

San Franciscans and San Francisco share the spotlight in venerable film festival

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Two of the many films slated for San Franciscoâ??s 12th Annual Legacy Film Festival on Aging next month are set in the city and produced by local residents.

â??Waiter for Lifeâ?• is a short documentary about five waiters over the age of 60 who have worked for between 20 to 30 years at Scomaâ??s, a family-owned seafood restaurant on Fishermanâ??s Wharf since 1965.



â??Iâ??d like people to realize that professional waiting is an honorable profession,â?• said creator Dan Goldes, 63. The waiters Goldes features have been able to buy homes, raise families, and live full lives because, he said, â??they had a good job, good union, and a good relationship with management.â?•

The documentary, he added, â??stems from my fascination with people who know how to do things well.â?•

Other films of Goldes that have featured seniors include:

- **â??Arrested Againâ?•** is about San Franciscoâ??s Karen Topakian, who has been arrested more than 30 times for nonviolent civil disobedience.
- **â??The Button Tin,â?•** featuring his then-90-year-old mother rediscovering the marshmallow tin that her mother used to store buttons.
- In **â??Paul Panish: Poem on My Eighty-Seventh Birthday,â?•** Goldesâ?? cousin ruminates on what it means to be a poet and won the Audience Award at the Bernal Heights Outdoor Cinema.
- In **â??Of Good Heart,â?•** East Bay residents Gary and Cindy, a Republican and a Democrat, talk about how their upbringing â?? and current political events â?? brought them into their political selves.

â??Waiter for Life â??and his 2019 film â??5 Blocks,â?• which looks at income disparity, changing demographics, and the nature of place in San Franciscoâ??s Tenderloin District, have screened at more than 10 film festivals around the world, he said.

Goldes has two documentary projects in development based on subjects in New York City. As for his Scoma waiters, he said, â??My subjects are still working at Scomaâ??s, and I dine there a couple of times a year to keep in touch.â?•

Yes, there is bliss



Emeline Sanchez and her mother. (Photo courtesy of Emeline Sanchez)

â??Caring for Mom,â?• a documentary short by Emeline Sanchez, 65, addresses the questions:

- What happens when your parents canâ??t care for themselves?

- Do you look for a nursing home to send your parent to? Do you become your parentâ??s caregiver?

This is Sanchezâ??s first film, but she has subsequently put together two other short documentaries on the same topic. Her aim in showing her films at various small film festivals is to â??implore children to be with their elderly parents before itâ??s too late.â?•

Sanchezâ??s film is drawn from her personal experience. â??I was my momâ??s caregiver for over 10 years. When my mom passed away in 2022, I put together her memorial video and the consistent feedback, while positive, was that most people were amazed that we had taken her to so many places and Iâ??m thinking, whatâ??s the point of caregiving if you donâ??t have fun with it?â?•

Too many depictions of caregiving, whether documentaries or fictionalized films, focus on despair, anger or frustration, Sanchez believes.

Yes, thatâ??s all part of it,â?• she acknowledges but adds, â??There could be so much more to it that can be cause for joy and bliss (yes, bliss) with your elderly parents. Thatâ??s the part I would like people to consider instead of flinching and going on autopilot when their loved ones get to a certain age.â?•

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Aging may bring physical limits but doesnâ??t necessarily impose psychological ones. One example is the founder and executive director of the festival itself.

She perseveres



Sheila Malkind (Photo courtesy of â??80 Over 80â?•)

Sheila Malkind, now 86, suffered a stroke in 2020 that paralyzed part of the left side of her body and left her unable to walk independently. Nonetheless, she continued to produce the festival, which is devoted, she said, to celebrating the great adventure of longer life. â??I always looked forward to getting older â?? itâ??s part of life, so what the heck.â?•

The films are divided up into 12 programs: Ageism & Resilience, Caring, Community, Dreams & Goals, End of Life Experience, Food, Free Spirits, Love Always, Memories, Pioneers, Seeking Creativity, and The Next Step.

Although the films reflect senior life, Malkind hopes â??filmgoers learn something new and pass it on to both older and younger adults.â?•

The 10-day festival runs Feb. 14-23 and is online. Each program contains two to four films and costs $12.00. For $65.00 you can purchase an All-Fest pass to watch all the programs. Tickets are available on the festivalâ??s website.

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