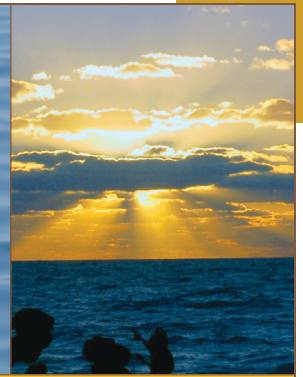


BAY WATCH NEWS



VOLUME 9 NUMBER 1

DECEMBER 2016

Lights, Camera, Action

By Tommye Fleming, Mahogany Ridge

YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED a film crew in and around Bonita Bay last month. They were in town interviewing veterans as part of a documentary called “Enlisted,” a perspective on today’s all-volunteer military. Unlike previous generations, who may have signed up for patriotic reasons, many of today’s enlisted join the armed services for more personal or practical reasons ... as a stepping-stone to college ... or in pursuit of another career path.

This film asks – and answers – a lot of questions:

- Does an 18-year-old fully grasp the commitment and consequences of enlisting?
- How do these life-changing decisions unfold after their service?
- What makes the military values and camaraderie unlike anything else in modern civilization?
- What dreams did they have? Did the military exceed their expectations or fall short?

Keith Famie, Director/Producer, and his Visionalist Entertainment Productions team, is responsible for the film. Bob Gillette, of Bonita Bay’s Rookery Lake and the Detroit area, is executive producer; he previously worked with Famie on a World War II veteran documentary and another about a Vietnam War veteran.

Famie and his team filmed in Bonita Bay once before, in 2012. *Bay Watch News* readers might recall the story that featured Dr. Brent Holleran of Mira Lago and members of the Bonita Bay Bicycle Club that ran in the April 2012 edition of this magazine. Brent’s interview was featured in a 7-part PBS series “The Embrace of Aging,” a male perspective of growing old. Readers can viewer a trailer at: <http://embraceofdyng.com/Men/trailer.html>.

About the Veterans

So who are these people who put on a uniform? Why did they choose to do so? And how do they fit in afterwards? This is Famie’s vision for his film.

On November 8, he and his crew began several months of veteran interviews. Among the first they talked to was Purple Heart recipient and President of the Bonita Bay Veterans Council, Nick Romano, Riverwalk. Some of the filming took place at Bonita Bay

Beach Park. Some in Riverside Park in Old Bonita Springs. There were eight filming locations in all.

How did Famie select Bonita Springs? Bob Gillette, of course. Famie was looking for a small-town America look at veterans. He wanted a touching Veterans’ Day ceremony to film. He was seeking interesting veterans to talk to. Gillette promised him all that and more in our own small town here in Southwest Florida.

The film crew has completed its work in Bonita Springs,

but will be crisscrossing America for some time in search of answers to questions like:

- When you joined the service, was it a career path or the result of poor choices/limited options?
- Why do so many young people choose the military over further education? What role do economic factors, a sense of immortality, exposure to video games and growing up in marginalized communities impact a young person’s decision to join the military?
- What happens after service ends – how difficult is reentry? What role do Veterans Administration services, drug addiction, PTSD and traumatic injuries play in adjusting?
- How important is camaraderie and how traumatic is dealing with the death of a friend?



Mayor (and Bonita Bay resident) Peter Simmons being filmed at Riverside Park



Writer's note: Several year ago, *Bay Watch News* featured an interview with 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps Charles Krulak, who lives in Estancia. When asked about the highlight of his career, Krulak's answer was one that any Marine would give: "It's the friendships you forge in the face of death."

When Famie was asked what has impressed him so far in the filming, he was especially touched by two Bonita Springs' veterans. First was Bill Pace, who was a gunner on a B52 in World War II. Famie's father flew the same planes so there was an immediate bond.

Another veteran with a moving story was double-amputee Josh Wege. "I was amazed at how resilient he and the others are," says Famie. "Their acceptance of life now. The fact that none of them said that given the chance, they wouldn't go back and do it all over again. Wege is in school now, pursuing a career in law enforcement. He added that he is glad he enlisted."

A Few Facts

In 2011, the Pew Research Center conducted two surveys regarding the military and post-9/11 attitudes. Those surveys showed that military service is rewarding and prepares veterans for life after service. Veterans are proud of their service; and the experience

has helped them get ahead in life. More than 80% said they would recommend it to a young person.

However, almost half of post-9/11 veterans say their readjustment to civilian life has been difficult. They have experienced strains in family relations and have had frequent outbursts of anger.

It's also interesting to note that only one-fifth of Congress has any military experience – a sobering statistic when you consider that these are the same individuals who determine whether or not our nation should engage in military force.

What Happens Next?

Although the film crew will be interviewing veterans for several months, Famie hopes to return to Bonita Springs next month (January) for a sneak peek (perhaps the first 30 minutes?) of "Enlisted." Gillette is organizing the event at The Prado..

When completed, in time for Veterans Day 2017, "Enlisted" will be a 2-hour PBS broadcast and a 90-minute documentary designed for festival submission. At that time, there will be several premiers -- one in Bonita, one in Detroit, perhaps a third; they all will raise funds for local veterans' organizations.

Readers are invited to visit <http://enlistedfilm.com> to see a trailer of "Enlisted" and to follow the film as it develops over the next year.



ABOUT THE PRODUCER - KEITH FAMIE

Keith Famie and Visionalist Entertainment Productions have been awarded 11 Michigan Chapter Emmy awards for human interest style films, which have all been broadcast on PBS. Famie is probably best known for being a contestant on the CBS reality television series, "Survivor: The Australian Outback." He finished in 3rd place.

Famie opened his own Detroit-area restaurant in 1988 and began making television appearances in cooking segments for local television stations. Following his appearance on "Survivor," he began hosting a television series for the *Food Network*. While traveling to Russia, Famie was given the opportunity to work behind the camera. He was hooked.

In 1997, he established Visionalist Entertainment Productions and created a TV series based on his adventurous cooking in exotic locations. He now works solely producing documentaries, most with an educational bent.

He has an incredible working relationship with PBS. He approaches PBS with an idea. He cuts a trailer to convey his vision. They say 'yay' or 'nay.' Truthfully, he knows that they want: something educational, inspirational, historical, with authorities on the subject to validate authenticity. They have never said no to him.

Prior to embarking on "Enlisted," Famie's most recent works have included:

- An 8-part series, "The Embrace of Dying," focused on dealing with the end of life (<http://embraceofdying.com/Dying/trailer3.html>)
- "Maire's Journey," a documentary about the wishes of a deceased cancer patient which will be featured at Sundance this year (<http://mairesjourney.com>)
- A film about depression and suicide in America ("Death is Not the Answer") which will make its way to PBS shortly (<http://deathisnottheanswer.com/trailer.html>)

