

Film About Family, Madison Begins Shooting Here

By Marianne Sullivan
Source Senior Staff Writer

Once again this summer, a film crew is at work in Madison. This time, however, Madison is more than an attractive, anonymous background. It is a character.

"In part, our story is an ode to this town, which is a special place, a special kind of small town that is a great backdrop for an independent movie," Marc Meyers says. He is the writer, director and producer of *Harvest*, the film that began shooting in town this week.

Residents may see the film crew during two days of shooting

on Main Street or at several local businesses over the few weeks.

"My family history is here along the shoreline. My grandfather owned Lupono's Department Store and the Guilford Theater. Probably every summer of my childhood was spent here. It is part of this story," he explains, then adds, "I wrote in places like Middle Beach Road and West Wharf when I wrote the script. Madison is so connected to this film, it could not have been shot anyplace else."

Harvest is a family drama. It is about three generations of a family coming together one summer around the eventual passing of the patriarch of the family, a World War II veteran. Told in part through the eyes of the grandson, *Harvest* is also a coming of age tale and "a simple, poignant story that is both intimate and universal," Jody Girgenti, fellow producer, says.

In his description Meyers says, "*Harvest* began several years ago when my grandfather, a World War II veteran, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and given only several months to live. Instead of a move to a hospital, our family collectively decided to have him stay in his house in Madison."

Meyers was a part of this experience, as well as an observer. He kept a journal and his summer, his family, his grandfather's hometown, and his journal led directly to this film.

With Girgenti, his producing partner and wife, Meyers has been spending weekends in Madison for months to do the groundwork, talking with businesses, scouting locations, securing accommodations for actors and crew, assembling a crew, and planning for the hundreds of

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Jody Girgenti and Marc Meyers are producing partners on the feature film *Harvest*, which is being shot this month in and around Madison. They are also husband and wife. Meyers's family has deep roots in the shoreline towns of Guilford, Madison, and Clinton. In addition to producing this film, he is also writer and director.

Photo by Marianne Sullivan

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small details that will make it possible to complete the filming within the allotted 19 days.

"Coming to this point has been a two-year journey," Girgenti says. "Marc wrote the script some time ago, but we began to push forward with it actively two years ago."

They wrote a business plan and began to use their background and experience within the industry to make the contacts that would lead to production of the film.

Harvest is Meyers's second feature film. His first is *Approaching Union Square*, which he also wrote and directed. It is based on his play *Love & Sex: Tales from the Trenches*, which ran for six months in New York in 2002. The film will premiere on the

Sundance Channel in November. The film played more than 25 film festivals and earned several jury awards for best feature. He also has a list of filmmaking credits and screenplays as well as playwriting.

Girgenti was also a producing partner on *Approaching Union Square* and has a broad background in film, production, and television. She co-created Cube Farm, web content for NBC Digital Studios and Dotcomedy, co-produced a music video, was producer of *Under Fire*, a Court TV documentary series, and served as an original programming executive at AMC.

"Marc has written a beautiful script and the actors we have attracted have been drawn to it," Girgenti says. "We have worked at developing synergistic rela-

tionships with the community."

Some filming has already taken place. The July 4 parade was filmed and written into the script because it is "such an integral part of the town" and also because of the World War II veterans honored during the parade, she said. The two days of filming planned for a small section of Main Street will be, in part, a recreation of a parade scene. "People may also see us coming and going from certain stores. We don't want to be an overwhelming inconvenience."

Meyers adds, "Madison is a great backdrop for a small independent film like this. If you come across us in the street, we don't mean to be an inconvenience. Instead, we are trying to create something beautiful, and then in a few weeks, we'll be gone."
