



## Local filmmaker spends six years making movie

***By MELANIE PLEND A Correspondent***

The only difference between a making a major Hollywood movie and an independent film is the places you stay and the food you eat, or so says retired-military-turned-independent-filmmaker J. Brian Turk.

Turk, of Nashua, recently finished his first independent feature film "Boston Psychiatric."

The film, which was written and produced by the 55-year-old and stars mostly Boston-area actors, is about a young psychiatrist's fall from grace when he accepts tainted startup money to bring a drug to market.

After a stint in prison, the good doctor takes a job working for free at a Boston psychiatric clinic. From there, hijinx ensue.

Though Turk's the vice president of a Boston-based defense contractor by day, at night he's been feverishly entering his film at festivals, hoping to get a showing and ultimately distribution.

"It's a long-shot grassroots film," Turk said. "But if you don't dream, if you don't reach beyond what's possible, you're not going to get anything."

Turk grew up outside of Cleveland. His dad, Jerry Turk, was a commercial writer and producer of the radio show "On Location."

"I grew up going with my father on weekends to interview sport figures, research scientists and NASA engineers. Each trip was a new adventure," Turk said.

He also grew up with John Wayne. Admiring each western, military and action picture was inspirational for young Turk; he joined the Air Force.

"I fell in love with the military," Turk said, but balks at the idea that the military is so much different than putting together a film.

"I learned how to breathe, talk, speak logistics and finance and how to manage people," he said. "And those are exactly the things you need to be an independent filmmaker."

Turk rose through the ranks in the Air Force, retired, and a few years later, began working for a defense contractor, which he declined to name. But still, he had a hankering to release his creative side. So, he decided to get a master's of arts at Harvard University. During one of his night classes, on the floor doing a breathing exercise, he thought he should make a film. He had access to the people. He had the drive to write, and even produce it if need be. So he did.

He gathered up his actors and wrote the script. However, with the help and advice of his pragmatic wife, Bunnie, he waited. He saved money for eight years to be able to fund the film, he said. He was not – whether by choice or his wife's sound advice – going to go into debt for the movie, no matter how much he loved it. He also made sure he got his two sons through college.

As home movie-making technology got better and more affordable, he gathered that up, too, including snagging a high-def camera.

Although filming took place in Boston and Seattle, the movie is largely shot on location in the real-life Codman Square Health Center in Dorchester, Mass. In order to secure the location, he went to Bill Walczak, who founded the Codman Square Health Center and has served as its chief executive officer since 1980. Walczak became the inspiration for the long-suffering Dr. Murphy, who struggles to keep Boston Psychiatric open for the benefit of the needy patients it serves.

"I support independent film-making, which I believe is critical to the creativity of the film industry, but I also like the concept of this particular film," Walczak said in a press release. "I've spent my entire career helping people get access to quality health care they couldn't otherwise afford. So that's why this film, which brings attention to someone donating his time to help others in need, is so close to my heart."

The cast shot on Sundays, in the non-patient areas of the clinic, for six years.

It was a long process, working around actors' schedules and his own, as well as maintaining a funding flow. When he'd run out of money, or needed more equipment, his wife was the voice of reason.

" 'Not unless you save up to pay for it,' that's what she'd say," he said. "She is a saint to live with me."

Turk finished the film in late summer and had a screening in Boston. From here on out, it's just a matter of waiting.

"You have to have a burning passion for what you're doing, that's the most important thing," Turk said.

“Whether it’s art, music, accounting – you have to have something that makes you jump out of bed in the morning. If you don’t have that, you may have an idea, but you end up just sitting there watching TV saying ‘I could do that,’ but you sleep in tomorrow instead.”

© 2009, Telegraph Publishing Company, Nashua, New Hampshire