

THE WILLIAM MEREDITH FOUNDATION

Presents

Marathon

1988, five years after his stroke, William Meredith was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *PARTIAL ACCOUNTS*, *New and Selected Poems*.

Ten years later William won the National Book Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Award for a new collection of poems, *EFFORT AT SPEECH*.

William Meredith died on May 30, 2007. Richard continues life's marathon with William as his inspiration.

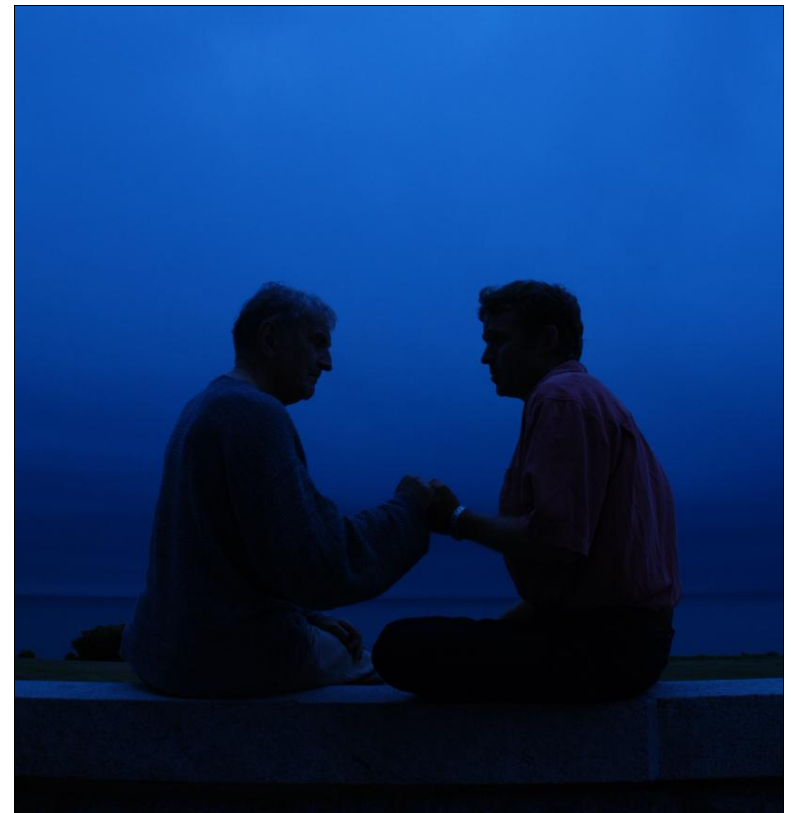
Their home was designated an historic landmark by the State of Connecticut and has since become the William Meredith Center for the Arts where Meredith's poetry and spirit live on.

This film is dedicated to Sharon McLane Gentzler,
In Memoriam July 13, 2008

The William Meredith Foundation is deeply indebted to three institutions without whose co-operation this film could not have been made, the Norwich Arts Council, the Griffis Art Center and Westerly Hospital who saw the importance of Meredith's story and opened their doors and hearts to us.

MARATHON©Richard Harteis,
and The William Meredith Foundation, Inc. 2008

CONTACT: RIVERRUNBOOKS@CS.COM



A Story of Endurance and Friendship

A Biju Viswanath film

Based on the non-fiction memoir,
MARATHON by Richard Harteis

EXTRAS

Geoffrey Akers, James Beckwith, Brittany Carclot-Sisco, Alice Carling, Bill Carlson, James Compton, Stan Daniels, Thresa Daniels, Rita Dawley, Jean Drake, Frank Dworak, William Ezell, Mike Farrell, Madison Fortner, Donna Grant, Florence Greger, Laura Hepler, Stephen T. Ingraham, Mae Jackson, Dee Keaney, Paul LaBounty, Brian Lavoic, Greg Ledorsky, Susan Lieslie, Donna Madamba, Emma Mansfield, Darrell Mathews, Sue Miner, Mathew O'Grady, Stephanie Potts, Alta Price, Jennybeth Richards, Colleen Romanski, Deb Rooth, Lisa Royce, Dorothy Selvidio, Veronica Strickland, Eric Strickland, Joyce Thorner, Chris Tripp, Fawn Walker, Eric Williams .

MARATHON was shot entirely in Connecticut and Rhode Island at the following locations:

The William Meredith Center for the Arts at RIVERRUN, The University of Connecticut, Avery Point, The Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theatre Center, Harkness Memorial State Park, Ocean Beach Park, Camp Harkness, Beechwood Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, The Griffis Arts Center, The New London Public Library, The Donald Oat Theatre, St. Emmund's Retreat, Enders Island.

Special thanks to friends in the community whose support has made this film possible:

Sharon Tripp Griffis, Frances S. Tripp, Jackie Bagwell, Dianne White, Sandra Swider, Russ Robertson of Deluxe Lab, and the President of Westerly Hospital, Charles Kinney, as well as colleagues Brian Jordan, Stanley Bousch (Joyce's Package Store), Paula Miller, Cinema Visions' Derrick Zimmerman, Neil Grimaldi, Tara Samuel and Fran Gibbs-Kail of the New London Public Library, James Davis, Beit Brothers, Nathan, Eric and Arthur, Don Guzauchas of HB Communications North Haven CT for the loan of lighting equipment and all the actors and crew members who so generously contributed their time and talent to this project.

Special thanks too to legendary marathoner John Kelley whose inspiration and moral support have given shape to this project from the very beginning and with gratitude for the model of his life and style. For Brian Benlifer and his family who are with us still and Amby Burfoot, a friend from early on.

And we are deeply indebted to three institutions without whose co-operation this film could not have been made, the Norwich Arts Council, the Griffis Arts Center and Westerly Hospital who saw the importance of Meredith's story and opened their doors and hearts to us.

MUSICAL SELECTIONS:

"Ritual," ©David Leisner. Original composition and performed by Mr. Leisner from his album SELF PORTRAIT, and by permission of Azica Records
"Your Amour," "Glass Half Full," and "Memory of you" © Bristol Pomeroy. Written, played and performed by the artist and by used by his permission.
"Sarabande," from the Partita for unaccompanied flute by Bach © David Leisner, by permission of Azica Records
"Adagio doloroso" (from the American Classics Album: Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra, op. 325 by Alan Hovhaness) Used by permission of Naxos Records and Hovhaness-Fujihara Music Co, Inc.

The William Meredith Foundation expresses gratitude to Sharon Tripp Griffis for the production of this keepsake program, and to Bill Dougherty, Jeff and Donna at Mystic Art Cinemas who have so graciously welcomed us here tonight as their guests.

November 20, 2008

DIRECTED BY: Biju Viswanath
 SCREENPLAY: Celia de Freine & Biju Viswanath
 PRODUCED BY: Richard Harteis
 MUSIC: David Leisner, Ronny Raphael, Bristol Pomeroy, J.S. Bach, Alan Hovhaness
 DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Biju Viswanath
 FILM EDITOR: Sasi Menon
 SOUND: Allison Jackson
 PRODUCTION DESIGN: Jeanette Drake
 ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS: Alec Andriulli, Jackie Bagwell
 MAKEUP/HAIR DESIGN: John Donner, ANTENNA SALON
 FIRST AD: Giovanni Capitulo
 SECOND AD: Sue Miner
 THIRD AD: Kyle Kuchta
 FIRST CAMERA ASSISTANT: Susan Jacob

CAST
 WILLIAM: Alec Dana
 RICHARD: Bristol Pomeroy
 ELIZABETH: Donna del Bueno
 RICHARD'S MOTHER: Beverly Robinson
 MARIAN: Beth Campbell
 BRITT: Malin Tybhal
 LOUIS: Giovanni Capitulo
 DR. LANGOU: Lura Hepler
 WEBB: Tom Keaney
 DR. GIAGONI: Dr. Chris Hutchins
 DR. MAC DONALD: Ned Farell
 DR. KOSTOV: John Noonan
 ART THERAPIST: Melanie Greenhouse
 WILLIAM'S STEP MOTHER: Frances S. Tripp
 LAWYER: Sharon Tripp Griffis
 ELAINE: Sharyn Berman
 NURSE NANCY: Phyllis Pezzolesi
 PETER: Chris Annino
 MINISTER: Carl A. Annino
 PHYSICAL THERAPIST: Matteo Castelli

CAMERA (ARI 535): Cinema Vision, Inc. New York
 Filmed in Kodak vison 2 series 5205, 5218

LAB: Deluxe Post Production, New York
 PROJECT MANGER: Joe Gutowski
 POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR : John Maxwell

LOADER: Vincent Escudaro
 CLAPPER: Bella Reeves
 GAFFER: Matteo Castelli
 FIRST ASSISTANT EDITOR: K.G. Geeson
 SECOND ASSISTANT EDITOR: Rajiv Raman
 SOUND DESIGN: Shaji Madhavan
 DTS SOUND MIX: Ajith A. George
 SOUND EDITOR: John Abraham
 SOUND EFFECTS EDITOR: Rita Paul
 PRODUCTION DESIGN ASSISTANT: Rebecca Miller
 CRAFT SERVICES AND CATERING ASSISTANCE: Susan Miner and Theresa Daniels
 PUBLICITY: Chris Annino
 SOUND NEGATIVE PROCESSING: Ad Labs, Mumbai
 TITLES : VFX Mumbai

Marathon

A Pre-World-Premier Screening

Mystic Art Cinemas
 25 Coogan Boulevard by Route 27
 Mystic, CT 06355

November 20, 2008
 7:00 p.m.

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A Word from the Producer

Richard Harteis

Writing is a solitary business. A writer sits at his desk or takes his note book to a café and, for better or worse, faces the blank page alone. For most writers, the idea of a "group poem" or a "team novel" are oxymoron's that can't correspond to any successful work of art. A corporate report or grant application may require a team effort, but the sustaining vision of a literary work is unique. One of the greatest surprises (and pleasures) in producing MARATHON then, was learning how necessary such a team effort would be in the genre of film. Cajole, compromise, confront, insist, relent, share, appreciate, learn and triumph are all verbs that come to mind when I consider the spectacular month it took to shoot this film, as well as the year of pre-production work with colleagues in India, Ireland and the US. A total neophyte to film making, my learning curve shot straight up and at times it was a very difficult climb. The needs of the film became paramount as each person brought their particular expertise to the table, a careful balancing act that sometimes meant for a fall without a net for some of the players. Nevertheless, that we actually accomplished what we set out to do and no one broke a leg was something of a small miracle.

Once I had to go to court for speeding faster than a ticket would allow, and when I got to the bench, the clerk, to my amazement told me, "the long arm of William Meredith has lifted you up. This case is dismissed. Go, and give Mr. Meredith the court's best regards." In July and August of 2008, just months after his death, William's spirit seemed to be with us in any number of small miracles that occurred: the weather clearing or turning into downpours just as the script called for, pulling up in traffic beside a taxi carrying our lawyer who had been circling round and round trying to find our house, getting permission at the last minute for a replacement location to one that had turned sour. But it was not always easy reliving my life with William on a daily basis - so eerie and often terribly sad, like living trapped in a mirror. When William was an undergraduate at Princeton, he sent his senior thesis to Robert Frost for comment. Frost sent a polite note, but also told him that "a man should only look into a mirror when he is shaving." Still, looking our life through this film helped me get through to the other side somewhat, as does the fact that we are gathered tonight in his honor, perhaps his presence.

The movie was shot with 35 mm film, a decision about which the director was adamant. Viswanath, said people involved with the film, has an eye not only for cinematography, but is also a keen, sensitive observer of human nature.

"His sensitivity to people, their emotions and their journey through life is beautifully captured with his eye for beauty and his sense of timing for each moment," said Sharon Griffis, who has a small part in the film and hosted cast members at the Griffis Arts Center in New London.

Celia De Freine, who wrote the screenplay, said the movie is a universal story of endurance and love.

"Richard stayed by him, despite all the difficulties, and that was a crucial part of the story," De Freine said.

For Harteis, the film is at once a celebration of his life with Meredith and a tribute. And with its making he seeks, like the name Riverrun fittingly suggests, an eternal flow of Meredith's spirit to thrive.

"Once we get the center built it will continue the kind of life at Riverrun William had, and we brought to the community. The kind of spirit and camaraderie and creative flame burning here all these years will continue and will keep his name alive."

On the Web: Visit www.marathonthemovie.com for more information about "Marathon."



Richard and his dog Daisy on Location during filming

Arts & Culture: Movie honors life of award-winning poet

By SHARMA HOWARD

Norwich Bulletin

Posted Nov 15, 2008 @ 12:00 AM

Ashford, Conn. — A marathon requires endurance and discipline, and calls upon the human spirit to triumph over its physical being. It's a transcendent process.

Richard Harteis, longtime companion of Pulitzer Prize-winning poet William Meredith, found while training for a marathon, the journal he kept became a creative catalyst, capturing the devotion in his relationship with Meredith, and family dynamics and American culture. The subsequent book, "Marathon," also has inspired a film of the same name, and it will debut Thursday at the Old Mystick Village Art Cinemas.

The grueling marathon reflects the endurance of two men overcoming adversity, and the triumph over the body also becomes the triumph of the soul.

Harteis, who relinquished creative control to director Biju Viswanath, watched as his story was translated to film, shot locally this summer.

"I'm like a nervous bridegroom," Harteis said. "I was always lobbying to make sure it wasn't just my own story, although in reality the book is. I wanted it to be both our stories."

Although "Marathon" isn't contained to being about overcoming strokes — Meredith suffered one in 1982 — Harteis said the discipline it takes to recover and thrive is an important theme.

"If it helps people to have courage or gives heart the way a good film can do, then it will have accomplished something," Harteis said. "Life can be very tough, and the more we can lend a hand to each other and give moral support, that's what life and culture is about: that we advance our capabilities to be human."

Meredith, whom Harteis described as gracious, nurturing, courageous and an ambassador of the arts, passed away in May 2007. Profits from "Marathon" will help endow an arts center to continue Meredith's legacy at Riverrun, his home in Uncasville, which has been declared a historic landmark by the state.

Since I am starting the ball rolling first with this little memoir, I get a chance to tell an anecdote I am sure Alec would want to tell. "Now, your eyes have to be blue for Monday's shoot," I told Alec, the fine actor who was playing William. "Anything you need just let me know." And sure enough, Monday morning Alec appears on set with William's very blue eyes. Halfway into the close-up scene, however, "Cut, cut!" comes the director's cry - film is very expensive, and you don't simply rewind the film when you are shooting 35 millimeter. "What's that black mark on Alec's eye?" On close examination, one can clearly make out the word "Sample" at the edge of Alec's blue iris. Funny.

There were plenty of times in the grueling schedule when a little levity was welcome.

I was on the set constantly this summer, sometimes I am sure, more constantly than the director might have wished? Who would want someone looking over his shoulder second guessing his work? So, while I have a good idea of the talented live performances, tonight I will be sitting in the dark house as the lights go down with the rest of the audience slipping into the private magic of film, seeing something for the first time, anticipating a beautiful experience. I am sure I will not be disappointed. And, for this new collective experience in the creative life I am extremely grateful, grateful to everyone in the cast and crew, the extraordinary friends who opened their hearts and homes to us, to my dear William whose life continues to inspire and bring us new works of art in his name.

Please forgive the commercial, but let me remind you that profits this film will help endow The William Meredith Center for the Arts, a retreat for artists established at "Riverrun" his home on the Thames that was recently added to the State Registry of historic landmarks. But before there are any profits to be made, we must first pay off our debts and market and get this film to audiences. You can get more information and help our efforts with a contribution if you wish the following:

www.firstgiving.com/the-William-Meredith-Foundation

For now, thank you very much for coming, and "let 'er flicker," as we all used to call out as children.

My view about making marathon:

Biju Viswanath

(Director)

Every film enhances my vision of life.
I learn something, unlearn something,
try not to repeat my mistakes.

In my 15 year long film making career,
Marathon was the most amazing and wonderful experience.

Four months of pre-production,
one month of shooting,
three months of post production:
a real test of endurance.

It was my marathon.

I am happy and grateful,
for I was blessed with a wonderful crew,
talented actors and beautiful locations.

Above all I was fortunate to meet
Celia de Freine and Richard Harteis
who helped me complete this dream project,
and Fran Tripp - amazing and wonderful soul.



Bristol Pomeroy, Biju Viswanath, Alec Dana

Barrett noted the Uncasville home often was used as a writer's retreat, a place where "great writers and great artists sat over dinner and worked and talked and learned from each other.

"If there was some way that Richard -- and us -- can keep this atmosphere alive."

Harteis is well on his way. He has the property listed on the state's register, garnering support from Sen. Christopher Dodd along the way. Now, his dream of preserving the property as a writer's retreat is nearly a reality.

"I think it'll be a beautiful way to contribute to the artistic life of the state," Harteis said. "The visiting artists -- whether they're writers or painters -- will be able to come live here."

Harteis said he hopes some of the region's colleges and universities will want to work with him, as he'd like to allow students to feel as inspired by the meticulous gardens, the quaint riverside and the wild serenity of the open land as Meredith himself.

"I want to keep the spirit burning, and to have future generations know who this remarkable person was -- not just as an artist, but as an individual who overcame so much," Harteis said.

"I think it's going to be a unique place," Gezari said. "If I were a poet and I wanted to actually go somewhere to reflect on things and write good poetry and be around poets, that would be near or at the top on my list."

Until the retreat becomes a reality, Harteis will toil -- over his marathoning, his grief, his upkeep.

"There was one point I was setting up a tarp over the terrace courtyard, and I was pulling on a chord and it broke," Harteis said. "And I fell down on that wall, and there I lay over all these boulders. I don't know how I didn't crush myself."

He paused.

"That wall needs to be replaced now."

All for love.

The New York race was his first, which he ran at age 41. He ran five more, and throughout, he and Meredith remained side by side.

"Remarkably, I trained and lost pounds and got into better shape, and so did William. He saw it as a way of supporting me," Harteis said. "You go on a 20-mile run and you've shot your whole Sunday sometimes.

"It was a very strange, symbiotic relationship," he added. "We sort of became one spirit."

That spirit absorbed a crushing blow May 30 with Meredith's death, but Harteis has slowly learned to live with the physical void, despite the stereotypical emotions one would have to overcome.

"I was worried, too – everybody says you have to move on. There's all these well-meaning platitudes that people offer you," Harteis said. "There's no one right way to deal with your grief. So not to be too morose about it, but I worried about languishing and involving myself too deeply in this kind of tribute memorial."

It shows. Harteis is working on a novel, and his "Marathon" is gestating into a full-length documentary. Harteis is preparing to run an 11.8-mile mini-marathon, with the film detailing that preparation and Meredith's own legacy through Harteis. So, of course, while Harteis is trying not to fully engross himself in his grief channeling, Meredith still remains.

"(The film) would make William happy, certainly," Barrett said. "He was a joyful and happy man, certainly. He wanted that joy to continue. I think it needs to be what it's about."

Legacy

"When I have my own feelings about that sort of thing – because I don't know how much a legacy can be left alive – I think ultimately, for every artist, whatever's on the page will be what's there for the rest of eternity," Gezari said. "For some extent, the personalities and achievements do tend to fade. But what's on the canvas and page tend to persist. That's the real legacy for William."

And what's on Meredith's pages – what's in his poems, comes from the trees, the gardens, the Thames River, the property.

"I think just the physical setting is contemplative and beautiful," Barrett said. "But beyond that, there was always a spirit in the house. It was kind of William's very simple and elegant, and further inspiring atmosphere."

In the beginning

Celia de Fréine

(Screenplay writer)

There is a house in Connemara on the west coast of Ireland called Tearmann which in the Irish language means sanctuary. Tearmann is a bolt-hole I bought ten years ago which has given me space and inspiration to write. It's where in the summer of 2007 I welcomed Biju Viswanath, filmmaker, and Richard Harteis, writer and where, one afternoon, around the kitchen table, the idea of Marathon the movie was first mooted.

The previous summer Richard and William had come to Ireland on a reading tour organized by my husband, Jack Harte. I first met them in the Gresham Hotel in the company of Seamus Heaney, Nobel Laureate, and was privileged to attend their July 4th reading in the Irish Writers' Centre. But my fondest memories of Richard's and William's trip to Ireland are of the few days they spent as my guest in Tearmann.

Normally a quiet house, as a writer's retreat should be, Tearmann resounded with activity and was besieged with visitors during their stay. There was the morning William couldn't wait to join us and fell getting out of bed, gashing his forehead. I ransacked the first aid box for TCP, band aids and Arnica, and Richard dressed the wound, holding the dressing in place with a pair of underpants. Later the same day, courtesy of musicians Richard had met on the beach, we took part in a music and dance session in the kitchen, reminiscent of a scene from Brian Friel's 'Dancing at Lughnasa'. Later still the men, whose ranks had since been swelled by students from Spain and Italy, gathered in the sitting room to watch Italy win the world cup.

Days such as these, as all involved in Marathon will know, were typical of the spontaneity and joie de vivre that accompanied Richard and William during the years they spent together.

Tearmann is a house that cherishes its memories while continuing to inspire me. It's appropriate that it was here the tiny seed, that grew into this great project, was sewn.

Alec Dana
(Actor Playing William)

It was the last day of the Marathon film shoot. Present were Biju Viswanath Director, and his camera crew, Richard Harteis, Producer, the few wardrobe/makeup/volunteer staff, Bristol Pomeroy, co-lead playing the role of Richard Harteis, and myself, co-lead in the role of the late William Meredith, Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. We were all standing in clusters in a microcosmic space along a secluded shoreline near New London, Connecticut.

Through the entire prior four week, five day daily film shoots at various locations, the camera/lighting/audio crews, the casted actors and the extras/volunteers, the makeup/wardrobe/food staff worked very well together. All was coordinated to keep pace with Biju's shooting schedule. Essentially vital to a low budget independent film production is the selection of its various people, their talents and their professionalism, the chemistry within this small group in having a film shoot run smoothly. Richard Harteis made this happen! Biju was using his favorite 35MM (A and B) film. We were to witness a master cinematographer in his element.

The final shoot takes place when my character, William Meredith, drowns in the waters of Long Island Sound. This is a flashback scene reflecting "the white light before death" vision. In a prior early shoot, I am lying on a gurney in the hospital emergency room being shock revived from a heart attack by the ER physician and nurses. This, in itself, was a demanding scene for me. I simulated a responsive jerk as the nurse said "clear" when she applied the shock paddles to my chest. Biju was manipulating the heavy 35MM camera manually under bright lights in this small ER area.

Those who were on these prior scheduled shoots quickly discovered, that part of Biju's creative direction took place at dusk. He'd say, "...it's always the natural light...", and he waited patiently, as he stroked his shaved bald head occasionally, for the right moment! In this dusk scene, the early moon, after the sunset, was high in the sky. The moon was throwing its glowing white light down on to the water. The light ran from a far distance towards the shoreline; the natural light setting for which Biju was waiting. It was now for me, wearing swim trunks, to walk out into the moonlit strip of deep water and drown. We had a few practice runs during which, it was evident my body's buoyancy was my greatest adversary, as I was underwater holding my breath for six counts. Diving into the water would work, but Biju wanted a sinking motion in the water.

"Students are beautiful, wherever you go," Meredith said. "I like students and I am amazed by students; there are good students and bad students, interesting students and amazing students."

As an instructor at institutions such as Princeton University, the University of Hawaii and Connecticut College, Meredith taught many of those good students -- a good portion, including poet Michael Collier, have found rich success through writing and language. Harteis said many of these students benefited tremendously from Meredith's considerable care for them.

"He would spend as much time with a student about his parents or girlfriend as the time he spent on his poems," Harteis said. "He was a Renaissance man of sorts."

Meredith's love of trees showed through his poetry. "Two Trees," one of Meredith's more celebrated poems, was written underneath a split oak tree on the Uncasville property. Harteis compared the trees on the property to Meredith's students.

"They have grown into great tall soldiers the way his soldiers have," he said.

Just noting the property's trees would be to glaze over Meredith's legacy, as friends agreed the late poet was an accomplished gardener.

"He just had these beautiful, meticulously grouped, kept gardens," said longtime friend Bill Barrett. "They were wild too -- they weren't perfect. They were wild and formal combined."

"To call him a landscaper is really a disservice," agreed longtime friend Walter Gezari. "He had an intuitive sense for where to put (flora) and he had a luminous knowledge of botany. He was a force of nature, himself."

Marathon man

For years, Harteis undertook the often whimsically arduous role of keeping up with the "force of nature" Meredith. The force, however, slowed to a halt when in 1983, Meredith suffered a stroke. What resulted -- expressive aphasia, which left Meredith without the ability to openly express himself -- left Harteis with the seriously challenging role of standing by Meredith. Not only did he remain, but he devoted himself to Meredith, becoming a sort of marathon man.

It's no surprise, then, Harteis composed his own memoir, "Marathon," which detailed Harteis' dual multi-mile expeditions: His training for the New York Marathon and his devotion to Meredith during his later years.

Poet's 'spirit lives on'

By TIM MALCOLM

Norwich Bulletin, December 24, 2007

Tucked away off Route 32 in Uncasville, off a pencil-thin road near the glistening Thames River, sits a house, gardens and most of all, influence.

It's where, for years, celebrated local poet William Meredith composed some of his most storied work, with inspiration brimming from the meticulous gardens, from the quaint riverside and from the wild serenity of the open land.

It's fitting, then, that influence will carry through the dedicated work of Meredith's longtime partner, Richard Harteis, who secured Meredith's home as a Connecticut Historic Place Dec. 5.

"This is my home and so much has taken place in the past 40 years," Harteis said. "I've lived here and William's spirit lives on here."

Meredith, who died May 30 after a 20-year bout with expressive aphasia, composed "The Open Sea and Other Poems" in 1957 and won a Pulitzer Prize for "Partial Accounts: New and Selected Poems" in 1988. He also served as U.S. poet laureate.

The Uncasville property, where Meredith lived for more than 40 years, serves as Harteis' regular home today, but the poet – who this year published "Legacy," a collection of poems written during and after Meredith's death – has images of the property's future percolating in his mind. The goal: an artist's retreat.

"I want to turn this small little house and property into a real jewel," Harteis said, "a wonderful place with real gardens ... to show some art and introduce poets from different parts of the world. To make it sing."

According to Harteis, the life of William Meredith can be summed up very simply.

"His life triangulated on students, trees and poetry."

Meredith's love of poetry is quite evident. The other two loves are, however, equally as evident. In a 1998 interview with David Kiernan of Connecticut College, Meredith expressed his fondness for students.

'Amazing students'

In this early August dusk, Long Island Sound was getting colder and after the many practice tries, I was shivering all over, my teeth chattering! Red jelly fish were abundant some ten feet from the shoreline and many were the size of one's hand. The shoreline itself was murky with brown seaweed floating ankle high. Looking out on the horizon one could see a clear dark shimmering water with the moon light gliding towards shore. I was ready! Biju had the camera crew place this heavy expensive 35MM camera on the sanded shoreline facing my back, next to my right ankle, pointing towards my slow walk into the moonlit water.

"Action" was given and I started to walk slowly out into the rock strewn underwater, avoiding its stinging floating red creatures which oscillated dancingly towards me. When the water rose to my waist, I did a "Groucho Marx" crouch-walk reaching a water chin level. I then, holding my breath, sat straight down into the water simulating a drowning. It was impossible to remain under water to the count of six. I just stayed buoyant, floating! I waded back to shore; staff were supportive, encouraging me to try again. Biju was upset, said "...we would have to leave it out!" In my mind this was a vital part of this flashback scene, if not for the entire film. Sadly disappointed, I still wanted to do this beautiful, unusual, special scene. I nodded towards Biju.

Returning to my camera spot on the shoreline, freezing, teeth chattering, I glanced at Bristol and the staff onlookers. He, or someone from the crew, yelled saying I carry a heavy rock with me. Along the shoreline area there were constructed jetties which had large sized blocks of limestone quarry rocks. Foraging, I picked up this heavy crushed limestone rock weighing ten pounds or more. It felt good in my hands. This moment had to work! Biju upset, this expensive film was running out, and most important, the moonlight would be lost!

Everyone was cheering me on. "Action" again, holding the rock hidden in front of me, the camera pointing to my back, resting on the shoreline, close to my right ankle, I slowly walked out into the water, reaching the water level to my chin. Still shivering, teeth chattering, I hold my breath, placing myself in a sitting position as I drop straight down with the rock in my hands. I reach further down into the deep water, count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. So far, so good!!! To my surprise, my buttocks rose placing me in a facedown "dead man" float position. Remaining under water, I felt so dejected. Still holding on to the rock as I rose out of the deep water, I heard "...it's a wrap!" There were cheers, hoorays! My buttocks were never seen.

As a remembrance of things past in Marathon, this beautiful weighed eleven pound limestone quarry rock is my trophy of elation in getting the job done. It rests on the floor at the foot of my desk. Thanks, Biju, Richard, Bristol, Marathon ensemble.

Bristol Pomeroy

(Actor playing Richard)

"Oh, what's this? Hmm... Marathon...must be a running film. I can run. Auditions in New London? Where's that?" Upon arriving in New London for the audition, I found myself in the most charming little town on a beautiful summer day. I got there early and was standing around admiring the architecture when along came Richard, Biju and Celia. Richard had a big hat on with his huge moustache and was such a robust lively figure that I just immediately liked the guy. Biju, I was told, was the director, a very mild-mannered, polite and handsome Indian man. And Celia was Irish... of course. It all made sense. The audition went well and I connected with Richard. He read opposite me as William and I was playing him. It was very emotional for both of us. That was the beginning of this wonderful journey.

Meeting Alec, the star of the film, and my roommate for the next 5 weeks was something. This chap looked like he just arrived from Hollywood and as soon as I met him, he started tap dancing. I thought, "oh boy, what did I sign up for"? After shaving his beard, getting a haircut, and taking off his hip sunglasses he had transformed into a handsome respectable man... Somewhat respectable. As time went by, we adjusted to each other's rhythm and became a support for each other. I don't think however that I ever really became accustomed to my regular morning view of Alec's bare bottom as I passed his room, on my way to the bathroom. That sort of took the place of caffeine for me.

Despite the frequent burlesque shows, Alec was a great roommate and I think I made a lifelong friend. So many nights, I'd be watching TV before bed and he'd come in thrusting a HUGE bowl of ice cream and cake at me. How can you not love that?

The crew of the film were an absolute joy to work with, always professional, kind and supportive. They are the unseen bricks and mortar of the film. I couldn't imagine a better group of people to spend every day with.

Richard was a constantly busy man who was always running around arranging things and getting really important things done. He drives fast in a bright red sports car, has bleach blonde hair, and is just bursting at the seams with energy. At times I thought I was working with Pam Anderson. He was the captain of the team and the inspiration for the entire film.

One day we were filming at a certain location and this man came out and told us very rudely and pompously to wrap it up and leave when we still needed about fifteen more minutes. He then walked back to the main building to rejoin his champagne sipping upper class guests. We were all in a bit of a

Biju Viswanath, Miracle Man

Wednesday, October 29th, 2008

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by Christopher Annino

This summer a man did the impossible and made many local people's dreams come true. Biju Viswanath a nationally known award-winning director from India came to CT to direct a feature film based on local poet and Pulitzer Prize winning author William Meredith's life. The film is based on the memoir, "Marathon." The memoir is about William's life and his companion, Richard Harteis, running a marathon in his memory. Biju and Celia De Freine re-wrote it as a screenplay.

Armed with only a skeleton cast, crew, and low budget Biju managed to do the impossible and create a masterpiece. Like an army both cast and crew, banded together and conquered various locations throughout eastern CT and RI. "The success of any independent film depends on team work. I was lucky to have a very good crew; Susan Jacob, first camera assistant, Allison Jackson, sound person, Jeannette Drake, production designer...all of them helped me achieve what I wanted in this film" said Biju. Being able to multi-task he took the roles of cinematographer, director, and at times cameraman/ locations scout. Beverly Hayes, who played the mother of Richard's character in the film said, "He was like a composer, he set the tone for all of us. He was a joy to work with."

In regards to the way the film was shot Biju remarked, "The script of marathon called for a direct and simple approach in lighting and cinematography, I love twilight and I had used lot of twilight shots in this film to enhance the mood and create a lyrical feel to the visuals. The interiors were mostly shot in the chiaroscuro pattern. The palette I chose was more of cool tones. The decision to shoot in 35mm film speed was mainly for the picture quality and for archival purposes. Fortunately I had the support of some very good actors Bristol Pomeroy, Alec Danna, Donna Del Bueno, and Beverly Hayes, who helped me in attaining my vision of the script."

Old Lyme resident Beth Campbell, who played Marian, said, "Biju is a genius with light and sound, every image will be symbolic and poetic. I'm sure it will be sweepingly beautiful." Bristol Pomeroy, who played Richard, added, "Biju was a joy to work with because he was always completely focused and at the same time allowed the actors to try anything that was appropriate to the scene. Sometimes even allowing us to create entire new improvised scenes for the film." "Marathon" was completed in record time and will be shown on November 20th at the Mystic Village Cinemas.

Biju recently received a special prize at the Patras Film Festival in Greece. He is currently working on a new feature film, which will be shot in December. For more information visit www.bjuviswanath.com/default.html.

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Poetic Preservation

William Meredith's legacy to be solidified in his former home

By Kathleen Edgecomb

Published on 5/12/2008

In the year since poet William Meredith died, his longtime partner has been working to create a legacy to honor his friend. Richard Harteis has established the William Meredith Foundation and a movie about Meredith's life is in production. The state has declared Meredith's home in Uncasville a historic landmark and Harteis is hoping to turn the house on the Thames River into an arts center for working artists. "It's a beautiful spot," says Harteis, standing in the sloping backyard filled with the flora and fauna that Meredith planted and tended on the property he called Riverrun. "It's quiet and peaceful. His spirit lives on here."

Meredith was U.S. Poet Laureate from 1979-81 and was a professor at Connecticut College before a 1983 stroke left him with expressive aphasia, unable to speak. However, with the help of Harteis, he managed after the stroke to win the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for Poetry for compilations of his work.

Much of his work makes specific reference to the land around his home, including a poem called "Two Trees," which describes a large split oak tree that stands at the edge of the lawn. His most famous poem "The Wreck of the Thresher," was imagined while Meredith stood on a point of land that extends into the river, Harteis says. Other poems set on the Thames River include "Winter on the River," "Winter Verse for His Sister," and "Squire Hazard Walks."

Harteis, who lived with Meredith for 36 years, says he is carrying on the wishes of his friend, who often hosted dinners at their home and enjoyed the hearty conversations that ensued. "He liked being in this house," says Harteis, as he shows a visitor around the former barn that was built in 1825. The first floor, where cows were once sheltered from the elements is now a kitchen and dining area. The second floor, where hay bales were once stored, is a bedroom and living area that includes a bookcase displaying some of Meredith's accomplishments. In addition to his literary achievements, Meredith was a Navy pilot during World War II and the Korean War. "I like being in this house where we shared so many experiences," he says. "This is where we lived."

In December, the historic preservation and museum division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism designated the house at 337 Kitemaug Road as a historic landmark.

state of shock to have been treated so boorishly when Richard said, "come on lets go tell this guy to shove it" or something like that and he and Biju stormed up there with balls of steel to confront him. Upon returning he said he had called the man a martinet and that he thinks the guy still didn't know what it meant. Richard sort of became the tough big brother I always wish I'd had at that moment.

Biju was the steady man who was always listening to his inner voice and had a real organic way of working that I found to be very refreshing and freeing. I could always tell when he was connecting with that voice because he would be touching the top of his head. At the end of each scene I had developed a grading scale for how I did in a scene. If Biju said "good" that was an A. If Biju said "ok," that was a B. If Biju said, "what are you doing," that was a C. And if Biju said, "I'm going to kick this Motherfucker into the ocean," that was a D or possibly an F, I couldn't tell. The elusive A plus which I only received once was him coming over and patting me on the back with a smile.

All of the people who worked on the film were wonderful and everyone put in their best efforts. It was a team effort and we each had our job to do to get this ship across this ocean, and I was lucky enough to be swabbing the decks along with everyone else.

And of course this is all in the name of William Meredith whom I never met, but who I feel like I know from his spirit reflected so lovingly in his partner's eyes, the community, and his beautiful poetry and trees.



Alec Dana, Bristol Pomeroy

Sharon Tripp Griffis

(Extra playing the Lawyer)

Richard Harteis and William Meredith have woven through my life over the years with vibrant, intense, emotional colors. I have always admired their talents and their pursuit of life with unbridled passion, and I have also learned from experience that Richard can make incredible things happen. The creation of the film MARATHON is one of those things, and it is once again an example of Richard's talent, his endurance, and his love for William.

This summer I watched as the life Richard lived and wrote about in his non-fiction book Marathon, became framed by Celia de Freine's screenplay and retold by international film director Biju Viswanath. In July 2008, the director, actors and crew from around the world, plus local volunteers and state-of-the-art film equipment, descended on Southeastern, Connecticut with high-octane energy ... and the world began to be remade through the eyes of Biju Viswanath.

From early morning until late in the evening, actors bonded and transformed themselves into their characters, the crew hustled to meet the needs of scenes and locations, and volunteers, many who are my friends and family, created as much support as they could. But I watched in distress as Richard re-lived his life and the gut-wrenching and still raw grief of the loss of William - all the while dealing with the daily crises of deadlines, locations, equipment, personalities and money.

This was Richard's life and story, he was responsible for the film, and he had no control over the outcome - it was Biju's creation. Richard not only had to "Let go, Let God" he had to "Let go, Let Biju." This was a tremendous act of trust during a very stressful and emotional time.

On schedule and within the four weeks allotted, MARATHON was filmed. Biju returned to India for post-production, the crew and actors dispersed, and a completely exhausted Richard left for a previous work commitment abroad. My life returned to a more standard routine, but greatly enriched and transformed by the people I had met during this project.

I look forward to experiencing the film MARATHON. The complexity, the warmth, the deep understanding of human emotions, the tenderness and the visual intensity I witnessed Biju create on film, matches the relationship, as I knew it, between Richard and William. I have no doubt that MARATHON will reflect the type of deep love we would all be lucky to be graced with in our lives, and I am grateful for this one more strand of extraordinary fabric that has been woven into the tapestry of my life.

CONTACT:

The William Meredith Foundation, Inc.
337 Kitemaug Road
Uncasville, Ct. 06382

Email: RiverrunBooks@cs.com
Tel: 860-961-5138

IMPORTANT LINKS

MARATHON WEBSITE: www.marathonthemovie.com

MARATHON DIRECTOR: www.Bijuviswanath.com

SCREENPLAY WRITER: www.celiadefreine.com

FOUNDATION WEBSITE:

www.firstgiving.com/the-william-meredith-foundation

TO ORDER a copy of MARATHON:

<http://www.vivisphere.com/vivispherebooks/3583/3583.asp>

TO ORDER A COPY OF LEGACY:

<http://stores.lulu.com/TheChurchofLivingHopeBookstore>

FEATURE ARTICLE ON WILLIAM MEREDITH:

<http://drunkenboat.com/db7/feature-meredith/index.html#>

MEMORIALS TO WILLIAM MEREDITH

<http://thechurchoflivinghope.com/churchhope-meredith.htm>

GOALS OF THE WILLIAM MEREDITH FOUNDATION

In order to share his legacy with future generations, a number of friends have come together to form the William Meredith Foundation. Our first goal is to preserve Riverrun and continue to invite artists for brief residencies. The Board of Directors has incorporated the Foundation in the State of Connecticut and function as a tax exempt foundation. Architectural plans have been drawn up for an annex to house artists and provide studio space. The William Meredith Center for the Arts will foster an appreciation for the work of local and regional artists and provide opportunities for them to present their work, as well as those invited for artist exchange programs internationally, particularly with the Republic of Bulgaria where Mr. Meredith was made a citizen by presidential decree in 1996 for his work in the culture.

A FINAL WORD: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton wrote a letter joining Connecticut College in a celebration of William's 80th birthday in which she says, "The arts have always been a unifying force in our world, bringing people together across vast cultural, social, economic and geographical divisions. Through his work, William Meredith both enhances and strengthens the American spirit. As you honor Mr. Meredith, you celebrate the timeless power of poetry and poets as our American memory, our purveyors of insight and culture, our eyes and ears who silence the white noise around us, and express the very heart of what connects us, plagues us, and makes us fully human."

The William Meredith Center for the Arts will offer another window on the world through which we can enhance our spirit, a window through which artists may search their private worlds and speak for us as we make our slow progress as members of the human tribe. A short signature poem by William Meredith inspires us in our efforts to honor his memory as a model of courage, good will, civility and achievement:



A Major Work

Poems are hard to read
Pictures are hard to see
Music is hard to hear
And people are hard to love

But whether from brute need
Or divine energy
At last mind eye and ear
And the great sloth heart will move.

Sue Miner

(Second Assistant Director, production assistant, extra)

If you are fortunate, you have times in your life when you have the opportunity to flourish in your work and also socially have the chance to meet new friends who are gifted in their craft. As Second Assistant Director of Marathon, I was blessed with these many opportunities during the Summer of 2008. I thank Richard Harteis, Producer for his direction and "We can do this" attitude. And of course for the opportunity to be a part of this very important film focusing on the life of William Meredith. And to Biju, our director, who taught me what I called his "MIB's" which meant MOMENTS OF BRILLIANCE. There were many. I'll always remember the million laughs with the cast, crew, volunteers, and those who graciously hosted us on location. I am forever grateful.



Alexander J. Andriulli

Associate Producer

Working on Marathon was an experience that I will not soon forget. It takes a lot of inner strength to fight through the ups and downs of film making, and there were a lot of very strong people who worked on Marathon. Everyone gave there all and then some to complete this film, and I formed a strong bond with all of them during the 30 days it took to shoot it. I remember seeing Bristol wearing my many wardrobe donations to the project and those pieces that I was not aware that I had donated. I remember all of us being delirious by the end of a long shooting day and using humor to keep our motivation up. I remember hanging out with the cast and crew after shooting and seeing another side of people. I remember telling dirty jokes with Giovanni, having interesting conversations with Bristol, and feeding off of Allison's laughter to keep my energy up. I remember the unsung heroes of this movie like Rebecca Miller, Sharon Berman/Ferrell, Chris Annino, Kyle Kutcha, and Marsha Tracy. Without their assistance and unending dedication this project would never have been possible. I appreciate the hard work of every single person who donated their time and energy to help us make this movie. I would like to extend a special thanks to Jeanette Drake's mother Jean who spent an entire day with us as an extra. I would also like to thank Richard for giving Jeanette and I the opportunity to work with some very talented individuals like Biju who came all the way from India to shoot and direct this beautiful and touching film, and Matteo who came from Italy to do our lighting and became our friend. Lastly thank you Alec for enduring the cold waters of New London to get our last shot. We all worked very hard and I am proud to call you all my friends.



THE WILLIAM MEREDITH CENTER FOR THE ARTS

The William Meredith Foundation in co-operation with the Norwich Arts Council is pleased to announce the establishment of the William Meredith Center for the Arts to honor a great American poet, the late William Meredith. This center will keep the flame of generosity and artistic camaraderie burning at Riverrun, William's home on the Thames River in Connecticut where he lived and worked for 60 years and which has recently been added to the State Registry of Historic Landmarks.

The invited artists at the Meredith Center will share their work through art exhibitions, readings, publications and academic seminars. The center will serve as a retreat where artists can create new works in the same spirit of peace, equality, and serious endeavor that characterized William's life and work at Riverrun. Profits from the film and sales* of MARATHON will be used to help endow the William Meredith Center for the Arts.

SOME BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON WILLIAM MEREDITH

After service as a Navy pilot in WWII and Korea, William Meredith returned to his native Connecticut to begin his extraordinary career. He settled on a farm in Uncasville to share his talents as teacher, poet, and arborist. For decades, as the rare trees he nurtured on the banks of the Thames grew to beautiful maturity, so did his many fine students at Connecticut College. He continued his mastery of the art form of poetry and in 1979 was designated Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress, a position now (and retroactively) legislated as United States Poet Laureate.

For years, William Meredith was a good friend and good neighbor to the community, and a legendary host to students and fellow writers such as Robert Frost, Muriel Rukeyser, Richard Wilbur and Robert Penn Warren whose visits enhanced the cultural life of the community. William encouraged emerging local artists, sponsoring and guest curating numerous art exhibitions from Norwich, to Westerly to New Haven. Even after a devastating stroke curtailed his career, he faced the challenge and went on to win the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the Los Angeles Times Book Award for Poetry.

The foundation believes we need such models of courage and grace to sustain us. In one poem from a series based on the life of an imaginary painter named Hazard, William describes Hazard as being, "in charge of morale in a morbid time." This is William Meredith's legacy to us, a legacy we treasure.

Frances S. Tripp

(Extra playing William's Step Mother)

Seeing the photograph of Richard and William walking down the path at my home here at the Mill gave me a flashback to a tender memory of them at a Fall Gathering here with my children, grandchildren, friends, the Australian and New Zealand artists in residence at the Griffis Art Center, the Bulgarian artists being hosted by Richard, and Mary and Elmira my spiritual mentors from Harmony House. It was September 2001 and we were all reeling with the aftermath of the unexpected 9/11 attack only a few days before. We were participating in a circle of love and sharing.

William still suffering from the effects of his stroke, gently and haltingly drew upon his strength and memory, overcoming great hardship to recite his poem about family. These precious feelings we shared as world family.

It was Richard's nurturing and caring for William and William's own great inner strength for his own healing that allowed us all to share this heartfelt moment that etched a place in my heart. With the flicker of the candles, eyes reflecting knowing, I experienced a personal flash of awareness of their love softly depicted in the invitation photo for the pre-screening of Marathon.

With my daughter Sharon's encouragement I agreed to participate in this inspirational movie in spite of the fact that I felt it was a real personal risk for me to enter this venture into the unknown. To my surprise, the participation has enriched my life and opened up for me an experience in my heart of overflowing joy. Becoming a part of the simple beauty of the dedication and commitment of Biju, Celia, the actors, the crew and friends of Richard's, honoring and sharing his soul journey was uplifting to my spirit.

Quoting the film maker and writer Julia Cameron, "This is switching on of spiritual electricity that transcends our own limitations."



Beth Campbell

(Actress playing MARIAN)

July 28, 2008, I will never forget. We filmed at Riverrun, Richard and William's home. The day was as beautiful as the setting. Bristol took pictures of every nook and cranny, and Jeanette scrounged every other nook and cranny for set dressing. But it was a day of extremes!

One of the scenes was Marian driving Richard's mother to the airport. Beverly and Bristol captured mother and son pathos perfectly, and their connection was palpable. What was not so palpable were the car brakes. Richard Harteis has secured a period-acceptable jalopy for me to drive up his driveway. Up might not be so difficult in a car without brakes, but downhill backwards was more dodgy. The gears worked, of course, with "reverse" being particularly vigorous. Now I could stop the car with the emergency brake. So that was it, and I had one rehearsal. I drove the car forward, and hit the brake with my left foot, all the while thinking, "Marian would never be caught dead in this heap." So to reset the car back to first mark, Richard said, "put it in reverse." Now I should have known better. All I had to do was put it in neutral and let it coast. But once that devil auto hit gear, the engine gunned and my sandal stuck under the brake—and in what seemed an eternity—I finally got my foot above the pedal and kicked it with all I had. The tires squealed. Whew! Isn't Beth some kind of hotrod.

Maybe they didn't know how close I came to killing them: Biju, Susan, Matteo, Gio, Jeanette, Alec. I'm not sure who was behind the car, but certainly the camera was mere feet from the bumper. And if I'd really failed completely, killing the crew and destroying the camera, there was still Richard and William's library directly in line. Historical, and flammable.

I jumped out of the car and had the quietest mother of all anxiety attacks. It was all I could do not to convulse on camera, since I had maybe two minutes to recover before we shot. But indeed we shot and it was a moving scene (pardon the pun) where Richard rejects Marian. Good thing driving a wreck made me a wreck.

Like I said, it was a day of extremes. I managed to recover from the brakeless episode, and we gathered near the river for the scene where Richard and Marian reminisce. It was Biju's genius to film in a hammock there. The crew set up, I carried a fuchsia flower, and Bristol and I watched the hushed spectacle of birds as we waited for the magic light of dusk. But it is working with Bristol that is magic. We could have been surrounded by hundreds, but

really, he and I were absolutely alone and completely safe. To paraphrase Spencer Tracy's Matt Drayton in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*: The only thing that matters is what you feel, and how much you feel, when you see us on screen. And if it's half of what I felt—that's everything.

It was the honor of my life to play Marian, and I thank the cast and crew for supporting me in this work. But I especially thank Richard, Biju, and Bristol for their faith in me. It made all the difference.

Donna Del Bueno

(Actress playing Elizabeth)

Dear Richard,

Thanks so much for the opportunity to be a part of MARATHON, your personal & moving story of love. In stepping out of your comfort zone you, not only produced this touching piece but I believe you completed an intimate chapter for yourself.

Working with Bristol & Alec was a delight. The members of the crew with whom I had contact were as able as they were gracious. How wonderful!

Above all else, I felt very special indeed to have had that brief moment in time to work with such a rare and gifted artist as Biju. It's a blessing to a fellow artist to be a part of that divine serendipity that brings unique people together to do what it is they were meant to do.

May God carry this film forth wherever it is meant to be seen.

John Noonan

(Extra playing Dr. Kostov)

I do have one quick note you may want to include... Biju was setting up a shot in a Hospital Room... where Richard (Bristol) was attending to William (Alec) who was lying in bed as Dr. Kostov (John) was about to come in and examine William... We heard some snoring coming from the bed and Biju said to William that he didn't think that was necessary... but in fact William (Alec) was so comfortable he had dozed off !!!

Phyllis Pezzolesi

(Extra playing Nurse Nancy)

It was so wonderful to make a movie. I was so honored to be asked. I thought I was going to die that day. Nerves were flowing, tears were flowing. I needed a drink, a smoke, but with the help of all the wonderful staff and producer I made it through.

Sharyn Farrell

(Extra playing Elaine /Producer's Assistant)

"Thanks to cast and crew I found my voice here. Blessings to all!"

