

Media Relations

September 4, 2013

Documentary on UNH Historian's Book About JFK Screened at UNH Sept. 18

Academy-Award Winners Are Part of Star-Studded TLC Production



Ellen Fitzpatrick, professor of history at the University of New Hampshire.

DURHAM, N.H. – A special screening of a documentary film based on the book [“Letters to Jackie: Condolences From a Grieving Nation”](#) by [Ellen Fitzpatrick](#), professor of history at the University of New Hampshire, will take place on campus Wednesday, Sept.

18, 2013. The major documentary produced by TLC involves many A-list actors, including Kirsten Dunst, Anne Hathaway, Laura Linney, and Betty White.

The UNH screening of the 90-minute film [“Letters to Jackie: Remembering President Kennedy”](#) will be held at 7 p.m. in Memorial Union Theater II. A discussion with the film's Academy Award-winning director Bill Couturie and Fitzpatrick will follow the screening. The film will debut as an exclusive television event on TLC this fall to mark the 50th anniversary of the president's assassination.

The events, which are free and open to the public, are sponsored by University Advancement and the Department of History. A limited number of tickets will be available to the public starting Sept. 11. Visit the Memorial Union Ticket Office in person or online at www.unhmub.com/services/mub-ticket-office.

"Bill Couturie has done a remarkable job of bringing to life not only some of the powerful condolence letters written in the aftermath of President Kennedy's assassination but also a moment in American history when many felt that the world as they had known it had changed forever. It's been a great honor to see his film come to fruition and to observe the brilliant work of Bill, his editor and his producers. They have brought imagination, passion, commitment and creativity to their work. And the result is a film that evokes the era of the early 1960s in a very moving way," Fitzpatrick said.

The film revisits the months following the assassination of President Kennedy, when millions wrote messages of condolence to First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. It is based on Fitzpatrick's book, which creates a revealing portrait of the nation's grief from a cross-section of American life.

Twenty A-List celebrities have lent their recognizable voices to give life to letters from everyday Americans, including a polio-stricken 13-year-old who offers words of strength for the first lady, a Peace Corps volunteer who mourns the loss while stationed in Ethiopia and an African American woman who expresses her pride and gratitude for President Kennedy's work in the civil rights movement.

"Kennedy's death was a tipping point in history. It took place in a turbulent moment in the Civil Rights era. I didn't sit down to write a Civil Rights story, but that's where the letters led me. For those who reflected on the assassination returned over and over again to Kennedy's insistence on change and to a climate of violence and upheaval they believed played a part in the death of their president," Couturie said.

The participating talent includes Bérénice Bejo, Demián Bichir, Jessica Chastain, Chris Cooper, Viola Davis, Zooey Deschanel, Kirsten Dunst, Anne Hathaway, Allison Janney, John Krasinski, Melissa Leo, Laura Linney, Frances McDormand, Chloë Grace Moretz, Mark Ruffalo, Octavia Spencer, Hailee Steinfeld, Channing Tatum, Betty White, and Michelle Williams.

Couturie has had a distinguished career in filmmaking for nearly 40 years. He has produced 15 documentaries for HBO, including "Earth and the American Dream," which was recognized with an Emmy and the grand prize at the Telluride Film Festival. His other award-winning films include "Vietnam Requiem," "Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam," a sequel titled "Memorial," and "Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt." He is the recipient of numerous awards, including multiple Emmys and an Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary.

Fitzpatrick, a UNH professor and scholar specializing in modern American political and intellectual history, is the author and editor of seven books and has appeared regularly on PBS's The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer. She has been interviewed as an expert on modern American political history by the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, the Boston Globe, the Washington Post, CBS's Face the Nation, and National Public Radio.

The [University of New Hampshire](#), founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

VIDEO

Ellen Fitzpatrick discusses her book "Letters to Jackie: Condolences From a Grieving Nation" with CNN's Carol Costello.

<http://www.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/us/2010/03/01/costello.letters.jfk.cnn.html>

Trailer of the film "Letters to Jackie: Remembering President Kennedy."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdpx3tP3xUs>

PHOTO

Ellen Fitzpatrick, professor of history at the University of New Hampshire.

<http://www.unh.edu/universityevents/speakersbureau/images/Fitzpatrick.jpg>

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