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P.O.V.'s "The Camden 28" Tells Riveting Vietnam Era Story Of Protest, Conspiracy and Double-Dealings, Tuesday, Sept. 11 on PBS

New Documentary Recalls Religiously Inspired Antiwar Action in New Jersey That Led to "One of the Great Trials of the 20th Century"

"The unspoken parallels between Iraq and Vietnam and the antiwar movements then and now are illustrated by 'The Camden 28,' a poignant documentary recalling the all-but-forgotten trial of 28 Vietnam War opponents, mostly members of the Catholic Left . . ." — Stephen Holden, The New York Times

Early Sunday morning, August 22, 1971, then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and Nixon Attorney General John Mitchell announced that 20 antiwar activists had been arrested the previous night attempting to break in and vandalize a Camden, N.J., draft board office. Five days later, eight more plotters were indicted. Charged with conspiracy to remove and destroy files from draft, FBI and Army Intelligence offices, destruction of government property and interfering with the Selective Service system, members of the "Camden 28" faced up to 47 years in federal prison. Who were these dangerous radicals that America's premier law enforcement agency so proudly took down? They included four Catholic priests, a Lutheran minister and 23 members of the "Catholic Left."

The Camden 28 were a far cry from bomb-planting Weathermen or even fist-waving militants. But the very difference of these "Catholic Left" conspirators — their religious motives — as shown in the new documentary **The Camden 28**, premiering on PBS's **P.O.V.** series, may well have made them more dangerous opponents in the eyes of the Nixon Administration. A growing Catholic and religious opposition to the war could not be dismissed as extremist to mainstream America, so they had to be brought down.

Anthony Giacchino's **The Camden 28** has its national broadcast premiere on **Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2007** at 10 p.m. on PBS, as part of the 20th-anniversary season of public television's groundbreaking **P.O.V.** series. (Check local listings.) American television's longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television's premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films.

The Camden 28 reveals just how far the government was prepared to go in the cloak-and-dagger story leading up to the arrests, including the participation of a 29th man who was wonderfully adept at solving practical problems that otherwise baffled the well-meaning but un-handy activists. But "the best-laid plan of mice and men often go awry," as Nixon, Mitchell, Hoover and the nation would learn from the ensuing trial.

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Participants in the religious antiwar movement shared the belief that killing, even in war, was morally indefensible. Led by the charismatic Berrigan brothers, the “Catholic Left,” though it included many non-Catholic religious and lay people, had conducted over 30 draft board raids, destroying close to a million Selective Service documents by 1971. But they were hardly a centralized or even structured movement. Actions were carried out by independent groups of activists, angered by the war’s mounting toll and its collateral effects on poor cities like Camden.

This was the case with the Camden 28. The group’s earnest dedication to stopping the war was hindered by a lack of resources, practical capabilities and the temperament to carry out a covert operation, but that didn’t stop them.

And their aspirations likely would have remained more fantasy than reality if Mike Giocondo, a former Franciscan brother, hadn’t brought a good friend, Bob Hardy, also an active Catholic lay person, into the plot. Hardy — the 29th person — was a professional handyman who had the practical skills and tools to turn the group’s ideas into action. Some members had been involved in other draft board raids and had perfected the skill of “casing” a target. But they needed to know how to get into the building. By going in with Camden 28 member Gene Dixon, Hardy managed to secure building plans, including those for security. Under Hardy’s direction, the group assembled a plausible plan of action. Even now, over 35 years later, members of the group, including Giocondo, can’t help but express the empowerment they felt as Hardy lent them the skills to throw a wrench into the gears of an “immoral and unjust war.”

Of course, after hearing what Giocondo and the others, including his parish priest, Father Michael Doyle, had in mind, Hardy had gone straight to the FBI — in the very building that housed the targeted draft office. He offered himself as an informer, and the FBI promptly accepted. The Camden 28 were allowed to get inside the building and destroy files for over two hours under FBI surveillance before the FBI moved in to catch them red-handed.

One of the fascinating aspects of **The Camden 28** is hearing from so many of the participants, then and now, especially as they gather for a 2002 reunion in the very Camden courtroom where the government brought them to trial. Giocondo still can’t quite get over his excitement at taking action, and his sense of betrayal at Hardy’s double-cross. Doyle recounts his “conversion” to activism, and how weeks after the break-in and arrest, despite everything, he performed the funeral rites for Hardy’s son after the boy’s tragic death. Navy veteran John Swinglish remembers facing the stiffest penalty.

Even Bob Hardy, still unapologetic, explains why he was bound to uphold the law — which, for many of the 28 does not really explain why he volunteered for such an active role in exposing — some would say entrapping — his friends. He had been expected to be the government’s star witness. Instead, he wrote an affidavit for the activists in which he maintained that the FBI had helped carry out the action by enlisting him as an *agent provocateur*.

What happened in the courtroom after the arrests, however, may be the most astounding thing recounted by the film. In a trial that lasted 63 days, the plotters proclaimed their guilt. “I ripped up those [draft] files with my hands,” declared the Rev. Peter D. Fordi, adding, “They were the instruments of destruction.” In the best tradition of civil disobedience, and fully expecting to pay for their stand, the Camden activists asked the jury to “nullify the laws” against breaking and entering in this case, and to acquit them because citizens had a right to stop an “illegal and immoral” war. They also asked the jury to acquit them on the grounds that the raid would not have taken place without the help of an admitted FBI double-agent.

After three days of deliberations, a jury of seven women and five men returned a verdict of not guilty on all charges. According to *The New York Times*, “the defendants . . . and 200 supporters . . . burst

into cheers, wept, hugged one another and sang a chorus of 'Amazing Grace,' a moment reenacted with gusto at the reunion.

The acquittals represented the first legal victory for the antiwar movement in five years of such draft board actions and prosecutions. The jury's verdict moved Supreme Court Justice William Brennan to call the proceeding "one of the great trials of the 20th century."

"The inspiration to make **the Camden 28** was born 11 years ago," says director Giacchino, who grew up 15 miles north of Camden and whose parents attend mass at Father Doyle's Sacred Heart Church. "Dave Dougherty, the movie's cinematographer, and I had been looking for a local historical subject that would make an interesting film. A family friend encouraged me to talk to his priest, the Rev. Michael Doyle of the Church of the Sacred Heart, about his role in the Camden 28.

"What I heard made me understand how a war halfway around the world can impact a city like Camden, and that there are important lessons to be learned today from the group's actions — and the government's ensuing reactions."

The Camden 28 is a production of ECC Media, LLC.

About the filmmakers:

Anthony Giacchino

Director

A 1992 graduate of Villanova University, Anthony Giacchino has been working as a producer in television and documentary filmmaking since 1994. He co-produced and co-directed an independent documentary in Dresden, Germany, "Time Bomb," about how Germans remember the 1945 bombing and destruction of Dresden. He also shot, produced and directed a short documentary on David McReynolds, the 2000 Socialist Party candidate for president. For The History Channel, he has produced the Sunday-morning talk shows, "HistoryCENTER" and "Hardcover History," as well as the primetime series "History vs. Hollywood," and a variety of specials. **The Camden 28** is the first feature-length documentary Giacchino has directed. A native of Edgewater Park, N.J., he lives in Astoria, New York.

David Dougherty

Director of Photography

David Dougherty began his career as an independent videographer in 1993. His clients have included numerous television stations, corporations and special interest groups. He also oversees a team responsible for audiovisual design, installation and production at a leading pharmaceutical firm. Dougherty graduated from Temple University in 1992 with a bachelor's degree in radio, television and film and is pursuing a master's degree in organizational dynamics from the University of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the International Documentary Association.

Credits:

Producer/Writer/Director:	Anthony Giacchino
Director of Photography:	David Dougherty
Editor:	Brandon Park
Music:	Michael Giacchino

Running Time: 86:46

Festivals:

- Philadelphia Film Festival, *Jury Prize and Audience Award, Best Documentary*, April 2006
- Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, 2006

POV 20

Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 20th season on PBS in 2007, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through September, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought nearly 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and now has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available online at www.pbs.org/pov.

P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces special features for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through filmmaker interviews, story updates, podcasts, streaming video, and community-based and educational content that involves viewers in activities and feedback. P.O.V. Interactive produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. In addition, www.pbs.org/pov houses *Talking Back*, where viewers can comment on P.O.V. programs, engage in dialogue and link to further resources. The P.O.V. Web site and P.O.V. archives, including special sites from previous broadcasts, form a unique and extensive online resource for documentary storytelling.

P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these original materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences. P.O.V. works closely with local PBS stations to partner with museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films. P.O.V.'s *Youth Views* expands these efforts by working with youth-service organizations.

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American Documentary, Inc. (www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation. Simon Kilmurry is executive director of American Documentary | P.O.V.

TAPE REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.