



**FRANK FILMS**

★ film & video production ★ post-production ★ photography

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## “ONE WINTER STORY” SYNOPSES

### LONG SYNOPSIS

“One Winter Story” is an unprecedented cinematic glimpse into the male-dominated world of big-wave surfing from an unusual and seldom seen perspective - a woman's. This hour-long film explores the life of big-wave surf pioneer and Ph.D scientist, Sarah Gerhardt, a relative unknown who made surfing history in 1999 as the first woman to surf Maverick's, the giant wave in Northern California. “One Winter Story” is a personal documentary that follows Sarah through several winter seasons as she surfs Maverick's, a monstrous wave that breaks in the freezing, shark-infested waters off Half Moon Bay in Northern California.

Sarah's journey to Maverick's was anything but easy. Surfing became her escape from the hardships of home and faith became the guiding force in her life. “Growing up was a dark time and faith was the only light that I had, basically, besides my Mom. It's definitely been the backbone of my life, this faith. I wouldn't be a centered person if I didn't have this concrete foundation to land my feet on.”

The film develops chronologically, documenting Sarah's achievements and setbacks throughout the 2001-2005 winter seasons, following her exploration and personal adventure both internally and externally. Sarah's voice will also be a link to the past, as she examines the difficult memories that both haunt her and propel her to new levels of achievement. Sarah's merchant marine father was a drinker and gambler, and was often away for 10 months out of each year. This left Sarah, from the age of six, to care for her mother, helping her through a lifelong battle with Multiple Sclerosis, a disease that left her unable to walk. Before school, Sarah would get her mother ready for the day, bathing her, dressing her, and attending to her needs. Once classes were over, Sarah would return home, fix dinner, study,





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and put her mother to bed. Despite these difficulties, or perhaps because of them, Sarah learned to surf and excelled in school using both to break away from the enduring poverty and occasional homelessness that marked her childhood. She surfed and studied to escape, to survive, and to ultimately make her own way in the world. These memories, as well as her deep religious faith, are the forces that fuel her passions, and are all woven into the story of the wave itself.

Sarah is a genuine big-wave pioneer, the first woman to surf what is arguably one of the largest waves in the world. In the seven years that she has been surfing Maverick's, Sarah has found that each time is a unique experience, determined by the wave itself and her own response. There are days when surfing comes easy and the rush and charge of the sport propels her to the edges of history, redefining what women can do in the face of such a wave. Through it all, Sarah's past, and her ability to forgive, leads her to find her place both in the line up, and in the world.

## SCREENINGS/AWARDS

- 2006 Santa Cruz Film Festival Work in Progress Screening – Winner: Best Biography Film
- World Premiere: Mill Valley Film Festival 2006
- Hawaii International Film Festival
- Ocean Film Festival 2007, San Francisco, CA – Winner: Audience Choice Award
- X-Dance, Park City, Utah – Nominated: Best Biography; Best Cinematography; Best Soundtrack
- Input 2007: Nominated to represent the United States at the International Input Competition in Berlin, Germany
- Broadcasting nationally in the United States on PBS Television in September 2007





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### PROGRAMMING DESCRIPTORS.

FORMS: Documentary, Experimental, Feature, Short

GENRES: Family, Educational, Nature, Coming of Age, Independent, Action/Adventure, Art,  
Spiritual

NICHES: Christian, Disability Culture, Women, Youth/Teen

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