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ARTS | CLASSIFIED

■ **Roaming the range** Baker Museum's new show comes from Western art museum. **9D**

Thursday, November 6, 2014



Best-selling author Shaara provides front seat to history

As a young man, author Jeff Shaara enjoyed a front-row seat on how to become a writer.

Shaara — who will speak in Naples on Thursday — grew up listening to his dad, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Shaara, when his father taught creative writing at Florida State University.

His dad — who died in 1988 — won the esteemed writing award for fiction with “The Killer Angels” in 1975. The book, which focuses on four days at the Battle of Gettysburg, is widely considered the best novel ever written about the Civil War.

“The first thing he’d tell his students is ‘I can’t teach you creative writing,’” Jeff Shaara said in a recent telephone interview.

“He would stress to people, ‘I don’t care what kind of writing you want to do, you have to start by telling a good story. That’s the thing Hollywood gets wrong.’”

Shaara also said his father would tell students this, perhaps the most important advice: “Write what you’re passionate about.”

Michael Shaara died

IF YOU GO

When: 4 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday
Where: North Naples Regional Park Exhibit Hall, 15000 Livingston Road
Cost: \$15 for military veterans, \$25 for general admission
Reservations: required; call 239-263-9200 or email Danielle@HolocaustMuseumSWFL.org
Information: The event will benefit education programs at The Holocaust Museum & Education Center of Southwest Florida, 4760 U.S. 41 N., Suite 7



YOU, THE JURY

■ Florida State Prison’s ‘Houdini’ up for parole, and film asks public to vote on it

By Kelly Merritt
 Daily News Correspondent; 239-213-6091

Mark DeFriest, the man who earned the moniker “Florida’s prison Houdini,” is staying behind bars for the rest of his life — or walking out of prison a free man. On Nov. 19, the Florida Commission on Offender Review in Tallahassee will make the decision.

Some people think DeFriest should be released. Others think he shouldn’t. As the debate goes on, director Gabriel London of Found Objects Films, executive producer Daniel Chalfen of Naked Edge Films and their team are asking a large audience — the public — to weigh in on DeFriest’s case.

Their documentary film on DeFriest, “The Life and Mind of Mark DeFriest,” will be screened twice at the Naples International Film Festival this weekend. Filmmakers hope viewers who see the film will share their opinions on DeFriest’s case and vote on it. Public “jury” decisions will be published online at www.defriest.com and presented to the commission before the hearing, which will be 10 days after the film is shown in Naples.

In an interview with the Daily News, London didn’t say what he believes should happen to DeFriest. He wants viewers to arrive at their own views. But his passion for the story is evident throughout the film, which is at times difficult to watch because of the cruel behavior and treatment.

“Whether you believe he should be released or not, Mark has a brilliant mind and fascinating character and is someone who has maintained his dignity and sense of humor despite draconian conditions in prison,” London said. “He can teach us a lot about the world we live in and how people understand the prison system as a whole. That’s the interesting thing about storytelling in that you can look at a bigger phenomenon, and in this story he is that lens.”

DeFriest has been in prison for more than three decades, the only nonviolent offender in Florida State Prison on X Wing, which is the disciplinary, long-term solitary confinement area above the electric chair. His initial conviction was for what was prosecuted as tool theft — even though the tools had been willed to him.

He is anything but slow, but DeFriest struggles socially. Unable to navigate a world he views as potentially harmful, he is unable to read situations, which haunts him, especially with authority figures. However brilliant, DeFriest becomes a disciplinary nightmare who seems unable to stop himself when it comes to undermining authority.

At first glance, DeFriest’s case seems black and white — you misbehave in prison, you stay there longer. But there is more to it.

“The Life and Mind of Mark DeFriest” has taken more than a decade to materialize, because of limited access. Only about five years ago was London able to begin recording phone calls with DeFriest. London also

See **JURY, 6D**



Screen shots from animation depict Mark DeFriest’s life behind bars.

IF YOU GO

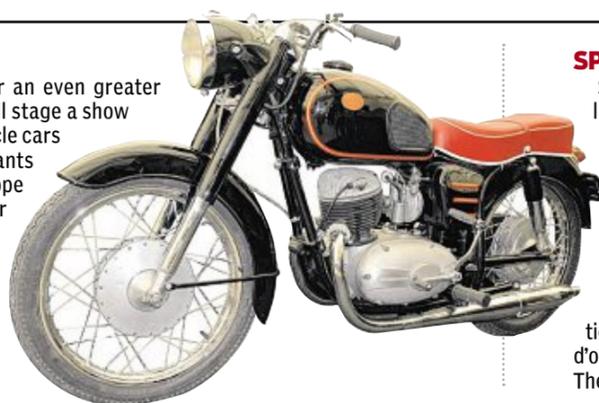
‘THE LIFE AND MIND OF MARK DEFRIEST’

When: 1:50 p.m., Saturday; 11:30 a.m., Sunday
Where: Silverspot Cinema, Mercato, Vanderbilt Road and U.S. 41 N., North Naples
Tickets: \$13
To buy: www.SilverspotCinema.com
Information: Naples International Film Festival; www.naplesfilmfest.com.

FREEFEESPREE

FREE
 This weekend, the Naples Concert Band will offer its annual patriotic concert in advance of Veterans Day at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Cambier Park bandshell at Sixth Avenue South and Eighth Street South. Bring a blanket or chair to nestle into while you listen to patriotic favorites. It will be free, but donations will help the band and its scholarship fund. More information: naplesconcertband.org

FEE
 It’s a “wheel” great time for an even greater cause. Naples Motor Festival will stage a show of classic with antique and muscle cars and motorcycles, food from local restaurants and competitions to watch, all with the hope of raising money for Bikes for Tykes. Look for appearances by racing stars, entertainment, competitions and more. It will cost \$5 for people 12 and older, but will be free with a new or good-condition bicycle donation, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday, Florida Sports Park, 8520 Rattlesnake Hammock Road, East Naples. 239-450-3366 or bikesfortykes.org



SPREE
 Spend an evening with Oscar winner Shirley Jones (“Elmer Gantry,” “The Music Man”). She’ll perform and talk about her career, while guests nosh and enjoy a silent auction from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Sunday at T-Michaels Steak & Lobster House, Village on Venetian Bay, 4050 Gulf Shore Blvd. N., North Naples. Tickets are \$275 for the performance, silent auction and preshow reception. You also can get a VIP ticket for \$425 that includes a wine bar, hors d’oeuvres and reception. Proceeds will benefit TheatreZone. 239-293-0354

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JURY
from ID

discovered DeFriest's unique drawing and writing skills, not surprising considering the level of genius he displayed from a young age — able to take apart virtually any machine and reassemble it.

"He was really good at using humor that was relevant to his state of mind in prison as a way to remain a strong human spirit in a dark place," said London, who was working with Human Rights Watch to document the issue of prison rape when he came across DeFriest's story.

"When I was able to record Mark's voice, actually bringing him into the story about himself and that's when I thought, OK, now I can make a documentary."

The story uses interviews with people and hand-drawn animation. Jonathon Corbiere, the

film's director of animation, illuminates the screen with disturbingly accurate scenes that paint a brutal re-enactment of DeFriest's life behind bars and in solitary confinement. Corbiere achieved an astounding level of detail in animating emotion. The film was edited by Nick Clark with a haunting soundtrack scored by composer Ronan Coleman.

"There were predators and victims everywhere, and there wasn't much that was done to stop it. And with Mark's lack of being able to deal with people, it was a terrible place to end up," London observed. "Mark is very intelligent, and he found ways to infuriate those he felt were unjustly holding him — he never made peace with that sense of injustice."

Only recently has DeFriest realized there might be hope for a future.

"This is still a live story because Mark has a pa-



FOUND OBJECTS AND NAKED EDGE FILMS

Mark DeFriest has spent more than 30 years in prison.

role hearing on the 19th of November," London said. "The fact that we have all

these screenings in Florida and the hearing coming up — there is something com-

ing together here, getting Florida citizens involved in this story before most

of the rest of the world has seen it."

London said this was a story that he felt just had to be told. Watching the film, it's easy to see why. London's film demands we question ourselves as a society regarding how the prison population has quintupled since the 1970s, whether we're for or against DeFriest's parole.

Shannon Franklin, executive and artistic director of the Naples International Film Festival, said she is excited to feature London's film, particularly for its Florida connection.

"Besides being an extremely compelling film, the director's choice to use animation throughout the film was such an original and artistic choice, it really made the film stand out to the committee," she said.

Two dozen filmmakers, including London, are scheduled to attend this weekend's festival with their films.

STARGAZER
from ID

bitterly disappointed that "The Killer Angels" never achieved best-seller status. But not for long.

Five years after his death, in 1993, the film "Gettysburg" hit the big screen. It was adapted from "The Killer Angels" and it starred Martin Sheen, Jeff Daniels and Tom Berenger.

"The movie made his book a No. 1 best-seller 19 years after it was published," Shaara said. "That's the only reason I became a writer."

He penned "Gods And Generals," published in 1996 as a prequel to "The Killer Angels." His "The Last Full Measure" in 1998 was a sequel and last part of the trilogy his father began two decades earlier.

"I learned to type as a kid, typing my father's manuscripts," Shaara said. "Sort of by osmosis, that stuff has rubbed off."

At Thursday's talk in Naples, Shaara said, he plans to focus on his World War II novels — "The Rising Tide," "The Steel Wave," "No Less Than Victory" and "The Final Storm."

"These are novels by definition, but the history is absolutely accurate and

the characters are real people," he said. "I don't play around with history; I don't screw around with the facts."

He said it takes him about one year to write a book — six months of research and six months of writing. His next book, "The Fateful Lightning," will be published in 2015. It focuses on Civil War Union Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's famous "March to the Sea," through Georgia.

Various websites have Shaara writing his next novel about the Alamo, but Shaara said his goals actually include writing about the Korean and Vietnam wars, maybe the French and Indian War and the War of 1812. He said he's also fascinated by the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis and even the Klondike Gold Rush of the late 1890s.

"There's a lot of good stuff in history I'd like to tackle," he said.

Shaara said he used to write six to eight hours a day but presently types for two to four hours.

"Now it's like a faucet turning on," he said. "All of a sudden, four hours are gone and I have 12 pages. That's a wonderful thing when that happens. Sometimes, it feels that these aren't my words, that somebody else is telling the story. When

that happens, it's effortless. There's nothing about that that feels like work."

Shaara said he looks forward to addressing folks for the Thursday event that will benefit Naples' Holocaust Museum.

"If there's some Holocaust survivors there," he said, "those are some hands I want to shake."

TICKETS AND SHOWS

Tickets will go on sale at 10 a.m. Friday for Bob Seger, who will perform at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 3 at Germain Arena in Estero. Go to germainarena.com for more information.

Tickets already are on sale for shows at these venues that are not yet sold out: **Barbara B. Mann:** bbmannpah.com and 239-481-4849. O.A.R. with Andy Grammer, 7:30 p.m. Nov. 13 — \$39.84-\$50.44; Ralphie May, 7:30 p.m. Nov. 16 — \$30.62-\$38.04; "So You Think You Can Dance" tour 7:30 p.m. Nov. 23 — \$41.75-\$73.55; "A Simpler Christmas," Wynonna and her band, The Big Noise, 7:30 p.m. Dec. 10 — \$50.76-\$71.96; Christmas With the Tenors, 7:30 p.m. — \$37.98-\$69.78; Lewis Black, 8 p.m. Dec. 11 — \$36.04-\$67.84; Gregg Allman, 8 p.m. Jan. 3 — \$29.15-\$60.95.

Germain Arena: germainarena.com and 239-948-7825; Alan Jackson, 7 p.m. Jan. 8 —

\$33.65-\$79.15; Brad Paisley, 7 p.m. Jan. 24. No ticket information available yet.

Artis-Naples: artisnaples.org; Dave Koz and Friends, 8 p.m. Dec. 1 — \$59-\$79; Vanessa Williams, 8 p.m. Jan. 3. \$74-\$88. Los Lobos, 8 p.m. Jan. 19. \$40-\$63.

The Ritz-Carlton, Naples: sunny1063.com and 239-514-6001. John Tesh Big Band Christmas Concert, 8 p.m. Dec. 12. \$179 for Champagne reception and meet-and-greet with Tesh, \$129 for general seating.

Hard Rock Live Orlando: hardrock.com/live/locations/orlando. Melissa Etheridge, 8 p.m. Nov. 25 — \$52.25-\$89.10; Jim Gaffigan, 7 p.m. Nov. 28-29 — \$61.20-\$68.40; Howie Mandel, 8 p.m. Jan. 4 — \$50.45-\$65.80.

Amalie Arena (formerly Tampa Bay Times Forum): amaliearena.com. James Taylor, 8 p.m. Nov. 14 — \$48.50-\$116.45; Usher, 7:30 p.m. Dec. 14 — \$50.30-\$171.95; Maroon 5, 7:30 p.m. Feb. 25 — \$42.85-\$143.55; and The Who, 7:30 p.m. April 15 — \$53.10-\$158.35.

Dixie Roadhouse, 1023 S.E. 47th Terrace, Cape Coral: thedixie.com. Cole Swindell, 7 p.m. Nov. 14 — \$33.95.

Dave Osborn is the In the 239 editor and writes about music, comedy and popular culture. Contact him at [Ndn_Dosborn](https://twitter.com/Ndn_Dosborn) on Twitter or [Detroitdave88](https://instagram.com/Detroitdave88) on Instagram.

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