

MPBN

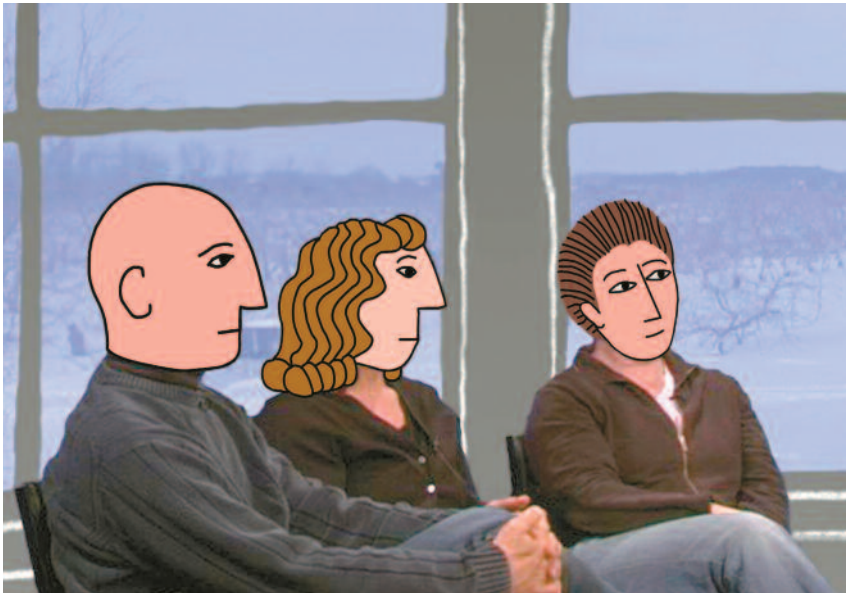
Community

Films

Every week, the **MPBN Community Films** series brings viewers independently produced films that showcase diverse people, places and the culture of our region.

One Alcoholic to Another

Thursday, June 12, 10:00 pm; Saturday, June 14, 11:00 am



Experience caught up with this month's featured filmmakers Eleanor Lanahan and Orly Yadin to ask about their latest project, **One Alcoholic to Another**, a film about Alcoholics Anonymous and its relationship with Vermont history.

Providing an unusual glimpse into a very private organization, the two were allowed to shoot footage of AA meetings by animating over the faces of members.

What inspired you to make this movie? What aspects of AA were you originally curious about?

EL: I was invited to participate in a large collaborative film series about Vermont. Each filmmaker could suggest an area of particular interest about Vermont's history. I was especially interested in exploring AA because the founder, Bill Wilson, was born here. I knew that his birthplace was Dorset, VT, which is quite a Mecca for recov-

ering alcoholics. Additionally, AA [meetings]... are conducted in such privacy that few people realize what a large and open society it is. It was appealing to search out more information about AA, perhaps discover a connection between the origins of the AA program and Vermont town meetings.... Town meetings, open to all citizenry, are such a backbone of small town life in Vermont, and we wondered if the format for AA meetings could have been influenced by that. It was a large topic, and I invited Orly Yadin, an accomplished producer of short films, to join me in the project. Prior to making this film, my experience had been limited to animation.

OY: My curiosity was mostly to do with how to depict the topic in a cinematic way.

What were your initial goals and did they change much during the process of making the movie?

OY: Initially we were making a 10-minute segment for the bigger Vermont movie. During the course of production, we realized that to do justice we needed to make our own stand-alone film.

EL: Our original goal was to explain AA, trace Bill Wilson's story and the history of Vermont's policies about alcohol. Before prohibition, Vermont had been a dry state for about 60 years. Nonetheless, Vermont was a major port for the smuggling of alcohol during prohibition.... It was an untold story. Early on, Orly and I decided that we needed to be part of the film, to let our distinct voices provide the narration. Orly came to represent the AA skeptic, and I represented the believer.

What did you hope the audience would take away from your film?

OY: The film asks questions as much as it provides answers. From my point of view, as with any film I make, I hope viewers are inspired to think for themselves about issues in the film.

EL: I hoped that if we revealed AA to be a human enough place, viewers would not be afraid to walk through the doors if they felt they had a problem with alcohol. We also hoped the audience would learn enough about AA to see that it is not a cult. We also hoped the audience would enjoy being part of our journey around the state, exploring this system of recovery and learning about Vermont's history.

Did you learn anything particularly surprising or illuminating?

OY: I loved the communication power of the animated faces. I believe

that however paradoxical it may seem, we are more drawn into the people's testimonies because of the animation.

EL: There were several surprises for us. First, the co-founder of AA, Dr. Bob, was also a Vermonter. This we didn't learn until we visited Bill Wilson's house in Dorset.... This opened up more history, including a brief look at the Second Great Awakening and Vermont smuggling.

What was your biggest challenge?

OY: The collaboration with Eleanor, co-writer, co-director, was a challenge, in a positive way. Learning to listen to other points of view and to re-examine my own thoughts and practices.

EL: It may have been the problem of how to bring so much information into a coherent focus. We were not only focused on history, but also on the birth of the AA program, town



meetings, the alcohol industry, the steps of AA itself, Vermont sites and on individual testimonies. The film did not lend itself to any obvious

chronological order. We reformatted the entire story several times so that the viewer would know enough about AA in the beginning. ■

MPBN Community Films Airing This Month!

• **One Alcoholic to Another** – *Thursday, June 12, 10:00 pm; Saturday, June 14, 11:00 am*: Two filmmakers demystify Alcoholics Anonymous, an organization that has helped millions achieve sobriety. The film includes the history of AA's founders, archival footage, interviews and unique access to the testimony of AA members, their identities masked by hand-drawn animation.

• **Deus Ex Machina** – *Thursday, June 12, 10:40 pm; Saturday, June 14, 11:40 am*: Tearing wires, welding copper to steel, replacing logic with humor and wit, a Camden man builds an incredibly beautiful, yet incredibly dangerous machine.

• **Reviving the Freedom Mill** – *Thursday, June 19, 10:00 pm; Saturday, June 21, 11:00 am*: When an environmentalist takes a crazy gamble to rehabilitate an abandoned mill, he inspires both skepticism and hope that its revived bond with the river will breathe new life into the town of Freedom, Maine.

• **George Bellows** – *Thursday, June 19, 10:30 pm; Saturday, June 21, 11:30 am*: Bellows, 1882-1925, created over a thousand paintings, drawings and prints, an original record of America in the early 20th century. His work captures iconic images of the modern city (boxing matches, New York street life), plus Maine seascapes, landscapes, WWI and family portraits.

• **Goranson Farm: An Uncertain Harvest** – *Thursday, June 26, 10:00 pm; Saturday, June 28, 11:00 am*: Jan Goranson and her family struggled through the difficult 2009 growing season to raise and harvest their crops. The story is a testament to the skill, tenacity and dogged determination of one family to survive an uncertain harvest – and to continue to serve the community that supports them.

Submit Your Film! You produce, we broadcast, our audience watches!

For information, go to mpbn.net. Click on *Television*, then *MPBN Community Films/Submit Your Film* for instructions, or contact Laura Schenck at lschenck@mpbn.net. ■

Major funding for MPBN Community Films is provided by Maine's Credit Unions and NextGen College Investing Plan ®.