

**PERNA**  
**CONTENT**

# WELCOME TO LEE MAINE

*A film about two soldiers and the  
town that loved them*



# SYNOPSIS

On June 23, 2007 Sgt. Joel House was killed while on patrol in Taji, Iraq by an improvised explosive device (IED). He died on his mother's birthday. On November 30, 2007 Blair Emery was also killed by an IED while on patrol in Baghdad, Iraq. Both soldiers were from Lee, Maine.

Welcome to Lee Maine is a documentary film about a small, close-knit town (pop 845) in rural Maine. As the smallest town in America to lose two sons in the Iraqi Conflict, the town of Lee must learn to cope with its loss. Lee is a patriotic, bucolic town with strong Christian values and has a long tradition of service in the armed forces. The film follows the community as it comes together to overcome its tragic loss and heartbreak. While there are many opinions about the war the war in Iraq, the people of Lee are united in their support of the families and each other in this time of loss.

Like the phoenix rising from the ashes of war, in the midst of his grief, Paul House, father of Sgt. Joel House, has a dream. Paul is dedicated to bringing Gold Star families, families that have lost loved ones in combat, together in the Maine wilderness to experience the solace and harmony of nature.

Paul enlists Bill Emery, father of Sgt. Blair Emery, in his efforts. Together, they tell their stories to all who will listen. Their inspirational and relentless efforts attract the attention of the Governor of Maine. With support from their state, their town and their families, Paul and Bill are able to make their dream a reality. Together they found the organization House in the Woods, a sanctuary in Lee Maine where grieving families from across the nation can come and begin to heal.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Welcome to Lee Maine is a film inspired by an article I read in USA Today entitled "A Small Town Mourns a Big Sacrifice" by Rick Hampsom. Lee Maine is the smallest town in America to lose two sons in the Iraqi war, SGT Joel House and SGT Blair Emery. In May 2008 I took a few trips to Lee to enjoy a meal in the local diner while observing the town before deciding whether or not to make the film. I spoke to Pastor Bickford at the Baptist Church in Lee about the film I wanted to make. He told me a bit about the town and about the House and Emery families. Pastor Bickford told me that Paul House was a deeply committed Christian and that his faith was a very big part of his life.

The Pastor also told me there was to be a Memorial Day celebration; I decided to come and film the ceremony. It was at the celebration where I first met the Dee and Paul House and Bill and Quie Emery, the respective parents of SGT Joel House and SGT Blair Emery. I told them about my idea to make a documentary.

The first thing Dee House said to me, which I'll never forget, was "You're not going to make an anti-war film are you?" She paused and followed with, "I guess it is hard to make a film about kids getting killed and not be antiwar." I told her I wanted to make a film that was true to the events and to the feelings of the town of Lee. The film was to be about the how such a small town dealt with the devastating news of losing two sons in the Iraqi War.

Having worked along side Albert Maysles for a few years I could hear Albert's voice in the back of my head as I spoke with Dee, "Rule one: Distance yourself from a point of view. Rule Two: Love your subjects." Albert's second rule was easy since the people of Lee are lovely. Albert always said "Make the film experiential, unstaged, and uncontrolled".

Albert said a lot of things, but the most important thing Albert Maysles ever told me was "there is a connection between reality and truth. Remain faithful to both" As I filmed Welcome to Lee Maine, I tried to keep Albert's words close to heart.

While working with Paul House, we often laughed as learned that we disagreed on so just about everything, both politically and philosophically. These disagreements never seemed to matter as I continually developed respect for Paul. It was not hard to recognize that Paul is an extraordinary person.

Lee Maine is a very Christian, conservative town. But while small in number, the people of Lee had varied opinions on the war. Despite their differences, the town stands united in support of the House and Emery families. The entire town was devastated by the loss.

It is my hope that this film will become a bridge between people. No matter what opinion or view on the value of the Iraq war, viewers can understand that the real face of any war is not the newscaster broadcasting statistics and interviews, but rather the shattered families, friends, neighbors, teachers and communities that must suffer the loss of loved ones.

Dee House told us she wanted to help us make the film. She helped to introduce us to people in the town. I quickly realized how important Dee's introductions were. We could have spent weeks trying to meet and film people in the town. Thanks to her help, we were able to get very candid and honest feelings and thoughts from people in the town.

On the very first day of filming, June 2008 Paul House began to tell us about his dream of creating a retreat from Gold Star families in Maine. At the time, I didn't pay too much attention to his idea. As we worked on the film, a back-story developed. Paul, with Bill Emery's help, was actually achieving his dream. Paul spoke to all who would listen: First, the town of Lee, then Senator Elizabeth Schneider, then Governor Baldacci, Peter Ogden, Director of Veteran Affairs. Since beginning the filming, Paul House has achieved his dream. He has formed non-profit organization called House in the Woods, a military family retreat.

# C R E D I T S

Director	Bill Perna
Executive Producer	Bill Perna
Producers	Jason Goldman Gary Robinov
Cinematography	Jason Goldman
Editor	Gary Robinov
Additional Editing	David Lee, Jeff Griffiths
Associate Producer	Deanna House
Art Direction	Josh Fisher, Matt Thierran
Web Design	Sean Michaud - Seismic Pixels
Post Production Sound	Pete Nenortas -Satronen Sound
Archival	Provided by Emery and House families
Original Score	Harvey Jones, Three Four Music Production
Was it Just Last Night	Nadia Ackerman

## CAST

Paul House  
Bill Emery  
Luke House  
Betsy Emery  
Peter Ogden  
Kendra Ritchie  
Lester Delano  
Vera Noyes  
Kathy Crise  
Pastor Bruce Swan  
Sgt. Lyle Walker  
Sgt. Steven Burke

Deana House  
Quie Emery  
Joy House  
Hilary Emery  
Senator Elizabeth Schneider  
Governor John Baldacci  
Everett McLeod  
Harold Noyes  
Amanda Tash  
Ruth Worcester  
Gail Rae

## SPECIAL THANKS

The House Family  
Nancy Lothrop  
Gail Raye  
Robert Noonan  
Nellie Stevens  
Jeremy Carey  
Pastor Mitch Bickford  
MSAD 30 Band  
Rabbit House  
Lee Academy  
Kay Crocker

The Emery Family  
Pete Lothrop  
Martha Broderick  
Reverend Mitch Bickford  
Raymond Variety  
Ethel Foss  
Lee Wynn Elementary  
Frank Severence  
Polly House  
Lee Baptist Church Chamber  
Music  
Thurlow-Cushman Ladies  
Auxiliary

## BILL PERNA

### Director, Executive Producer

After graduating from University of New Mexico and New York University where he studied film and advertising, Bill began a 20-year career in Marketing and Advertising. He built his career working in New York for advertising agencies, Grey Advertising, Wells Rich Greene and Doyle Dane Bernbach. With his partner, Peter Smillie, Bill spent 10 years in Los Angeles building one of advertising's most successful commercial production companies, Smillie Films. While serving as President and Executive Producer of Smillie Films, Bill worked on accounts such as Apple, Kodak, IBM, Nike and Anheuser Bush among countless others.

Bill was elected to be President of the Association of Commercial Producers/West Coast, an organization that represents the interests of Commercial producers. After serving two consecutive terms as West Coast President, Bill was then elected to serve as the AICP National President.

While working with Albert Maysles for two years Bill created and developed the Branded Content division for Maysles Films.

## JASON GOLDMAN

### Cinematography

Since graduating from Cornell University, Jason Goldman has been involved with filmmaking in many levels of production. Beginning his career in music videos he quickly transitioned to the world of advertising. He soon was producing with Maysles Films and in recent years, he produced content for Mercedes-Benz, Fashion Week, IBM, Swatch and Maybelline. In 2005 he formed Pharmacy Films, which develops television and independent feature films. During his leisure time, Jason prefers golf to polo, Coke to Pepsi, London to Paris, forest to beach, and Guinness to everyone. If you ask him nicely, he will even make you a very good sandwich.

Link to Article:

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-01-24-smalltowns\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-01-24-smalltowns_N.htm)

Vimeo link to film:

<http://vimeo.com/33284347>

Link to [www.welcometoleemainefilm.com](http://www.welcometoleemainefilm.com)

Facebook Welcome to Lee Maine

# 360 THE ASSETS

## Film

Theatrical

DVD

VOD

Semi Theatrical

Broadcast

Web

## sound track

CD

iTunes

Mobile Phone







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