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In My Own Words

By Glyn Trafford

My brother makes magic. Not on stage performing in front of hundreds of people — Neil's more of a backstage kind of guy. In fact, most of you won't even know who he is, or see him in the medium that he works hard at each day.



Submitted

Over the years, though, odds are you have enjoyed my brother's work. When we all need to escape, to get away, we turn to a medium that allows us to do that, if only for a couple of hours.

Former Valley resident Neil Trafford poses with his camera on the set of Weight of Water off the coast of Nova Scotia in the fall of 1999.

This is Neil's realm, and this is where he helps create and bring things to life. My brother works in film.

This is a story of a small-town boy realizing a dream.

Neil and I grew up in Duncan not really knowing which way life was going to take us. Through high school, and later at Cable 3, I dabbled in television production, both in front of and behind the camera. Somewhere along the way Neil must have seen my passion and decided to give it a try.

Alex Wilson instilled in us the incredible power of film. Mr. Wilson had a passion not only for teaching us the finer points of production, but also for exposing us to classic tales like Shane. In this melting pot of creativity and enthusiasm, Neil first considered going for the big time.

He quickly realized he'd have to attend a film school to get the basics of film production. Neil moved to Vancouver to complete a year-long course at the Vancouver Film School. After graduation he worked on various projects around Vancouver: TV movies, the odd commercial, low-budget movies. Neil stayed on the West Coast for a year or two, but knew he'd have to further his education if he were to really get anywhere in a very aggressive industry. So he said goodbye to his family, packed his bags and headed to Toronto for three years and a degree from Ryerson University (he somehow convinced them to let him skip the first year).

Now he could start working with the big names!

Well, not really. Neil, like all before and since, had to start at the bottom.

Yes, he parked cars, and ran errands. Along the way he made contacts, moved up and tried different things.

Soon he was actually working in film, even if he wasn't directing, and he could see how his small contribution helped the overall production. He had to find a specialty. The magic of capturing that real-life image on celluloid was to be his calling. Since that decision, almost 10 years ago, Neil has worked in the camera department.

What did this lad from Duncan make of himself — this fellow who graduated from Cow High and sat in the Caprice Theatre, watching films and dreaming? Neil has now settled down in a Toronto suburb, where he and his wife Tanya are raising a family. Yes, I am lucky enough to be uncle to a lad named Rhys. He's not quite two, but the time will come soon when I can take him to see films — new ones his daddy just worked on, or maybe classics his dad shot in the past.

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I wonder if you have seen any of my brother's films?

How about *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, directed by Renny Harlin and starring Geena Davis and Samuel L Jackson, or *Blues Brothers 2000*, directed by John Landis and starring Dan Aykroyd and John Goodman? Then there was *Pushing Tin*, directed by Mike Newell and starring John Cusack and Billy Bob Thornton. Let's not forget that comic book movie *X-Men*, and another Cusack movie, *Serendipity*. Recently, Neil has worked with Gus Van Sant, who directed Sean Connery in *Finding Forrester* and Kathryn Bigelow, in a submarine picture called *K-19: The Widowmaker*, with an actor some of you may have heard of...Harrison Ford?

Actually, Neil's worked on a lot of great movies, and has had the chance to work alongside some brilliant directors and talented actors.

So am I proud of Neil? You bet!

How often do you have this kind of connection to the film industry? Believe me, I hear first-hand all the gossip and stories directly from the set. Some of the things Neil has told me are outrageous, and would fill pages. The "behind the scenes" photos I've seen would make your head spin.

Most of all, though, I'm happy he's happy and doing something he loves. I know it's not an easy job, very physically demanding, with long days and short weekends.

But I'm hoping that if he ever makes it to the big time and shoots his own movie he'll remember his old brother the truck driver and hire me to chauffeur some big-name star!

For now, I enjoy getting lost in the magic that is film.

Go sit in the darkened seats at the Caprice Theatre, drinking a pop and waiting for the magic to start this weekend.

Whether you decide to catch the rollicking, Oscar-nominated musical *Chicago!* or take your girl to see the romantic comedy *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, stay a little longer at the end as the credits roll by.

Yes, that's my brother Neil Trafford up there on that screen he used to watch.

Dreams can come true.

Glyn Trafford is a film buff, Valley resident and proud big brother.
