

Going the Distance

A proposal for a 56-minute television documentary on survivors of traumatic brain injury

Produced and directed by David L. Brown.

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Executive Producer: Robert Howard

Epic Way Sports

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Traumatic Brain Injury (or TBI) has become the “signature injury” of the Iraq war. The Rand Corporation estimates that 19% or 300,000 troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have come back with traumatic brain injury. A recent report by the Institute of Medicine commissioned by the Department of Veteran Affairs found TBI linked to such long-term problems as seizures, aggression and severe dementia reminiscent of Alzheimers.

“The Veteran’s Administration and the Department of Defense cannot deny that there is a TBI crisis. We can’t let this report get swept under the rug.”

-Paul Sullivan, Veterans for Common Sense

Non-profit fiscal sponsor:

San Francisco Film Society (pending)

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Project Summary. *Going The Distance* is an hour-long documentary film-in-progress on survivors of traumatic brain injury (TBI), the genesis of which was the first-ever crossing of Lake Tahoe's 22 miles on stand up paddleboards. The paddle was a benefit for the Bob Woodruff Family Foundation, which raises funds and awareness about TBI. ABC News Anchorman, Bob Woodruff, is a survivor of TBI from a roadside bomb in Iraq, and his story and those of other TBI survivors anchor this documentary.

Going The Distance features the moving stories of several survivors of TBI, including Woodruff, extreme athletes, a survivor of a road rage beating, a survivor of a car crash and Iraq war vets. The Lake Tahoe paddle footage is woven with TBI survivor stories, including their accidents, recovery and rehabilitation. The challenge and uncertainty faced by the paddlers is described by physician, Robb Gaffney, as a metaphor for some of the challenges and uncertainties facing TBI survivors. Less than half of the Lake Tahoe paddle participants had ever been on a stand up paddleboard prior to setting out for what would be an 7-hour, 22-mile marathon event. But unlike the athletes that day on Lake Tahoe, TBI victims face the struggles and uncertainty each and every day - most likely for the rest of their lives. This documentary explores those struggles in the face of what many experts are calling a "TBI crisis" created by the "signature injury of the Iraq war." The Rand Corporation estimates that up to 300,000 Iraq war veterans are afflicted by TBI, with many such injuries going undiagnosed. The documentary explores the physical, emotional, and economic impacts of this disability on individuals, their families and society.

The documentary weaves scenes of the lake paddle, interviews with the athletes, portraits of TBI survivors with commentary from experts on TBI. The documentary also briefly profiles some key brain trauma rehab centers (like the Veteran's Administration Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center in Palo Alto, CA) and several of the key organizations that are focused on survivors of TBI. These include the Woodruff Family Foundation, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the Brain Injury Association of America, the BrainTrauma Foundation and Wounded Warriors.

In addition to profiling the multiple challenges facing TBI survivors, the documentary will address the challenges facing the family and other caregivers. Most family members are totally unprepared for dealing with a TBI survivor and "caregiver burnout" is a huge problem.

Going the Distance is designed both for broadcast and for wide DVD distribution including educational markets with an accompanying discussion and resource guide. It will be a valuable educational and outreach tool for all organizations, like the Woodruff Family Fund, that are addressing the plight of TBI survivors. The primary target

audience is the 3.17 million Americans currently living with traumatic brain injury and the tens of millions of family members and friends of TBI survivors.

“We are looking at an epidemic of brain injuries.” - Jill Gandolfi, co-director of the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit of the V.A. Palo Alto Health Care System.

The Need. With an estimated 300,000 TBI survivors returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, surviving injuries that had not been survived in the past, many TBI experts and medical professionals argue that the U.S. is facing a “TBI crisis.” The number of people afflicted far exceeds the resources, medical facilities and trained professionals focused on brain injury. And, equally serious, many TBI survivors are going undetected. War-related TBI screening continues to lag and the Veteran Administration’s TBI testing program has been called into serious question by several TBI organizations. Only about 35,000 troops have been screened for TBI. Most experts agree that a universal screening program needs to be in place in the military or thousands of combat vets will continue to struggle with the effects of an undiagnosed (or misdiagnosed) brain injury. The ABC News documentary on the Bob Woodruff story, *To Iraq and Back*, as well as the Woodruff-reported TBI stories on ABC News, have been all-important for raising public awareness of the plight of TBI survivors. But additional media resources on TBI are needed – especially those that address both civilian and military TBI survivors and can be used for education and outreach by the organizations that are focused on the care and treatment of TBI survivors. Other documentaries on TBI, like HBO’s *Coma*, are extremely depressing, virtually devoid of hope and inspiration and fail to address many of the issues surrounding TBI survivor care. *Going the Distance* will be educational, inspirational and empowering for a broad television audience. It will be especially powerful and important for all those involved with survivors of TBI.

The TBI Survivors

Jay Waller was a very athletic Yale graduate bound for med school when he suffered traumatic brain injury from a savage road-rage beating while on vacation in Hawaii. He was in a coma for 32 days and in various stages of rehab for three years. Six years after his injury, he has returned to graduate school in a Ph.D. program in Physical Therapy specializing in brain injury. His family and psychologist, Dr. Len Travaglione, will join Jay in telling the story of his injury and recovery.

Charlie Gaylord was a professional skier when he suffered TBI from an extreme skiing accident. He was in a coma for 28 days and, three years later, is still in rehab. His skiing accident was videotaped. He family videotaped most of the rehab sessions along with much of Charlie’s recovery over three years. Charlie and his family have a website charting his recovery. His family and fellow pro skiers will join Charlie in telling the story of his injury and recovery.

Jim Moran was an Olympic skier who had won several world championships when he suffered TBI from a bad skiing accident. He was in a coma for 25 days and was not able to ski professionally again. His close friend, Olympic champion, Jonny Moseley, helps to tell Jim’s story, including the sad fact that many of Jim’s fellow pro skier friends abandoned Jim after his accident.

Ruth McMaier suffered TBI from an auto accident. She has no memory of the accident or the first two weeks after she emerged from a coma. In addition to TBI, Ruth suffered

nerve damage in her left arm. Her successful rehab at two facilities enabled her to return to work as an attorney part-time after 6 ½ months in rehab. But she found it extremely difficult to resume half-time work and cut back to 16 hours a week. Then, a friend of hers was killed in an auto accident and Ruth suffered immediate and acute post-traumatic-stress disorder. The PTSD has become chronic and prevented her from driving, or even riding in the passenger seat, for months.

Bob Woodruff was an ABC News Co-Anchor when he was badly injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq. He suffered a traumatic brain injury that nearly killed him. Fourteen months later, after receiving the best care available, he had miraculously recovered enough to return to work reporting for ABC News. His extraordinary story was told in a moving ABC News documentary, “To Iraq and Back.” He and his wife, Lee, told their story in a best-selling book “In An Instant.” Bob founded the Bob Woodruff Family Foundation to raise awareness and support for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who have suffered TBI. Both Bob and Lee will tell their story for this documentary. Bob has facilitated our permission to license ABC News footage of his Iraq experience and recovery. Bob’s brother, Woody, has already been interviewed and will be re-interviewed. We also plan to interview members of Bob’s ABC News crew and key members of his medical and rehab team.

Jason Poole was a Marine infantryman ten days from returning home from serving his third tour of Iraq when he was badly injured by a improvised explosive device (IED). He was in a coma for two months, was not expected to live and, over four years later, is still receiving rehabilitation therapy at the VA Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center in Palo Alto. We will document much of his therapy-in-progress. His story will be told by himself, his family and his medical team members. See the attached article on Jason from the *New York Times*.

A survivor of a fall or a similar accident. Auto accidents and falls are the leading causes of TBI.

TBI Experts/ Board of Advisors.

Len Travaglione, Ph.D., Jay Waller’s psychologist, is the Program Director at the NeuroPsychological Rehabilitation Services in Chatham, NY, where he directs a comprehensive outpatient treatment program for neurologically impaired individuals, including assessment, counseling, and cognitive remedial training. He was formerly Program Coordinator of the Head Trauma Program at New York University Medical Center’s Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Geoffrey T. Manley, M.D., Ph.D. is Professor of Neurological Surgery and Chief of Neurotrauma at San Francisco General Hospital and Co-Director of the UCSF Brain and Spinal Injury Center at the University of California, San Francisco.

Michael Levy, M.D. is the chief Neurosurgeon at Children's Hospital in San Diego, and a clinical professor of Neurosurgery at both UCLA and UCSD medical schools (the later where he is the founding principal.) Michael has produced over 200 peer-reviewed publications, and is the editor of the most widely used text on penetrating brain wounds in US medical schools.

Susan Connor is the Director and CEO of the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA). Founded in 1980, BIAA is the leading national organization serving and representing individuals, families and professionals who are touched by traumatic brain injury. Together with its network of more than 40 chartered state affiliates, as well as hundreds of local chapters and support groups across the country, the BIAA provides information, education and support to assist the 3.17 million Americans currently living with traumatic brain injury and their families.

We are working with the cooperation of the Veteran's Administration Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center in Palo Alto, CA, one of four principal rehab facilities for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan afflicted with TBI. We will work with our advisory board, with Bob and Lee Woodruff, the Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans of America and the American Brain Injury Association, to identify other experts to interview and advise the project. The advisors will also assist the filmmakers in finding TBI survivors and TBI experts.

TBI Issues Addressed

- unidentified or misdiagnosed TBI.
- TBI survivors falling through the cracks of the health care system.
- Lack of sufficient funding for TBI care and treatment
- insurance company's unwillingness to pay for adequate treatment: TBI patients being discharged "sicker and quicker" from hospitals and treatment facilities. Combatting the view that, "if the patient can say his name, he's cured."
- the stigma attached to TBI and general public ignorance about the disability.
- family stress and "caregiver burnout."

Fiscal Sponsor

The pending non-profit fiscal sponsor is the San Francisco Film Society. They will receive and administer all grant and donor funding received for the project. Their 501(c)(3) letter will be included in all proposals sent out.

Audience

In addition to the primary target of TBI survivors and their families, the documentary will target a wide international broadcast audience, educators who teach about brain injury, medical professionals involved with treating TBI, and families and friends of all TBI survivors. A particular focus is the larger membership and potential supporters of all organizations involved with TBI survivors. WGBH, International, that distributes four of Brown's previous documentaries, will represent the project to foreign broadcasters.

Distribution

The documentary will be offered to PBS through American Public Television. The DVD will also be distributed by the producer/ director and by an educational distributor, such as Fanlight Films, that specializes in health issues. The producer will begin the promotion of the DVD by targeting all organizations and medical facilities focused on TBI survivors. Several theatrical premieres in New York, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco will feature panel discussion with TBI survivors and experts.

Producer/Director

David L. Brown is an Emmy Award-winning San Francisco documentary filmmaker who has produced, written and directed over 80 productions and 11 broadcast documentaries on social, nuclear, environmental, health, technology, peace and justice issues. His documentaries have received over 80 international awards, include two Emmy Awards, and have been broadcast on PBS and in fifteen countries.

Recent work includes *THE BRIDGE SO FAR: A SUSPENSE STORY*, a comedic 56-minute documentary on the troubled 16-year history of the new east span of the S.F.-Oakland Bay Bridge that received two Emmy Awards (*Best Documentary* and *Best Graphics and Animation in a Program*) and aired on PBS; *OF WIND AND WAVES: THE LIFE OF WOODY BROWN*, an hour-long profile of legendary 94-year-old surfer, Woody Brown (Emmy nomination for *Best Documentary, Inspiration Award* at Mountainfilm in Telluride) that aired on PBS; *AMAZING: THE REBUILDING OF THE MACARTHUR MAZE*, a half-hour film on the fiery collapse and speedy rebuilding of Oakland's MacArthur Maze (Emmy nomination for *Best Graphics and Animation*) that aired on PBS; *SENIORS FOR PEACE*, a 26-minute portrait of a group of articulate and passionate senior peace activists (average age 85) which aired on national PBS; and *SURFING FOR LIFE*, an inspirational one hour documentary on older surfers as models of healthy aging. It screened theatrically in 40 cities, was broadcast on over 140 PBS stations, won 15 international awards (including the *Golden Maile* for Best Documentary at the Hawai'i International Film Festival), and was profiled in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Parade Magazine*, on National Public Radio and ABC's *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*. *The San Francisco Chronicle* called it "a treasure, perhaps the most intelligent treatment of surfing ever captured on film."

Brown produced several films on nuclear and environmental issues culminating in *BOUND BY THE WIND*, a moving documentary on the global legacy of nuclear weapons testing and the plight of the world's "downwinders." It won 20 international awards and has been broadcast on PBS and in 14 countries. *The Boston Globe* called it "far and away the best film on the nuclear legacy."

Brown teaches Documentary Filmmaking at the City College of San Francisco and UC Berkeley Extension and the History of Documentary at S.F. Film Society. His current projects in production include a feature-length documentary on 63-year-old drummer, Barbara Borden, entitled *KEEPER OF THE BEAT* (www.kobmovie.com). His web site is www.DLBfilms.com

Robert Howard Executive Producer

Robert Howard is the founder of Epic Way Sports, a firm dedicated to enlisting action sports and action sports programs to improve and sustain both mental and physical health. Epic Way Sports develops and distributes an array of instructional and inspirational print and video content through its various subsidiaries (SkiSkills, BikeSkills, SurfSkills) as well as through Internet broadcasting. Epic Way Sports EWS division manages various sports events including The Lake Tahoe Crossing. Howard is also the founder and president of the non-profit Bikeskills Foundation, an organization that works to make cycling opportunities both safer and more available in America. Epic Way Sports' central mission is to find ways to encourage people to be more active, and remain that way, throughout their lives.

For more information on the *Going The Distance* Project and to learn how you can ensure this project is both completed and helps survivors of traumatic brain injury, contact:

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