective in January 2014, right when I started filming, makes it so that all breweries must use at least 20% hops grown from New York State. As a reaction to this, the Town Board of Appeals in the Town of Onondaga, where Terry resides, has instead placed a 6-month moratorium on the town (and then renewed it twice after) to re-evaluate the whether or not 5 acres was enough as they were concerned that this law meant more and more hops would be grown in the area and more specifically, they expressed this as a concern for Terry's case, even though his deed states his land will only ever be used for Christmas trees.

Here we are able to evaluate the role of local government in our everyday lives. What are the real motivations for certain legislations being placed? Tax incentives? Control? Fear of change? We are also able to evaluate how we can affect it by not simply moving to another town, filing a lawsuit or giving up – all which were options available to Terry and he considered, but he never resorted to.

These themes are all looked at through Terry's true story, and as we follow him in his pursuit to accomplish his dreams, we see a passionate man fervently meeting adversity and not backing down, with a supportive community and immediate family backing him. While he and the small Town of Onondaga are meeting challenges with the changes the constant, they are all able to rest on is the spirit of the holiday and family traditions.

TREATMENT

The film opens up with Dan Duggan's "O Christmas Tree" on hammered dulcimer, set to beautiful snowy landscapes of the small town of Onondaga in upstate NY, and endearing shots of Terry dancing through the snow. This is followed by 8mm footage and stills of him growing up on his family farm, meeting his wife, Emma and then their family Christmas' growing up, landing on a photo of me exhausted over a lawnmower at the age of thirteen, on my grandmother's Christmas tree farm in Buffalo. I narrate the opening, explaining who I am, and how I'm related to Terry who is my father, and explain why I chose to make this documentary, while footage of that years Thanksgiving dinner is shown with our neighbors the Fox's and how we consider them extended family.

Following the intro, we come back to the scenes of Terry in the snow and getting excited about Christmas trees and now realize that was on a Christmas tree farm that he, Emma and their neighbor Mary, are getting their Christmas tree at. It's at Chengarians Christmas tree farm in 2014 and he briefly describes what his barn is going to be like and shares his dreams of having coffee in the barn with his wife someday. Emma points out the wreaths on display about talked about her days of having a wreath-making business, and Terry talks to Bob Chengarian like a colleague. He then jokes that the delivery fee for his neighbors' tree is a Manhattan. We get the sense that this is a very deeply rooted and important tradition but also a passion, and that he has very close friends as his neighbors. We then cut to Emma driving at night to the town hall and explaining the issue that their facing with having a Christmas tree farm, which is that they are a mere 300ths of an acre short of the acreage requirement to build a barn structure.

His lawyer is laying out what is going on with what he is looking for by explaining to the town board with diagrams exactly what he's trying to do. Right after we go to Gregory Walsh of Gregory's Quality Trees (a Christmas tree stand chain in NYC) explaining how tough it is to manage a Christmas tree farm as we see B roll of Terry preparing the Christmas tree they just purchased to go on a stand. We then hear Terry talking about how he grew up learning from his father about how to grow Christmas trees as we move on to learn more about his past growing up on a Christmas tree farm. This is all within the first fifteen minutes of the film.

We hear from Kelly, Terry's oldest niece, Ted, Terry's eldest cousin, Terry's mother through an old cassette tape recording, Emma and Terry about how the farm started. It was purchased by my grandmother and started out very rustic and through the whole family's involvement, developed into being a beautiful 50-acre

Christmas tree farm. They reminisce about the rowdy parties my grandmother would throw, and how rambunctious my grandfather was and how it just felt like home. My mother, Emma, recounts how she and my father, Terry, met on the first day of college and how their love grew as they dated by going to the Christmas tree farm every weekend. Emma explains how they got married and moved away to Syracuse for Terry's job and then their family grew by two daughters.

We cut back to present footage of the McHugh family showing Terry, Emma and Amy and Amanda their daughters, acting out traditions and talking about how they came to be. Ornaments hand-made by Emma in the 70s being fondly hung on the tree and cutout cookies being made by everyone now also including Amy's fiancée Andy. As Terry decorates a tiny Christmas tree with yellow frosting, Emma and Terry explain what happened to the family farm that he grew up on; when his mother passed away his brother Pat wanted to purchase it, so he did and because of their big family they don't spend the holidays together. This is all they say of it, so we can tell there is a lot being left unsaid and there is some tension there.

We're now back to the town hall meeting with Terry's lawyer as he explains that they are merely 300th's of an acre short from having the required acreage to be able to build a barn on their property with no issues. It's still winter before Christmas, and Terry shows us around the land – including the 60 feet of property that he doesn't own but he has to walk through to get from the backyard he's owned for decades to the land in the woods that he purchased in 2012. He explains that the woods were in terrible shape and we see still images of him and his neighbors cleaning up the property. Terry discusses his passion for wood, and how it warms you twice by first cutting it down and then having it in a fire. Over their fireplace we see a sign that says "It's a Wonderful Life" as a reference to the 1946 Frank Capra film and here we can begin to draw comparisons of the selfless and distraught lead character of the film George, and our hero Terry. He then discusses his thoughts on retirement and how people die a little each day from staying inactive and this farm is his way to keep living as long and as full as he can. We learn throughout the film that Terry spent his whole life working hard for his family and now at the age of 64, he's finally pursuing something that is for him.

We open this next section moving through various Christmas scenes in New York state: the Syracuse tree lighting ceremony, a NYC Christmas tree stand and the Union Square Christmas market. I enter into Terry's office offering him a candy cane and wishing him a Merry Christmas Eve. We see that even on a holiday, Terry is hard at work as a property manager for his boss, a then 98-year-old wealthy industrialist. As he prints out paperwork, he shows us blueprints of the barn and

explains his disappointment in not being able to make more money that year. After this we learn that the next day is Christmas and they will be headed to Emma's sister Sharon's house to celebrate with her side of the family. There is a short montage of Christmas morning, opening presents, and we land on a toast to family and the holidays with Emma's extended family. We meet Sharon and her and Emma talk about their traditions for the holidays which have roots to remember their mother. The purpose here is to reminisce with the audience about our favorite past times and how the consistency of them will show up even when everything else around them changes.

It is now New Year's Eve, just over twenty minutes into the film, and we see the McHugh's house flooded with incoming neighbors mostly all at the age of retirement. Upstairs Terry discusses in an OTF interview, his friend Lee Heaviside who passed away years prior as he reminisces about their times together and in remembrance of him, he has a large photo of him on display at parties and has everyone including himself wear Hawaiian shirts since that was something, he was known to wear at the neighborhood parties. Here we see the comradery that Terry and Emma bring to the neighborhood which increases our understanding as to why they don't want to move to a new neighborhood that would make it easier for them to build the barn that they would like to have.

After we see Terry and Emma pack up the Christmas ornaments, we move through the seasons in seeing Terry working the land in snow, melting snow and now spring as we hear of voiceover of Terry describing his pain over not being able to start working on his dreams. When we get to spring we see Terry working the land with some of the neighborhood kids that he hired to help him, and in an interview we learn how he purchased the land from his neighbors sons when their mother was getting ill and the agreements he made with her that there would never be a home built there and would name the driveway they would have to put in to get access to the barn after her. We learn more about what his original timeline was for ordering the trees and building the barn, and how the towns repeated moratorium's have postponed this dream by so far two years.

As he cleans up the 25-wide ditches that are on his property we learn that the town put ditches in the property in 1976 to move surface water, and that it was meant to be temporary and replaced with sewers. Now in 2014 when this was filmed, we learn that the town has since rebuked that promise once Terry purchased the land from the original owner and that he would have to clean it up. Cutting back to Terry's lawyer, he explains how a moratorium was originally put in place to prevent any structure from being built while the boards researched the effects the

Agriculture and Markets Law would have on residential districts. This law gave and still gives incentive to farmers by way of tax cuts to grow hops and they are worried that hop production would be disturbing to these neighborhoods, even though this law only applies to ag districts, which Terry's property is not in. Afterwards to gain a greater perspective of this topic, we cut to Goderie's Tree Farm, which is the largest Christmas Tree farm in New York State, who have also started growing hops. Here we understand that as a whole, New York State has been beginning to give incentives to breweries to source their hops locally and Goderie's Tree farm saw that as an opportunity to meet those demands. We also are given the understanding that trees take 7-15 years to make any money from them, and hops for them only took two years. Terry is aware of this, but it's not a business for him, it's a passion.

Between interviews with Terry, Emma and Terry's lawyer, we then learn that because the moratorium shouldn't apply to him because he's not in the applicable district, he was told he could apply for a variance to build the barn even though he is .03 of an acre short of what he needs for the standing law. However, because of the moratorium his initial application was wrongfully not accepted. After Terry starts working with his lawyer, the town then placed another six-month moratorium on his district, to discuss increasing the required amount of land needed from five acres to seven acres. With all of these changes every time Terry thinks he's making headway, we begin to think that this issue is personal.

We see his neighbors helping him out with every step and we also see him helping them with their projects, such as a restorative antique chest business his next-door neighbors the Finkle's started. We hear from Mr. Finkle talk about how Terry is always there for you as a neighbor when you need him, and how excited he is for the barn to be built in their neighborhood one day, so all the retired men have a place to bond and work on their projects together. Throughout the summer months, we see Terry bonding with his neighbors at parties and we hear from them in OTF interviews, what they think of Terry's dreams. Through this we understand what retirement means to this community, in that it's not a time to relax, it's a time to build things, pursue their passions and bond. We see that the landscape of retirement is changing, whether people have to work to make ends meet, or they choose to because they love work.

Terry has another town board meeting, where they ask if he can build a smaller barn and Terry explains that according to his architect, the New York State Christmas Growers Association (which he is now a member of) and other farmers the size of the barn is exactly what it needs to be to be safe, and store all of his

equipment. The result is Terry once again being left in limbo as to whether or not he will be able to get the variance to have his barn.

After we see and also hear from a number of Terry's neighbors and friends in interviews and OTF interviews their thoughts on Ron Ryan, the codes enforcement officer, and the unnecessary trouble that the Town of Onondaga is causing. As Terry sits with Joe Schmidt, a friend of theirs who is also a building contractor, he describes how in his county, projects like this are no-brainers and that he has never seen anything like this. Mary describes how there are fallen down barns in the county meanwhile they won't let a brand-new barn be built. Emma explains how Ron Ryan, who is the one who originally refused their application, accused them of using the farm only as an excuse to get the barn built. Terry is exasperated that the town has offered them no solutions only limitations. Another one of Terry's friend explains how he learned of Terry's dreams to develop this property over ten years ago and recounts how difficult the Town of Onondaga tends to make things. Their neighbor explains in a blunt manner how Mr. Ryan has a reputation of not being the easiest person to work with. We will learn through a title card that all of the boards that were met with have been reached out to for a request for an interview and they said because the decisions about Terry's property have not been made yet, it is not their policy to discuss these matters outside the hearings.

In an interview from their daughter Amy, we learn the perspective that although she doesn't understand why he wants this barn so badly, she understands why he's not willing to move to have it. She feels as though he puts on a good front trying to act happy and like he has everything together, as this is intercut with an interview with Terry discussing how lucky he is to have what he does have, especially the 43-long marriage to Emma, although his tone tells us he is in a lot of pain regardless. Amy believes it'll be a heart-wrenching decision to have to choose between his dreams of having his barn and a farm and leaving the home he's put so much work into, and the community he's spent three decades cultivating with his neighbors. We also learn here that Terry's timeline has quite a bit of urgency as it takes 10-12 years to grow a Christmas tree from sapling to fully grown and ready to cut down. This is all heard with B roll of Terry getting up from his chair and seeing the look of pain on his face from his knees and ending with a story he tells around a campfire of him waking up with a Charlie horse in his leg and Mary teasing him calling him old.

It is now the beginning of fall, and Emma is driving around the neighborhood near where the barn will be built and going door-to-door to hand out one-sheets explaining what the barn will be like and asking for their support. That night is the

final town board meeting to determine whether or not Terry will be able to get a variance to have the barn he wants so he can start his Christmas tree farm. It is Emma's hope, that she can rally the neighbors to show up to the meeting to show their support for the structure, so that the board doesn't have the idea in their head that the barn or farm will be a hindrance to them and also to boost Terry's image by showing how well he is loved and to put pressure on the town since all of these members are elected officials by those very same people. We feel bad for Emma as it is a sad thing to watch as she rallies for her family's basic rights to be honored. Intercut with this is an interview of Terry in the woods, where we see the trees really beginning to change color. During this interview, Terry's emotions come through as frustrated agony. He is nervous as his whole future rests on tonight's meeting, and he is worried that his neighbors will think he is crazy for fighting so hard for something he shouldn't have to fight this hard to get.

That night at the meeting, we see how over sixty neighbors and friends have packed the town hall. Historically all meetings we have seen prior to this had completely empty seats and no positive results. The meeting is opened by Terry's lawyer who hands the board nine letters from neighbors who couldn't attend, speaking in favor of the barn being built. One-by-one, each neighbor, even ones Terry doesn't know very well, stands up and says something nice about him and why he deserves to have the barn. The neighbors are all confident that the barn will be a beautiful addition to the neighborhood, well-structured, and that the trees would be a better alternative than someone coming in and developing houses, We learn that Terry has helped a number of folks with their landscaping, is always the first one to rally everyone together to help out someone in need, and through multiple rounds of applause he is heralded as the unofficial mayor of the neighborhood. The display of love from the town here is overwhelming. The town board are completely caught off-guard and although they all agree that they should vote in favor of Terry getting the variance, else they risk losing future votes, they decide to hold on their final decision for further review. Terry leaves the meeting feeling like a winner and we get the sense that this is the break he's been looking for all along.

We bring the audience up high just to punch them in the gut just as Terry and Emma had been as the next day, they were informed that the Zoning Board of Appeals were going to also have to refer Terry's case to the Town Board. This not only made it so that a board they had not been able to present their case in front of would have to vote as to whether or not Terry could build his barn, but so that he would have to wait, yet again, to find out the fate of his dream.

A month and a half later, the day before his 65th birthday, we learn at the final meeting that two members of the Town Board of Appeals were absent during the

presentation of Terry's case and that they had asked me to send them the footage of the neighbors speaking at the meeting to help them make their decision. After some back and forth about whether they had enough information to vote, those two members abstained from voting and there was a unanimous vote for Terry to have the permit. He then came home to a surprise party put on by his wife and his neighbors to celebrate both his birthday and his permit.

The falling action of the film is seen through a montage of the two years following with major credits animated with the footage. We see Terry and Emma at Rockefeller Center and hear Emma saying how this is just the beginning and they have a lot to look forward to. We see Terry planting his first Christmas trees, we see a time-lapse of the barn being built and the neighbors coming to help. This is also going to be intercut with quick clips of Terry and Emma discussing more roadblocks the town has presented them, with the building of the barn. At this point, the audience can laugh at the ludicrousness of it all, as we come to the conclusion that even when you have the permits and you own the land, ultimately, everything is still owned by the government. Yet still, the barn is built, and we end before rolling credits, with shots of New Year's Eve 2016 to 2017 in the barn, just as Terry and Emma said they would after they got the permit. Fade to black and roll credits.

CHARACTERS

Terry McHugh



Terry spent most of his youth on a 50-acre Christmas Tree farm in a town smaller than Onondaga, called West Valley, about 50 miles outside of Buffalo, NY. His mother bought the farm in the 1950s and since then, he and his two older brothers and one older sister would come to the farm every summer to plant and cultivate the farm under the tutelage of his father Howard. The farm quickly grew into a business, which extended into having a number of Christmas tree lots in the Buffalo area during the holiday season. After he met his now wife, Emma, at orientation of college at Buffalo State University, she would ride on the back of his motorcycle to the farm on weekends and that was how they dated. Forty-six years later and their marriage and love are still growing strong. After bouncing around to a number of teaching jobs, Terry landed a job with Niagara Mohawk in Syracuse and then he and Emma settled into Sycamore Hills with their adopted daughter Amy, and a year later adopted Amanda. In 1999, in the process of Niagara Mohawk going out of business, Terry was laid off and, in that process, started his business McHugh Star Services, where he finds rare items and large equipment and re-sells them on eBay. In 2001, his mother Catherine passed away without details in her will as to who would take over the family Christmas tree farm. Since his brother Patrick lived next door to the property and was already running the tree lots, it was decided that he would take over the family business. A rift occurred between the two brothers wherein Patrick started charging Terry for Christmas trees even though he planted many of them growing up on the farm. Around this same time Terry found himself working for a now 101-year-old wealthy industrialist as his property manager in Syracuse and

Brooklyn as well as a business manager helping to mediate problems within the company. In 2012, Terry purchased 4.97 acres of land only sixty feet from his current property with the intention of growing his own Christmas tree farm

Emma McHugh



Emma McHugh spent her youth in the Town of Cheektowaga just outside of Buffalo, NY and is the oldest of two sisters and one brother. Her father Phillip kept a Victory Garden in their backyard which is where Emma's love for gardening and sustainable sourcing began. Her summers were spent with her family boating and fishing and camping with the Girl Scouts. She loved playing piano, violin, clarinet and accordion growing up as well as playing all sorts of sports. She attended Buffalo State where she met Terry and earned a bachelors and master's degree in Home Economics. In the early years of her marriage with Terry, she made her and Terry Christmas stockings and Christmas tree ornaments out of household items such as cans and egg cartons which are treasured keepsakes the family still uses to this day. She started as a Home and Careers teacher and when she and Terry adopted Amy and Amanda, focused her energy on being a parent until Amanda was in school where she then became a Nursery school teacher and started her own wreath-making business which blossomed over the years during the holidays. Emma remains close to her siblings and spends every Christmas with her extended family at her sister Sharon's home just outside of Buffalo. In 2001 Emma became the Home and Careers teacher at Amanda's middle school Marcellus Central Schools. Emma is fully supportive of Terry's dream and as she says in the film "his dream has become my dream." Emma shows her support actively by helping in the yard and going door-to-door to her neighbors to encourage them to come to the town board of appeals final meeting which will determine the fate of Terry having his barn.

Amy McHugh

Amy McHugh was adopted at just a few days old from Florida by Terry and Emma and is the oldest of their two adopted daughters, Amy and Amanda. Amy grew up playing piano and French horn and found a love for photography on her 35mm camera. The friends she grew up with when she was just a baby, she still has strong friendships with to this day. They played volleyball, tennis and were in track together and have been in each other's weddings. Amy went to Marist College in Poughkeepsie for Communications and got her master's degree at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. She met her now husband (and during filming fiancée) while studying abroad in Sydney and has since gone back and forth between Syracuse and Sydney to maintain the relationship. During filming she and her fiancée Andy are living in Syracuse, as Andy is a graduate student at Syracuse University in forensic sciences and Amy is working as a professor of international communications, and alternative student advisor at SUNY Oswego. Amy loves her parents dog Dundee and often takes care of him as if he were her own. Amy is very supportive of her father's pursuit although she does present a skeptical, realist point-of-view on the issue in that she doesn't understand her father's vehement obsession with overcoming the town's obstacles and wonders sometimes why he doesn't just move to a new neighborhood. Since filming, Amy and Andy have gotten married in front of the finished barn in their woods, and they now reside in Sydney where Amy continues to work as an adjunct professor and is a new mom.

Mike and Mary Fox

Mike and Mary Fox grew up and met in Buffalo, New York. They have been family-friends and neighbors for over thirty years, ever since Mike Fox nearly ran over Amanda flying down the neighborhood's steepest hill with her bike out of control. Mary worked in HR for a number of Syracuse companies and Mike worked for the IRS. They are currently both retired and enjoy traveling together. Emma and Mary have been going on morning walks together for over two decades and the couple loves enjoying wine, dinners, holidays and going to the theater with Terry and Emma. Mary often makes an appearance in the film as being a very supportive and humorous figure in the film with her outgoing energy that is akin to Terrys. She fully understands Terrys drive to accomplish his dreams as she says in the film "the things I loved when I was young, I still love doing today."

Kelly Matecki

Kelly Matecki grew up as the first granddaughter on Terry's side of the family to her father, Terry's eldest brother, Howard. She and her younger brother Sean had a tough childhood as her mother Annette was sick for a long time and then passed away. She grew up playing on the family-farm and experienced her grandfather Charles as a rambunctious, fun guy who was always there for her. Her father remarried to Sandy and had two daughters Maggie and Jessie. Just before the start of filming Howard passed away. She is now a hair stylist in Elma near Buffalo, with college-aged twin sons and a daughter.

Ted McHugh

Ted McHugh was Terry's eldest cousin. He grew up near Buffalo, New York on his father. Terry's uncle, own Christmas tree farm. He recounts in his interview, how his father and Terry's father had an argument about how the Christmas tree farm should be run, and so he broke off from McHugh Family Trees (Terry's father's farm) and started his own about a decade down the line. After his father passed away, his mother ran it for a while as they had Christmas tree lots in Buffalo covering areas that McHugh Family Trees did not. Since, Ted founded McHugh Art Studio, where he has become a well-known leaded-glass artist, repairing many churches in the Buffalo area. He also started his own Christmas tree farm, however about a decade in right when the trees had reached full growth, he lost 2/3 of the trees to deer and extreme weather shifts; after this he gave up on Christmas tree farming. Two years after filming his interview, Ted passed away and his son Pat took over his business as a stained-glass artist. The film will be in-part dedicated to him.

Chris Finkle

Chris Finkle has been Terry and Emma's next-door neighbor and friend for nearly two decades. He is a retired assistant superintendent of north Syracuse central schools. Now he and his wife have a business restoring antique chests. He fully participates in neighborhood activities and he and Terry help each other with their own building projects very frequently. In the film we can see Terry assisting Chris with his chests and Chris standing up for Terry at the final town board of appeals meeting.

Phil Sauro

Phil Sauro has been in the neighborhood for over ten years and has one son and one daughter. He sells food products to restaurants and has very strong feelings about the local government. From his own experience as well as hearing from others he recounts how Mr. Ryan, the one who wouldn't accept Terry and Emma's permit application, is not the easiest person to work with and says very blatantly to the camera exactly what he thinks of him.

“The small family farm is one of the last places - they are getting rarer every day - where men and women (and girls and boys, too) can answer that call to be an artist, to learn to give love to the work of their hands. It is one of the last places where the maker - and some farmers still do talk about "making the crops" - is responsible, from start to finish, for the thing made. “

-Wendell Berry, *Bringing it to the Table: on Farming and Food*

TOPICS COVERED/RELEVANCE:

Retirement

Today's culture is showing us that retirement as we have known it is becoming a thing of the past. In reaction to a survey conducted by the Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder.com, Rosemary Haefner (VP of HR at CareerBuilder.com) says that many retirees will pick-up part-time jobs because they enjoy working as a means of fulfillment. She also says that a number of those who would retire keep their jobs because they have to, due to the losses incurred in the recession.

Terry's boss, a now 101-year-old wealthy industrialist says that the reason he will never retire is because he feels as if not working is boring. Terry doesn't ever plan on retiring either. Instead, during the year approaching his 65th birthday, he was working tirelessly in both his job as a property manager as well as clearing out the land and working with a lawyer to gain his right to build a barn on his own property.

"I'm at the 35th inch of my 36-inch yard stick of life" he says. There is no reason to take a break, however, in fact, this only motivates him further to have his dream of having a farm of the trees that he loves in the neighborhood that he loves surrounded by the community and wife that he loves. This urgency comes from the fact that growing a Christmas tree from a seedling to a size that's ready to cut for the holidays takes about 12 years. Terry has always planned on planting seedlings and is still what he plans to do.

Land Legislation

Land legislation laws are a tough nut to crack, especially in a small town with not much else going on except for families trying to live out their lives to the ideal of the "**American Dream.**" To think that a mere 300ths of an acre would make it so that a town wouldn't allow a man, who is loved and known by all of neighbors as the "mayor" of the community, to build a simple barn on his property makes us wonder what the real issue is here. If Terry were to instead of a barn, build two houses on the property and sell it, that wouldn't require any sort of permits or extensive meetings from the Board of Appeals. Why might this be? Taxes. Houses can be taxed much higher than barns. Also, the definition of a farm can mean any number of things depending on the farmer growing it.

For Terry, a Christmas tree farm that is facing a road would mean minimal disturbance to his neighbors and he has an open-door policy when it comes to the property in that anyone is welcome on it at any time to enjoy as they please. However if this were to be a microbrewery, which have seen a huge surge in

popularity in Upstate NY since the New York Farm Brewery Law was instated (not coincidentally around the same time that the first moratorium in the Town of Onondaga was imposed) the issue becomes about potential disturbances to neighbors as that would entail more smell, noise and a disturbance in traffic. The solution for the town board was to re-evaluate the 5-acre minimum and to increase it to 7 acres for anyone looking to build a barn of a certain size on their own property.

When Terry and Emma applied for a permit to build a barn, the application wasn't accepted because of the upcoming moratorium - even though applications of this kind are all supposed to be accepted for review, regardless of future plans from the town. Because of this, there was no paper evidence showing their attempts began before any of these changes began to take place and therefore weakened their case when asking for a variance.

Dreams

So, we must ask ourselves, how do we handle adversity with a local government that holds the power to either give us what we desire or destroy all hopes for our swan song American Dream? How do we approach our friends and family in humbly asking for their help and support? Who will come through for us when we really need it? *Finally - what's most important?*

Terry had a vision, **a story of "convergence"** - which is what he will name his barn - when he bought the property. That everything he had been working so hard for, for so long was coming together at one place at one time. I have a vision of doing the same with this documentary while having met a lot of adversity of my own. From unsupportive extended family members, people who don't quite understand what it is that this film is about, to financial limitations and geographical challenges. For both of us, it has been a given that self-doubt has crept in and we have had to re-evaluate our priorities and what it will take to necessitate this dream for others as well as ourselves.

It's understandable. People are complicated. Dreams are complicated. Life isn't always going to pan out the way you had planned - but with enough tenacity and belief in your goals, attaining your dreams is possible. This is the story of a man pursuing his, and how he meets those obstacles when they arise.

Tradition

Pursuing the American Dream has in a way, become a common denominator in American traditions. To pursue happiness and attain success no matter where we are at in life, nor what our situation is. To support this theme, we are highlighting Christmas traditions and how Christmas trees have affected those traditions and touched our lives.

This holiday season may be the mother of all traditions - and we often forget how important they are in our lives. Whether you celebrate Christmas or not, the

season itself tends to either give us the "warm fuzzies" or stress us out - not unlike the range of emotions that the McHugh family went through themselves during this time.

Not only were the McHugh's and their neighbors interviewed about their family traditions, but I also interviewed New Yorkers at the Rockefeller Center Tree Lighting Ceremony, and those working at 5 different tree lots around Brooklyn, Queens and South Philadelphia. The result? Everyone had a story to tell about their trees growing up, the ornaments passed down from generation to generation, the various rituals on Christmas Eve - always told with a smile on their faces and a feeling of nostalgia. In a world that is constantly changing, if we can get back to our traditions and spear-head them forward, we can have something to hold onto that continues to connect us as a family and as a community.

ARTISTIC APPROACH

The aim with this film is to give the audience a sense of nostalgia and “Christmas spirit.” To do this I wanted to give the film the intimate feeling that we are watching a home movie. This is shown through mostly vérité footage and OTF interviews. I did this by living in the same home as my main characters and being a part of the experience as much as I was observing it. I realized while filming that the story was stronger if my identity as the daughter of the main character was made known. So, in the edit, I show the little moments in between filming where Terry is referring to me as his daughter or my sister calling me “Cakes” which is a nickname she’s had for me since I was a child. At times I put the camera on a tripod so I can participate in various family traditions. I tried during numerous stages of filming to get interviews with town board members, however, no one would give me one. So, I decided to lean into that and focus fully on Terry’s perspective, which shows us that while the surface conflict is man versus society, the real conflict is man versus self.

To add to the nostalgic feel, I use plenty of supporting authentic 8mm and VHS found footage from Terry’s own collection as well as a cassette tape of an interview I did with my grandmother when I was twelve years old about her being the one to actually purchase the farm. There is also footage of Terry and Emma going through old photos reminiscing about how they met and got married and Emma and her sister Sharon going through old photos talking about their wacky Christmas traditions that have evolved over the years.

The look will be to somewhat marry the new footage shot, as well as the old, with color correction that will mimic the look of one of my favorite Christmas films “A Christmas Story.” The soft grain, earth-tones and weathered look will give it a traditional film feel which I believe will evoke the timeless nature of many of the topics of the film.

The music is also a very central part of the approach: while filming I heard the music I wanted to use, which is Dan Duggan’s “Christmas Morn” album. Dan Duggan is an award-winning folk musician from upstate New York, known for his hammered dulcimer playing. I grew up seeing his performances in my school and listening to his Christmas album every Christmas morning. Dan Duggan has already agreed to come on board as our composer and has already donated all of his existing music for use in the film. We would ideally like to collaborate with him on an original score especially for the middle sections where the theme of Christmas is less present. The music is central to tying the story together in a way that it all feels cohesive as the dulcimer is a very specific sound.

A parallel that will be made is to the film "It's a Wonderful Life" – in the way that a man struggles to find his value and place in a world that economically and legally feels very unsupportive, but by the end of it all, with the support of his friends and family, he comes out triumphant. This will be shown through the structure and also simply, cutting to shots of the "It's a Wonderful Life" sign the couple have above their fireplace which they always seem to have burning.

STATUS of FILM

Current State of the Film:

The film is currently picture-wrapped, and we are halfway through editing. We also have our sound designer, composer and editor locked in. In March and April, I'll also be working with our web designer to complete the website and update our Kickstarter backers the new status of the film and what that means for their rewards. Between then and July I'll be focusing on attaining the rest of the funds needed through grants, investors as well as gathering feedback from my peers who haven't seen any of the cuts of the film, to help unlock some editing roadblocks we've run into.

Projected Timeline, Funding Dependent:

Three Weeks: Attain HIGH-RES conversions of the 8mm and VHS footage. Record voice over. Film a new opening sequence that will show all of the characters in the documentary by utilizing old photos of them, placed onto ornaments and hung on a Christmas tree, which will then be accompanied by a title card.

Six Weeks: Completion of the final, 90-minute cut of the film.

Three Days: Color grading.

Eight Weeks: Film sent to our composer to music edit the film with existing pieces and score original connecting pieces.

Ten Days: Sound editorial, design and mix, which includes surround and stereo deliverables, for theatrical and VOD.

All of the post-production crew is on standby to begin working on the film once funds are secured. We may need to work around various schedules since funding has yet to be attained, but once funds are secured, completing the film from editing through sound should take an estimated five months. The goal is to ideally have the film finished on time to submit to Sundance Film Festival by the 2019 Fall deadline.

So far, my editor Lillian Mauser-Carter has been generous enough to offer her free time on the weekends when not working at Vice, however this has slowed our progress immensely. Since we are all ready 60% completed with the edit with a very clear direction of where the film needs to go, she and I feel confident that six weeks of full-time work will be enough. Dan Duggan, an award winning, nationally acclaimed folk musician and hammered dulcimer player, is currently signed on as our composer, which we expect this to take six weeks. Finally, the film will move on to Thomas Ouziel for sound design, which includes a recording studio to record voice-over for the opening as well as some ADR, if needed.

"The Family Tree" Line Item Budget Top Sheet

Director: Amanda Kari McHugh
Producer: Amanda Kari McHugh
Co-Producer: Lillian Rose Mauser-Carter
Production Co. What Now? Productions LLC
Address: 1539 N. Alexandria Ave., Apt. #302
 Los Angeles, CA 90027
Phone #: (315) 430-5221
E-mail: mchugh.amanda@gmail.com

BUDGET TOPSHEET

COMPLETED:		
PRODUCTION:	Subtotals	
Camera & Lighting	\$15,032.09	
Sound	\$580.00	
Media	\$2,102.11	
Location	\$1,855.28	
Food	\$619.95	
	PRODUCTION GRAND TOTAL:	\$20,189.43
POST-PRODUCTION:	Subtotals	
Editing	\$15,825.12	
Sound Post-Production	\$1,385.00	
Graphics	\$576.00	
PR & Kickstarter	\$3,598.20	
	POST-PRODUCTION GRAND TOTAL:	\$21,317.25
COMPLETED GRAND TOTAL:		\$41,506.68

PROPOSED:		
POST-PRODUCTION:	Subtotals	
Editing	\$21,180	
Sound Post-Production	\$16,500.00	
Titles & Graphics	\$2,000	
Rights & Clearances	\$90	
Insurance & Legal	\$17,000	
	PROPOSED POST-PRODUCTION GRAND TOTAL:	\$56,770
OTHER:	Subtotals	
Festivals & Promo		\$8,550
	PROPOSED OTHER GRAND TOTAL:	
	10% Contingency	\$6,532.00
PROPOSED GRAND TOTAL:		\$71,852

COMBINED BUDGET TOTAL: **\$113,358.68**

"The Family Tree" Documentary Completed Line Item Budget

**PRODUCTION (COMPLETED!)
CAMERA & LIGHTING**

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
*Director of Photography	1	58	\$200.00	\$11,600.00	
*Camera + Lighting Package	1	1	\$50.00	\$3,432.09	
			Camera & Lighting Total		\$15,032.09

SOUND

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
Sound Package	1	58	\$10.00	\$580.00	
			Sound Total		\$580.00

MEDIA

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
Memory Cards	1	1	\$69.75	\$69.75	
*Laptop	1	1	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	
Research	1	1	\$24.95	\$24.95	
On-Location Internet Usage	1	1	\$7.41	\$7.41	
			Media Total		\$2,102.11

LOCATION

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
*Car Rental	1	1	\$287.24	\$287.24	
*Metro Pass	1	1	\$178.00	\$178.00	
*Plane Tickets	1	1	\$159.00	\$159.00	
*Bus Tickets	1	1	\$656.00	\$656.00	
*Locations Fee	1	1	\$7.00	\$7.00	
*Rideshare/ Taxi	1	1	\$380.38	\$380.38	
*Gas/Tolls/ Parking	1	1	\$187.66	\$187.66	
			Location Total		\$1,855.28

FOOD

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
*Meals	1	1	\$411.33	\$411.33	
*Craft Services	1	1	\$208.62	\$208.62	
			Food Total		\$619.95

PRDUCTION GRAND TOTAL

\$20,189.43

**POST PRODUCTION TO-DATE
EDITING**

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
*Editor	1	12.6	\$1,000.00	\$12,600.00	
*Harddrive Purchase	1	1	\$586.00	\$888.35	

"The Family Tree" Documentary Completed Line Item Budget

Footage Transcriptions	1	1	\$1,500.00	\$1,200.00	
Kickstarter Trailer Editing	1	\$1	\$500.00	\$500.00	
*Trailer editing 1-minute	1	1	\$250.00	\$250.00	
*Software	1	1	\$279.83	\$279.83	
*Low-Res Dubs and Transfers	1	1	\$106.94	\$106.94	
				Editing Total	\$15,825.12

SOUND POST-PRODUCTION

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
Kickstarter Trailer Audio Mixing	1	1	\$150.00	\$150.00	
*1-minute Trailer Audio Mixing	1	1	\$175.00	\$175.00	
*Kickstarter Trailer Music	1	1	\$30.00	\$30.00	
*1-minute Trailer Music	1	1	\$30.00	\$30.00	
*Music Used in Film So Far	1	1	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	
				Sound Post-Production Total	\$1,385.00

GRAPHICS

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
*Logo Design	1	1	\$76.00	\$76.00	
Kickstarter Graphics	1	1	\$500.00	\$500.00	
				Graphics Total	\$576.00

PR & KICKSTARTER

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
*Postcards	1	1	\$31.86	\$31.86	
*Website Domain	1	4	\$12.00	\$48.00	
*Website Hosting	1	9	\$29.00	\$261.00	
*Kickstarter Social Media Advertising	1	1	\$265.84	\$265.84	
*Kickstarter Launch Party Venue Payment	1	1	\$46.20	\$46.20	

"The Family Tree" Documentary Completed Line Item Budget

*Kickstarter Launch Party Performance Fees	1	1	\$67.07	\$67.07	
Kickstarter & Amazon Fees	1	1	\$2,811.16	\$2,811.16	
PR & Kickstarter Total					\$3,598.20
POST-PRDUCTION TO DATE GRAND TOTAL					\$21,367.25
COMPLETE GRAND TOTAL				\$41,506.68	

***NOTES**

CAMERA & LIGHTING

Amanda Kari McHugh was both the Director and Director of Photography. Equipment that was used was her own. Costs calculated were for what the equipment package would be rented out for and additional equipment packages and repairs that were needed during production. **\$2,940 in-kind equipment donation.** Rest covered by Kickstarter funds.

SOUND

Amanda Kari McHugh ran sound on her own personal Tascam DR-40, Samson Lavs, and Rode VideoMic Pro. The costs here are estimated for what it would cost to rent out this sound package. **All sound was donated.**

MEDIA

Laptop used is donated by director.

LOCATION

\$834.76 transportation/locations costs donated by Director. Rest covered by Kickstarter funds.

FOOD

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal
\$462.62 food costs donated by Director. Rest covered by Kickstarter funds.				

POST PRODUCTION TO-DATE EDITING

Editor has donated \$4,200 worth of editing hours to documentary since October 2015. **Editor has also provide \$239.98 in Premiere Pro** software for Editing. **Director has donated \$396 worth fo harddrives.** **Low-res 8mm conversations were an additional donation by a Kickstarter backer.** The rest of these costs were covered by the Kickstarter funds.

GRAPHICS

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal
*Logo Design costs donated by Director.				

PR & KICKSTARTER

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal
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***Postcards, Website Costs, Kickstarter Social Media and Launch Party costs all donated by Director.** Venue itself was donated so long as a bar tab was covered. 6 singer-songwriters donated their performances to launch party, gas was covered. Kickstarter and Amazon Fees came out of final total raised on Kickstarter.

"The Family Tree" Documentary Proposed Line Item Budget

PROPOSED POST-PRODUCTION EDITING

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	Total
Editor	1	6	\$1,000	\$6,000	
Harddrive Purchase	1	1	\$180	\$180	
High-Res Dubs and Transfers	1	1	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Colorist	1	3	\$1,000	\$3,000	
Deliverables	1	1	\$10,000	\$10,000	
Editing Total					\$21,180

SOUND POST-PRODUCTION

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	Total
*Sound Designer	1	1	\$9,000	\$9,000	
- includes assistant, V/O Recording, studio rental, and Deliverables	-	-	-		
*Score	1	1	\$7,500	\$7,500	
Sound Post-Production Total					\$16,500

TITLES & GRAPHICS

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	Total
*Graphics Designer	1	1	\$250	\$250	
*Main Titles	1	1	\$500	\$500	
*Subtitles	1	1	\$250	\$250	
*End Credits	1	1	\$1,000	\$1,000	
Titles & Graphics Total					\$2,000

RIGHTS & CLEARANCES, ETC

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	Total
*Transcripts	1	\$90	\$1	\$90	
Rights & Clearances, etc. Total					\$90

INSURANCE & LEGAL

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	Total
*LLC Fees	1	1	\$10,000	\$10,000	
*Legal Fees	1	1	\$5,000	\$5,000	
E&O Fees	1	1	\$2,000	\$2,000	
- for festival coverage					
Insurance & Legal Total					\$17,000

PROPOSED POST-PRDUCTION GRAND TOTAL \$56,770

"The Family Tree" Documentary Proposed Line Item Budget

PROPOSED OTHER FESTIVALS & PROMO

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	
Website Design & Hosting	1	12	\$50	\$600	
Postcards/Posters	1	1	\$250	\$250	
T-Shirts	1	250	\$11	\$2,750	
Social Media Ads	1	1	\$100	\$100	
Film Markets	1	1	\$600	\$600	
Festival Screeners	1	1	\$400	\$400	
Festival Entry Fees	1	1	\$1,000	\$1,000	
Transportation to Festivals	1	1	\$2,500	\$2,500	
Accomodations at Festivals	1	1	\$350	\$350	
PROPOSED OTHER GRAND TOTAL:					\$8,550

PROPOSED GRAND TOTAL \$65,320

NOTES

EDITING

Category	Amount	Units	Rate	Subtotal	Total
Estimated time left to edit is 6 weeks full-time at a rate of \$1000/week for the Editor.					

TITLES & GRAPHICS

End credits based on Endcrawl's cost of creating and editing end credits for 4K.

RIGHTS & CLEARANCES, ETC

Transcription costs based on the film ending up being about 90 minutes.

INSURANCE & LEGAL

LLC costs based on back taxes owed to state of CA to be reinstated as an LLC which is what curretn contracts are signed under. Will need to speak with a lawyer to determine whether this is necessary or contracts can be signed over to a new entity.

PROPOSED OTHER FESTIVALS & PROMO

Festival costs based on submitting to 10 festivals. Accomodations in NYC, Syracuse, Vancouver, Los Angeles, New Orleans, San Francisco and Austin can be taken care of by friends and family. Promo materials based on estimates from Vista Print, ID Solutions and previous digital marketing costs.

"The Family Tree" Funding to Date

Source	Amount	Status
Kickstarter Campaign	\$15,751	Secured
Private Investment	\$25,755.68	Secured
The Fledging Fund	\$25,000	Applied
Roy W. Dean Grant	\$5,889	Will apply April 2019
Gucci-Tribeca Documentary Fund	\$18,750	Applied
Nancy Malone Marketing and Promotion Grant	\$5,000	Will apply June 2019
Media Impact Funders Grant	TBD	Will apply TBD
Sundance Institute Documentary Fund	\$40,000	Will apply September 2019
NYWIFT's in-kind post-production grants	TBD	Will apply May 2019
Producing for PBS	TBD	TBD
Film Independent Documentary Fellowship	\$10,000	Applied
ITVS Open Call	TBD	TBD

FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

The strategy for fundraising is first to attain fiscal sponsorship, preferably through Film Independent, and continue in the grant application process. There are a number of grant applications that are currently on the roster to apply for, where I have it scheduled out to average about one grant application per month between now and July 2019. Each grant was chosen, as *The Family Tree* and myself seem to uniquely fit that organizations goals for the types of films and filmmakers they are looking to support. The grants I'll be applying for are The Fledging Fund, the Roy W. Dean grant, the Gucci-Tribeca Documentary fund, the Nancy Malone Marketing and Production Grant, and the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund.

In addition to this, I'll be reaching out to individuals, organizations and companies that may be interested in supporting this film either as an executive producer or sponsor. Tom Nunan, whom I met at a Film Independent workshop, has taken an interest in "The Family Tree" and has offered to help connect us to an executive producer he believes may be interested in coming on board, once our website and 1-minute trailer are complete, both of which will be finished within the next two weeks. Organizations I'm looking to reach out to: AARP, Nationwide Insurance, Canon (who have already hosted us as part of the "Almost Finished" Female Filmmakers showcase) and the Christmas Tree Farmer's Association of New York. We are also adding a "donate" button to the website in case anyone would like to make an in-kind, tax deductible donation to the film at any point.

While filming tree lots in NYC, I made a point to film shots of "Santa's Christmas Magic" products which includes ornaments, Christmas lights and tree food that helps Christmas trees retain their needles. I will be reaching out to them as well to pitch possibly having them come on board as a sponsor. Last but not least, a "Christmas in July" fundraising event is something I'm looking to do next summer, as a means of getting the last leg of our funding. Having experience hosted events for various non-profits in Los Angeles, I already have resources at my disposal to do this with as little overhead as possible.

DISTRIBUTION and MARKETING STRATEGY

Being that it is my editor and mines' premiere feature documentary, a solid festival run is very important to us. Festivals that are currently on our roster to apply for are: Sundance, TriBeCa, SXSW, Telluride, Toronto International Film Festival, Hot Docs, Louisiana International Film Festival (LIFF), Slamdance, Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, Philadelphia Film Festival, Rochester International Film Festival, Buffalo International Film Festival, Oregon Independent Film Festival, Los Angeles Documentary Film festival, Full Frame Documentary Film Festival and Silver Docs. These were selected because either I already have a connection to the festival itself through covering it as press or working in production (Sundance, LIFF, SXSW), or because the location is uniquely suited to growing Christmas trees or the festival's focus is on documentary film.

Marketing will begin its preliminary stages during fundraising, getting the existing social media accounts out of hibernation and updating the mailing list and letting everyone know the current status of the film and beginning a monthly e-mail update of the status of the film. During its festival run, more grassroots marketing will take place by way of passing out postcards with screening times. Potential marketing merch will be a decorative pinecone ornament with the name of the film on it, and T-shirts, which were designed during the course of the Kickstarter campaign and proved to be hugely popular.

For distribution, our aim is to first have a theatrical release at independent theaters across the country, especially in areas where Christmas trees are grown, such as Oregon, North Carolina, California, Washington and the northeast. We would then like to have a public broadcast release; we think a network like PBS would be right for this film and my editor and I agree that we will be able to make a 50-minute version of the film for this purpose if it gets picked up. Finally, landing with a VOD release, preferably on Netflix and Amazon since those have the widest reach currently. We would like to avoid a release that only involves hard copy DVD, since not only is that less widely viewed, it is also not very sustainable.

ABOUT the SAMPLE WORK

File Name: The Family Tree ROUGH CUT

This is our 10th version of the cut at about an hour long. After many iterations my editor and I went back to the basic story and we believe this is our skeleton of the film. The middle needs to be much more fleshed out with more interviews which we have shot as the film is completely picture-wrapped. The ending will also be different as the way the permit was actually attained involved a couple more hoops to jump through which we are now going to include. This is without any music editing or audio mixing.

Link: <https://app.frame.io/presentations/033b60bc-260d-4cbd-8023-77aa5dc38535>

Password: TFT2018

KEY CREATIVE PERSONNEL

Amanda Kari McHugh

Director / Producer / Cinematographer

Amanda Kari McHugh is a bi-coastal documentary filmmaker and photographer, whose work has been featured on publications such as *Time Out New York*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Vice*, *Brooklyn Vegan*, *Everfest*, *Lecturas* (print), *Insomniac*, *Dancing Astronaut*, *Mixmag*, the *Brooklyn Eagle* and countless others. As a journalist she's written articles covering primarily festivals including Sundance Film Festival, Desert Hearts and Art Basel Miami. She currently runs the blog *Focal Nomad* which explores her own healing and transformation through the exploration of travel, art and events.

Most notably she was a producer on the Pivot docuseries *Life Line Booth*, the UPM for the viral musical comedy video "Burning Man: The Musical" and a producer for the award-winning webseries *Slice the Series*. She also acted as Associate Producer, to help raise 300k for the Kickstarter campaign of the upcoming feature-documentary *I Know Catherine, the Log Lady*, presented by David Lynch.

While attending The University of the Arts in Philadelphia, she was a punk show promoter, experimental theater director, go-go dancer and animal rights activist. Having started out as an actress (SAG-AFTRA), Amanda focuses primarily on character development and highlighting the everyday hero.

Lillian Rose Mauser-Carter

Editor / Co-Producer

Lillian Mauser-Carter was born on a couch in Dayton, Ohio, where the roots of her love for the weird and creative first unfurled. Deepening their reach, Lillian moved to Chicago in 2007 to learn Digital Filmmaking and Video Production at the Illinois Institute of Art. In the process of creating her first documentary, *Learn Free*, she realized the power of nonfiction storytelling and discovered her love for the craft.

Upon completing her bachelor's degree in the fine arts, Lillian gained commercial experience while working at a major, fast-paced production house as an Associate Graphics Producer. Additionally, she gained experience as an editor for the feature documentary *Welcome to Unity*.

Hungry to explore new techniques and experiences, Lillian moved to New York City in 2013, eager to return to her documentary roots. After working various film production jobs while finding her footing in New York, Lillian helped raise funds and started editing *The Family Tree*, a feature documentary about a man and his desire to have a Christmas tree farm against all odds. During this process, Lillian's broadened her scope working on a wide range of content for digital, film, and broadcast. Currently, she works full time at *Viceland* as an online editor on a variety of their prime-time programming.

Dan Duggan

Composer

Dan Duggan is known nationally for his wizardry on hammered dulcimer and flat-picking guitar and is the recipient of the National Hammered Dulcimer Championship. He is a true multi-instrumentalist, equally at home on guitar, slide guitar, piano, banjo and his signature hammered dulcimer. Included in his extensive array of recordings { 18 }, are six recordings of original compositions including the recently released " *For the Love of Friends*". He and his wife Peggy Lynn have released two trio albums with Dan Berggren, the more recent titled *Jamcrackers*, and as a duo have released four recordings: *Keeping Christmas*, *A Stitch in Time*, and *Be the Light and the recently released "Esperance"* Dan's children's album, *Pieces of Our Life*, earned a Parent's Choice Award in 1998. His dulcimer work can also be heard on Paul Simon's CD *You're the One*, released in October of 2000 and "The Paul Simon Collection" released in 2004.

Thomas Ouziel

Sound Designer

Thomas' passion for sound grew in the midst of studying film production at Chapman University (class of '11). He fell in love with the way delicate changes in room tone and surreal sound design enhance the way films guide the audience. Energized after his nomination for Best Sound Designer at Chapman, he moved through a slew of post internships, including DaneTracks where he shadowed veteran sound designers like Dane Davis (all three Matrix films), and Paul Hackner (*Hunger Games*, *Drive*, *The Revenant*). He observed countless sessions at WB Sound on films like *Project X*, *The Raven* and *The Twilight* series. Informed by that experience, he co-founded MelodyGun with Hamed Hokamzadeh to facilitate the wide range of sound and music needs in filmmaking. With over 50 film credits and recent sound design nomination for the psychological thriller *Dry Blood*, he makes it a mission to never stop learning.

AUDIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

Intended Audience

The intended audience of this film is the retired, middle-class American white male, and anyone who is a little Christmas-crazed. While this film will certainly inspire anyone who watches it, I recognize the reality that the demographic of the town this story is about, is primarily white and retired or soon-to-be. The town appears to be of the Trump-supporting demographic and privilege, however are having to “fight the power” all the same. In addition, Terry and Emma’s political leanings are quite moderate, boasting sustainable farming practices while at the same time feeling the frustrations of being over-governed. This film will transcend any potential preconceived political notions over the common love of Christmas and supporting your fellow neighbor.

According to Tom Nunan, the strongest market for attending documentary screenings is the baby boomer white male, which is exactly who this film centers around, but in a way that is unifying and non-divisive. According to Variety.com, “There’s a climate right now for docs, but in particular uplifting ones,” Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi (“Free Solo”) says. “It’s about people wanting to see a story that’s real, but also inspires.” “The Family Tree” is exactly that. Although I am not directly part of this demographic, being Terry’s daughter is inviting as my generation can also relate to trying to understand our parents, their choices, and how maybe we can all still learn from each other in a time that it feels difficult to do so.

In the promotion of the film, my father will be present at as many screenings as possible. He is a very outgoing person and has watched enough HGTV shows to present himself well and answer any questions audiences might have for him. Having him and/or my mother present especially for the major screenings and premieres of the film will create engagement with the audience through dropping the barriers of age and building bridges of tradition and pursuing one’s passions.

Audience Engagement:

While this is not the main intention of the film, I do believe it would be well-suited for screenings at retirement homes for events with the residents and their children participating, to start a conversation about activities perhaps their parents still want to pursue, and dreams their children are working on and how they can best support each other in these goals.

It also might be interesting to screen the film at the state-level Christmas Tree Grower’s Association’s annual events, to start a conversation about local legislation and how that has placed dents in farmers’ plans on the local levels. Hopefully this would start a conversation between farmers about how their respective communities can support each other by offering insight and advice as well as simply showing up to meetings, which the film has shown has a drastic impact on the decisions the town boards make.

During the promotion of the Kickstarter campaign, I reached out to various Christmas Tree Growers' Associations' and received both promotional and monetary support from organizations all over the Midwest. They were exasperated upon reading of Terry's story from the press release I sent and wanted to "take care of their own" by promoting the film and donating to it as well.

Bringing us back to live social engagement and encouragement is something I hope to do with all of my films so I'm looking forward to developing these ideas more.

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

The Family Tree is well-suited for screenings at retirement homes for events with the residents and their children participating, to start a conversation about activities perhaps their parents still want to pursue, and dreams their children are working on and how they can best support each other in these goals. It also might be interesting to screen the film at the state-level Christmas Tree Grower's Association's annual events, to start a conversation about local legislation and how that has placed dents in farmers' plans on the local levels. Hopefully this would start a conversation between farmers about how their respective communities can support each other by offering insight and advice as well as simply showing up to meetings, which the film has shown has a drastic impact on the decisions the town boards make.

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