



# Buddy Squires

**on capturing history**

Buddy Squires has compiled more than 80 documentary credits beginning with *Brooklyn Bridge* in 1981. His films have earned 18 Emmy® nominations with 13 taking top honors. Squires also shot eight films that were nominated for Oscars®, including one Academy Award winner.

"I was filming our first interview with an important historian, and realized that I had to look him in the eye to establish rapport," Ken Burns recalls working on *Brooklyn Bridge*. "Buddy was my assistant. I asked him to get behind the lens. We are now working on our 20th film together."

Squires was born in Cleveland, Ohio. He shot and edited his first film while he was a freshman in high school in lieu of writing a term paper. The 8mm movie documented how local factories were polluting the air above the city and the waters of the Cuyahoga River. In 1974, Squires enrolled at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass. That is where he met Burns and other lifelong collaborators and friends. After graduation, they formed Florentine Films.

Their initial endeavor on *Brooklyn Bridge* was a seminal experience for Squires. "I learned that every documentary is a process of discovery," he explains. "You have to recognize and be open to every possibility, each moment of every day because you never know what is going to happen next. The choices you

make about the way light falls on someone's face, composition and camera angles can speak louder than words."

It was just the beginning of a lifelong journey, which has taken Squires to the far corners of the world. He was in Africa filming Jane Goodall fighting for the survival of chimpanzees; in China with victims of the 1937 attack on Nanking by the Japanese Army; at mass graves in Iraq documenting the massacre of Kurdish civilians; and in India, when the Dalai Lama greeted a group of children who had hiked a treacherous trail in the Himalayan Mountains to escape the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

A short list of some of Squires' memorable films includes *The Civil War*, *Baseball*, *Scottsboro: An American Tragedy*, *New York: A Documentary Film*, *Heart of a Child*, *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*, and *Jazz*.

Squires' most recent co-venture with Burns was *The War*, an epic, seven-part series that premiered in HD format on PBS stations in the United States last fall. *The War* blends 60-year-old archival footage of World War II battles with compelling filmed conversations with some 50 aging survivors sharing their memories. (See *InCamera* July 2007)

Burns and his co-producer/director Lynn Novick focused on interviewing ordinary people who fought the battles and worked on the home front. They selected four cities in different regions of the United States, and spent several years making their presence known. They met some 500 people before culling the list down to 50.

Film stocks KODAK VISION2 100T 7217  
 Colorist John Dowdell III, Goldcrest Post, New York

Processing DuArt Labs



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"We were dealing with people's most painful memories," Burns says. "They had seen their friends killed and maimed, and many had close calls themselves. We asked questions conversationally during the interviews. Buddy helped to make everyone feel comfortable. He used sympathetic, soft light that he made subtly darker and brighter. His composition and angles were also interpretative, in tune with the words."

The interviews were generally done in people's homes, where the subjects were likely to feel most comfortable. Squires carried just enough gear to work in the environments he found, including an Aaton XTR camera, Canon 8:64 and 11:165mm zooms lenses and a few small lights. He arrived a little early to establish rapport and to choose a setting for filming the conversations with either Burns or Novick.

### Sixth sense

Squires made a painterly decision to record images on KODAK VISION2 100T 7212 film as soon as it became available. He slightly overexposed the negative by about one-third of a stop to get a richer, more organic look. The film was processed at DuArt Labs and telecine transfers were timed in collaboration with John Dowdell III, senior colorist at Goldcrest Post. Both facilities are in New York.

"Buddy has an amazing sixth sense for anticipating and getting magic moments on film," says Dowdell who has worked on some 25 projects shot by Squires.

Before they completed *The War*, Squires began working on a film about U.S. National Parks, another ambitious Florentine Films endeavor. Squires scouted locations with writer/consulting producer Dayton Duncan, who estimates that they have traveled thousands of miles together.

"We recently filmed scenes in Kings Canyon National Park in California, where Buddy hiked about 36 miles in four days," Duncan recounts. "He had his camera, lenses and film in his backpack, while he was climbing 12,500-foot mountain passes in the Sierras to be in position to film a sunrise or sunset. He

always managed to be in the right place at the right time."

Squires is filming the parks with the same Aaton Prod camera, which has a bright, onboard viewfinder with a 400-foot magazine. He chooses from a palette of KODAK VISION2 films depending on what he is shooting and the environment in available light.

"Today's films give you the latitude to paint pictures that look and feel organic in any light," he says. "I love that look, especially aired in HD."

Paul Barnes, an editor who is a long-time collaborator with both Burns and Squires observes, "Buddy's images of the landscapes are extraordinary. His sense of composition, light, choices of films, filters and lenses will bring those beautiful images of our national heritage into people's living rooms when this project is completed."

The good news is that all 20 of his projects with Burns and Florentine, and most of his other documentaries were produced on film, which is a proven archival medium. The final cuts of the films are archived at Eastman House in Rochester, N.Y. The outtakes are archived at other facilities for posterity.

"I am certain that some of Buddy's most important work is still ahead of him, but he has already made an indelible impression on our history and the documentary genre," says Ann Turner, general manager and vice-president, Entertainment Imaging Division of Kodak.

In early December, Squires received the Outstanding Documentary Cinematography Award from his peers in the International Documentary Association (IDA). The award, sponsored by Kodak, was presented during the 23rd Annual IDA Awards Gala Benefit at the Directors Guild of America Theater in Los Angeles.

"Buddy is the author of the images for some of the most compelling documentaries of our times," says IDA Executive Director Sandra Ruch. "Our members wanted to express their appreciation for his considerable contributions to advancing the art of non-fiction storytelling."