

### Work shaped by war

WHO

Marian Marzynski

WHAT

Marzynski, 74, is a Brookline documentary filmmaker and Emmy winner who contributes to such PBS series as "Frontline," "Nova," and "The American Experience." Born in Poland, he survived the Holocaust as a Jewish child, first in the Warsaw Ghetto, later by living with Christians. In his new autobiographical film, "Never Forget to Lie," he returns to the ghetto with other child survivors.

WHEN

The film's North American premiere will be Wednesday at 6:15 p.m. at the Museum of Fine Arts as part of Jewish-film.2012, the National Center for Jewish Film's 15th annual film festival. It will screen again Friday at 5:30 p.m. For more information or tickets, go to [www.jewishfilm.org](http://www.jewishfilm.org)

**Q.** How long were you in the Warsaw Ghetto?

**A.** I was born two years before the war, in 1937. I spent two years in the ghetto, three years in hiding after leaving the ghetto — altogether, five years of stolen childhood. My mother and I escaped from the ghetto. My father stayed until the last moment and was taken to a concentration camp. He escaped [from the transport] by cutting a hole in the train wall. He was killed after that in the forest, we don't know by whom.

**Q.** What do you remember about the ghetto?

**A.** I remember glimpses of my mother and father and fairy



COURTESY OF MARIAN MARZYNSKI

tales, and some playing, but not dead people on the street. Memories start usually at age 5, and that was the time I was smuggled out.

**Q.** How did you survive after that?

**A.** I survived the last year and a half living with a Catholic priest. I became a completely devoted Catholic child.

**Q.** How is your film different from other films about the Holocaust?

**A.** I think what is missing in filmmaking about the Holocaust is that people try to cover too much territory without going inside [people's minds]. ... I think this film is also a little revelation in that the common knowledge is this: There was a Holocaust, almost everyone was killed, and those who were remaining left and ended up in Canada or America, and Poland has no Jews. Probably 90 or 95 percent of people really did

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that. But others didn't. We also have stereotypes of survivors in concentration camps — that people were dehumanized and their lives really shattered. But remember, there was another group of survivors like us who never met a German. These people had gruesome memories, but they were somewhat victorious, in a sense.

**Q.** Did you ever consider leaving Poland?

**A.** No, not until 1969 under the new circumstances, a politically-motivated anti-Semitic campaign.

**Q.** How did you launch your career?

**A.** I had a kind of happy career as a journalist [in Poland] — reporting, radio, filmmaking, television. I was a talk show host. I came to the US at the age of 35 with a completed career.

**Q.** Why did you come to the East Coast?

**A.** To teach at RISD (Rhode Island School of Design). The person who hired me thought I was from Czechoslovakia. He liked Milos Forman's films. I was there for four years, but I was a little bit too revolutionary for RISD, and my contract was not renewed. I went to Chicago for 24 years, then I had my American debut. In 1981 I made my first film for WGBH. I

moved to Boston 10 years ago.

**Q.** What was it like to return to the Warsaw Ghetto for this film?

**A.** There were a lot of obstacles in being able to get into the last remaining physical space of the Warsaw Ghetto. These were condemned buildings. When we went back to the enclave it was very, very spooky. It was like I was living in a twilight zone. I think I shot eight or nine characters there, and we didn't shoot much more than we showed in the film. The experience was so intensive that people could not last too long in this type of emotional situation. We didn't want them to be emotional for so long. They were old people.

**Q.** Do you think your work has been shaped by your experience during the war?

**A.** Yes, in the sense that I was introduced to drama, which is a natural ingredient of filmmaking; to storytelling; and to the pageantry of the Catholic Church. I feel that all those things made me, after the war, someone who wanted to tell the story. Others wanted to forget.

**Q.** Do you consider yourself one of the last eyewitnesses of the ghetto?

**A.** Right. After us, it is only iconography — pictures with documents. It's another five years, I guess, and there will be silence. Maybe in 10 years the youngest will be 85 and the rest will be gone, or unable to express themselves.

**Q.** Do you consider yourself Jewish?

**A.** Not religious. Being brought up Catholic ... there was no one to introduce me to Judaism. I call myself a Holocaust Jew, which means my Jewishness is based on the idea that I am aware of the fact that I belong to people who were condemned to be exterminated. That is a very strong connection.

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