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You're Never Too Old to Go for the Gold, as Revealed in POV's 'Ping Pong,' Monday, Sept. 9, 2013 on PBS

*Competitors in the Over-80 World Table Tennis Championship Show an Uncommon Drive to Win
In the Face of Old Age*

"It is about aging, mortality, friendship, ambition and love. The stories stay with you for hours, weeks, after the credits have rolled."—Matthew Syed, *The Times*, UK

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Dates: Anson Hartford and Hugh Hartford's **Ping Pong** has its national broadcast premiere on **Monday, Sept. 9, 2013** at 10 p.m. (check local listings), as part of the 26th season of the award-winning PBS series **POV (Point of View)**. The film will stream on POV's website, www.pbs.org/pov/pingpong, from **Sept. 10-14, 2013**.

American television's longest-running independent documentary series, POV is the recipient of a 2013 MacArthur Foundation Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

The Film: Call this old age, extreme edition: Seven players with 620 years between them compete in the Over 80 World Table Tennis Championships in China's Inner Mongolia. British players Terry, 81, who has been given a week to live, and Les, 91, a weightlifter and poet, are going for the gold. Inge, 89, from Germany, has used table tennis to paddle her way out of dementia. And Texan Lisa, 85, is playing for the first time. **Ping Pong** is a wonderfully unusual story of hope, regret, friendship, ambition, love—and sheer human tenacity in the face of aging and mortality.

Embed a trailer, download press materials and learn more at www.pbs.org/pressroom.

The Characters: British player **Terry Donlon** is 81 and has cancer. He plays wearing a nebulizer for shortness of breath, earning him a reputation as a "walking miracle." Now, he's been given one week to live.

Fellow Brit **Les D'Arcy**, 89, is Terry's doubles partner. Les is a renowned advocate for the elderly, known for his determined—some would say fanatical—pursuit of activities such as weightlifting, triathlon and shot-put.

Swede **Rune Forsberg**, 85, an archrival of Les, sees the 2010 competition as his last chance for gold.

Dorothy DeLow of Australia may not be the best player, but she's a legend in her own right. At 100, she is the game's oldest competitive player.

Lisa Modlich of Houston, a relative newcomer at 85, has led an exciting life. She was raised in an aristocratic Viennese family and fought in the French Resistance before emigrating to

the U.S. She is now married to Joachim, 25 years her junior, and is one of the game's fiercest competitors.

Ursula Bihl, 89, of Germany, won the world championship three years earlier and almost gave up on going to the 2010 championship.

German **Inge Hermann**, 89, ended up in the dementia ward of a nursing home after her husband's death 15 years earlier. Introduced to table tennis as therapy, she literally paddled her way back to physical and mental wellbeing, and today she manages the nursing home and teaches computer science classes. In **Ping Pong**, she's going to her first international competition.

The filmmakers: [Hugh Hartford, Director](#)

Hugh Hartford is a producer and director of documentaries for United Kingdom and international broadcasters through Banyak Films, a company he co-founded. His last project as producer, *Us Now*, aired on Channel 4's international feature documentary series *True Stories*. He regularly makes half-hour current affairs documentaries for Al Jazeera English. **Ping Pong** is the first feature documentary he has directed.

[Anson Hartford, Producer](#)

Anson Hartford has produced documentaries for the BBC, Al Jazeera English, Sky Arts, BBC Films and a host of independent ventures. The last film he directed was *James Ravillious: A World in Photographs*, a BBC Four arts documentary about one of the great unknowns of British photography.

Filmmakers'
Statements:

"Interestingly, ping pong is seeing a resurgence of interest through pop-up spaces, bar-based tournaments and celebrity enthusiasts," says director Hugh Hartford. "But, really, we wanted to make a film about the tenacity of the human spirit more than about any sports title. There's a message for all of us in this."

"At the beginning we thought we were making a film about what life is like toward the end of our lives," says producer Anson Hartford, Hugh's brother, "but **Ping Pong** is much more about living than about dying. It is more about love and friendship than loss and death."

Outreach:

POV works with educators, public television stations and national and community groups to foster dialogue around the issues in our films. For a list of screening events, go to www.pbs.org/pov/outreach. POV and nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow develop discussion guides and lesson plans to facilitate conversations. The **Ping Pong** discussion guide includes background information on healthy aging and "ping pong therapy," prompts for dialogue and a list of resources. The materials are available free of charge at www.pbs.org/pov/pingpong/. Rogow's lesson plan asks students to examine stereotypes about senior citizens. Event organizers may email events@pov.org to request a free loaned DVD to screen.

Online:

POV's website for **Ping Pong**, www.pbs.org/pov/pingpong/, offers a broad range of exclusive online content to enhance the PBS broadcast. Watch the film online from Sept. 10-14, 2013, view a video interview with the director, download a discussion guide and viewing resources and find out what's happened in the players' lives since the cameras stopped rolling.

Related Stories: "Why ping pong just might be the elixir of youth," Channel 4 News, Aug. 12, 2013. <http://bit.ly/19Y5lPh>

"Exercise: A Fountain of Youth," by Carol Carson, AARP News, Aug. 7, 2013. <http://bit.ly/934B0j>

“Gray Chynoweth: Putting Greens and Ping-Pong Encourage Creativity,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 6, 2013. <http://on.wsj.com/13JUeC7>

“Americans sharply divided about dramatically extending human lifespan, poll finds,” by Michelle Boorstein and Tara Bahrapour, *The Washington Post*, Aug. 6, 2013, <http://bit.ly/19ohihP>

“Can exercise improve memory and reduce the risk of dementia in older inactive adults?” Healthcanal.com, July 17, 2013. <http://bit.ly/13TfEjQ>

“Eat right, exercise, go to school to avert dementia,” *Arizona Daily Star*, July 23, 2013. <http://bit.ly/17k1Kpy>

“Going batty: the stars of over-80s table tennis,” by Sally Williams, *The Telegraph*, June 26, 2012. <http://bit.ly/My1RWX>

Credits: Director: Hugh Hartford
Producer: Anson Hartford
Executive Producers: Maxyne Franklin, Beadie Finzi
Cinematographers: Hugh Hartford, Anson Hartford
Editor: John Mister
Original Music: Orlando Roberton
Running Time: 56:46

POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer: Simon Kilmurry
Co-Executive Producer: Cynthia López
VP, Programming & Production: Chris White
Coordinating Producer: Andrew Catauro

Awards/Fests: Celebrate Age Special Mention, Mumbai International Film Festival, 2012
Best Documentary Nomination, Warsaw International Film Festival, 2012
Opening Night Film, DMZ Docs Korea, 2012
Official Selection, Hot Docs, 2012
Official Selection, Sheffield Do/Fest 2012
Official Selection, DOC NYC, 2012

For a complete list of screenings, visit <http://pingpongfilm.co.uk/>.

Pressroom: Visit POV’s pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 26th season on PBS, the award-winning POV is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today’s best independent documentary filmmakers. POV has brought more than 365 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide, and its films have won every major award, including 32 Emmys, 15 George Foster Peabody Awards, 10 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards® and the Prix Italia. In 2012, POV achieved a new milestone, winning five News & Documentary Emmy® Awards. Since 1988, POV 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. Visit www.pbs.org/pov.

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