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Documentary tells a story of race relations in Annapolis

By E.B. FURGERSON III, Staff Writer

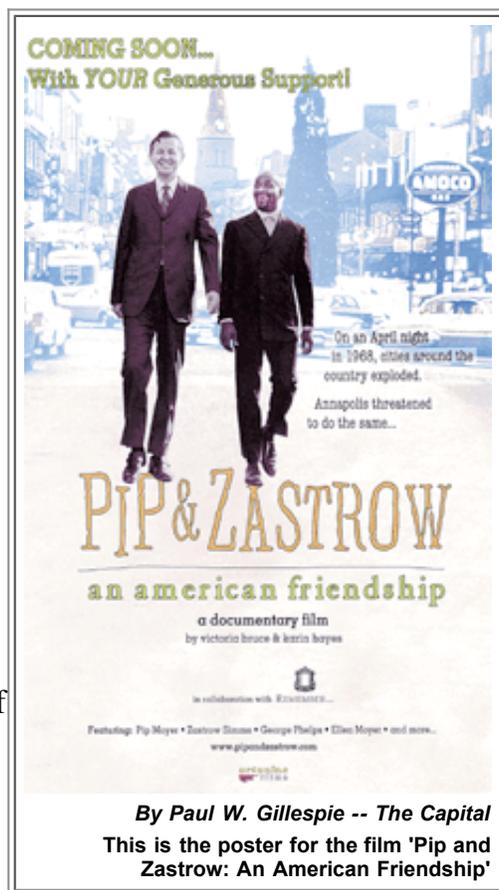
Two award-winning documentary filmmakers previewed their next project yesterday at the Martin Luther King Breakfast: "Pip & Zastrow: An American Friendship."

It is the story of boyhood friends, one the white mayor of Annapolis, the other a street-wise African American who ended up in trouble and in jail - but together they helped change race relations in Annapolis.

Filmmakers Victoria Bruce and Karin Hayes have turned their lens on Pip Moyer and Zastrow Simms and their lasting friendship.

"They are so loyal to each other, it is a great story. It is also a way to give the county a sense of pride. These guys are heroes of the civil rights movement, right here. It's our story," Ms. Bruce said.

Mr. Moyer and Mr. Simms played high school basketball together - though separately - Mr. Moyer at all-white Annapolis High and Mr. Simms at Wiley H. Bates High, the only public high school for African Americans in the county.



By Paul W. Gillespie -- *The Capital*
This is the poster for the film 'Pip and Zastrow: An American Friendship'



"We wanted to play each other, but they would not let us," Mr. Moyer said Sunday at his boyhood home in Eastport, where he and his friend of more than 50 years were being filmed.

Later the men, now both 71, would play together as teammates when Mr. Moyer became the only white man on the previously all-black Annapolis Falcons, a men's basketball team that played against squads from Baltimore and Washington D.C.



"My brother hated him," Mr. Simms said. "Oh, it wasn't racial. Pip beat him all the time with that hook shot."



Fast forward to April 1968. Mr. Moyer was mayor and Mr. Simms was in a Baltimore jail on burglary charges.

When news broke that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had been gunned down in Memphis, cities and towns across the nation erupted in fiery riots.



Baltimore and Washington were ablaze, but Annapolis was quiet.

"In the midst of crisis there is calm ... Annapolis stands unscathed by racial violence tonight," *The Evening Capital* reported.

Mr. Moyer got the lion's share of the credit, but he could not have done it without his friend.

Mr. Simms, a three-sport athlete who had a shot at a professional baseball contract before he got in trouble, rendered advice by passing notes through prison guards.

He was granted a furlough and within hours was walking the streets with his friend.

Together, they kept the lid on in the black neighborhoods of Annapolis where stashes of Molotov cocktails had been found ready to burn.

"We just talked to people," Mr. Simms recalled.

Pip Moyer was respected in the African American community. "Here he was, a white man. But he could walk into the valley of Clay Street, and would fear no evil," Mr. Simms said.

"People know when someone is not fake. If young men had not respected Pip we would not be (telling) this story."

But for Mr. Moyer, reaching out to the black community was not about politics, it was about the right thing to do.

"I just did the things that should be done," Mr. Moyer said, with

cameras rolling Sunday. "Someone who did not work to bring justice (in those times) did not deserve to be in public life."

It was just the way he was raised, he said.

"I remember my 6th birthday party, there were more black kids in my yard than white."

Today, his body is wracked by Parkinson's disease and Mr. Moyer relies on the circle of friends he earned then. People call on him constantly. They bring meals or just sit and chat.

They also come to pay respect. "If Jesus shed his blood for any one, he shed it for Pip Moyer," Mr. Simms said Sunday. The kind words brought tears to Mr. Moyer's eyes.

Mr. Simms went on to become a community leader and ran the Stanton Center and its program of arts and sports for city youth. He took kids to Baltimore Colts, Bullets and Orioles games and even to Broadway shows.

A new city recreational basketball league is named for him.

Ms. Bruce, who lives in Annapolis, said she had heard the story of the two men some five or six years ago.

"I could not get the story out of my head. I told Karen about it and she said she would do it."

She and Ms. Hayes started shooting interviews with Mr. Moyer in April 2003.

But finishing another project, "The Kidnapping of Ingrid Betancourt," came first.

It is about the first female presidential candidate in Colombia, who was kidnapped by leftist guerillas in 2002 and remains a captive today.

The film won a 2005 DuPont-Columbia Silver Baton - one of broadcast journalism's most prestigious awards and has aired on HBO.

Now the team has put together a four-minute preview of what they hope to turn into a full-length documentary by early next year, and are seeking funds to finish the movie. Information on donations is available at their Web site, www.pipandzastrow.com.

"We invite people to help sponsor the feature film. They can be a part of this extraordinary story," Ms. Bruce said.

The trailer was met with enthusiastic applause at yesterday's Martin Luther King breakfast at Anne Arundel Community College.

George Phelps, a deputy sheriff in 1968 who helped secure the Molotov cocktails, narrates the film.

"It's about time this story was told. Children learn about Dr. King ... but there are heroes here ... and people don't know about it," said Mr. Phelps, who went on to become a leader in the African-American community. "Pip Moyer was the foundation. He was mayor of all the people."

The hope is the film will be released nationwide, following an Annapolis premier.

"Dr. King said there are difficult times ahead, but out of difficulty comes opportunity," Mr. Simms said. We have come a long, long way. But there is still hatred out there ...The children need to learn that black and white can work together."

- No Jumps-

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