

Death of an Industrialist: a family history



a fictive non-fiction film
written and directed
by
David Bemis

featuring the voice-over talents of:
Peter Reznikoff
Marilyn Sokol
Tika Gulik
Cal Crenshaw
Barry Sherman
Gai Crawford
James Himelsbach



A Faceless FISH Production

Logline

Ambition and betrayal cause an early 20th century industrialist to commit suicide, leaving his family longing for answers and the attention he never paid them.

Synopsis

Death of an Industrialist: A Family History is a film about Howard Bemis, who committed suicide at age 70 after successfully running a company in Springfield, MA that manufactured an early cellulose nitrate plastic commonly known as celluloid. The story is told visually using photographs and 16mm films taken by Howard Bemis from the 1890's through the 1930's. It is Howard's story told literally through his own eyes. These striking and often artfully framed stills and films evoke another era, and convey a strong sense of both the inner and public life of a successful man who ended up dying by his own hand.

Director's Statement

The idea for *Death of an Industrialist: A Family History* started with my finding a suitcase full of 16mm films taken by my great grandfather, Howard Bemis. Sometime later I came upon several old photo albums belonging to my great grandfather. I was taken by the beauty of the photographs and became curious about all the people in the pictures, who were obviously my relatives. Then three of my great grandfather's leather-bound business journals surfaced, and the accumulated documents seemed to demand that his story be told.

I had known very little about my family history before researching this film. My grandmother had told me that my great grandfather had killed himself when caught in a compromising situation with another woman. My grandmother was a notorious fabricator of tall tales, so I gave her account little credence. But when I hunted down his obituary, there was the suicide in graphic black and white. No explanation for his act was given however. It was a mystery I felt compelled to find some answers to.

I was inspired to use the narrative device employed by Edgar Lee Masters in *The Spoon River Anthology* in which his characters speak in monologue from beyond the grave. Some of what Howard Bemis says is based on his business journals. For the other characters, I extrapolated from what I knew about them from first or second hand experience and from looking at the photos and films. Seeing as Howard had taken all the pictures, it seemed right to let him tell the story. The other characters chimed in demanding to be heard, and I thought it best to stay out of the way.

The story takes place at the turn of the 20th century, a time of great technological and social change with many parallels to the present. The issues of success and failure, the price paid for progress, management-labor relations, balancing work and family, the ramifications of the development of mass media, and the radical changes in modes of transportation are all woven into the fabric of this story. I feel that by looking back at a time gone by there are many things to be learned about the present. I want to share my family's story with the hope that it informs and builds on that which is common to all stories and families

About The Cast

Peter Reznikoff - Voice Over Talent

Peter Reznikoff studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, and with Lee Strasberg in NYC. Recent roles include Lyman in Arthur Miller's *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* at the Stamford Works Theatre, and Adam in the Multi Stage production of *Novel*. Off and Off-Off Broadway credits include: *Venus Observed for the Verse* Theatre of Manhattan, *Bill Gunn's Rimestones*, *The Cold Wind and the Warm* at the Jewish Repertory Theatre, Judd in *Compulsion*, Davis in *Pavilion*, Wall in *Reflected Glory*, Gast in *Troublemaker* at the Theatre for the New City, Moskowitz in *Fat Lucy* at the Mint Theatre and Dad in James B. Nicola's *Sixteen Chews*. Regional Theatre: Franco in *Arturo Vi* at the Hartman Theatre, Clarence in *Richard III* and Horatio in *Hamlet*. Films: *The Marathon Man* and the television series *The Quinns*. He has done numerous voice-overs and narration on tape for Random House and Warner Books. Peter has produced, written, and directed *The Jazz Traveler* for Public Radio.

Marilyn Sokol -Voice Over Talent

Marilyn Sokol is an actress, singer, and comedienne of many moods virtually in every medium. Her career has spanned the continent from Broadway to Hollywood, from prime-time TV to Off Broadway. She completed her liberal arts education with a bachelor's degree in Spanish Literature, Drama and Art History from NYU-Heights. Her long list of credits include: Broadway: *Grease*, *Conversations with My Father*, *Welcome to the Club*, *Great God Brown* and *Don Juan*. Off Broadway: *Wild Party*, *Shyster*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Cid Caesar & Co.* and her one woman show, *Guilt Without Sex*. Film: *Man on the Moon*, *Family Business*, *Foul Play*, *The Front*, *The Goodbye Girl*. Television: *Sex in the City*, *Law and Order*, *All My Children*, *Tonight Show*, *David Letterman Show*, *Sesame Street*, as well as Concerts and Cabaret performances at Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, and Town Hall. Marilyn is a proud member of The Actor's Studio. She teaches an ongoing Comedy Master Class, and her Dial-A-Jokes are enshrined in the Smithsonian Institute.

Cal Crenshaw - Voice Over Talent

Cal Crenshaw graduated from the University of Texas and has studied acting at HB Studios, Creative Actors Workshop and the Pasadena Playhouse. Credits include - Film: *Monday Night Mayhem*, *Zoolander*, *Frozen Hot*, *Committed* and *The Naked Game*. Television: *Criminal Intent*, *Third Watch*, *Sex and the City*, *Now and Again* and *Dallas*. Theatre: *At the End of Long Island*, *My Three Angels*, *A Matter of Heart* and *Night Must Fall*.

Tika Gulick - Voice Over Talent

Tika Gulick is a recent arrival to the New York area by way of Florida. Credits include: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Beyond Therapy*, *Royal Gambit*, *Terra Nova*, *Annie*, *1940's Radio Hour*. Recent NYC plays include *Loves and Other Losses*, and *Lizzie Borden in The Fall River Tragedy*.

Gai Crawford - Voice Over Talent

Gai Crawford holds an MFA from the University of Michigan, and has performed in regional and summer stock throughout the U.S.

About The Filmmakers

David Bemis - Director, Editor, Writer, Producer

David's first film, "My Imagination," won a bronze award for experimental video/mixed media at the 1999 Worldfest Houston Film & Video Festival. It was also accepted into the 13th Annual Dallas Video Festival in March 2000 shown in the Video Lounge. It was also screened at the Knitting Factory in NYC at a 1999 Video Lounge presentation. The film was accepted into the Ifilm website in the experimental section. David Bemis' second film, "Death of an Industrialist: A Family History," premiered at the Silver Lake Film Festival in Los Angeles in 2002 and was shown at the Dallas Video Festival in 2003. David Bemis works as a freelance editor and runs Faceless Fish Productions in New York City.

Josh Heineman - Composer

Josh's TV music credits include: All Kinds of Families for Lifetime, The Marty Povitch Show, Petite Journal (Canada), New Attitudes and Wires for Lifetime. He has done sound design for MTV, Cartoon Network, Planet 10 Post, The Smithsonian Institute, and Hit and Run Films. TV spots include: Espn 2, Toys R Us, MinuteMaid, Nathans, and Martini & Rossi.

Credits

Cast

Peter Reznikoff
Marilyn Sokol
Tika Gulik
Cal Crenshaw
Barry Sherman
Gai Crawford
James Himelsbach

Written, Directed, and Produced by
David Bemis

Photographs and 16mm Films by
Howard R. Bemis

Music Written and Arranged by
Josh Heineman

Voice Over Performances Recorded and Edited at
Video Active/Voiceworks® Sound Studios by
Steven Garrin

Sound and Picture Edited at
Faceless Fish Productions by
David Bemis

Digitized, Recompiled, and Mastered at
Editology by
Ron Humer

Music Recorded and Mixed at
Wits End Productions by
Josh Heineman

Musicians

Mitch Stein - mandolin, guitars
Rachel Maria Heineman - violin
Josh Heineman - piano, synthesizer, percussion

Audio Post Production at
Solar Film/Video Productions by
Eric Lau and Victor Fan

Sound Effects Purchased at
sounddogs.com

Casting Assistance
Voice Overs Unlimited - Dan Duckworth
Voiceworks® Sound Studio - Steven Garrin

Historical Research Conducted at
Connecticut Valley Historical Museum
at the Springfield Museum
Springfield, Massachusetts
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and John O'Connor

Special Thanks to
Max Miller, Lisa Hoke, Lara Tal,
Lawrence Gormally, Matthew Bemis,
Carla Hoke, Michael Coffey, Tanya Cypriano,
Frank Emmett, Teddy Jefferson

Film Screenings

Silver Lake Film Festival
Los Angeles, CA 2002

Dallas Video Festival
Dallas, TX 2003

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