



## THE STORY OF DON JAMIESON JUST HIMSELF

Over 25 years after his death, he remains one of Newfoundland's greatest politicians and broadcasters. Don Jamieson's grandson, Joshua, tells the story of how he paid tribute in a documentary that aired on NTV.

BY PAM PARDY-GHENT

Joshua Jamieson, 27, is a local filmmaker. His film, *Just Himself: The story of Don Jamieson*, tells the story of one of this province's best politicians and broadcasters. If you think there might be a family connection, you'd be correct.

Joshua is the only child of Donna, Don's youngest daughter. Don Jamieson, the politician, was simply known as 'Pappa' to Joshua.

"My grandfather died just before I was three years old, so my memory of him is very vague. The night before he died, he and I did speak on the phone. My mom tells the story that we'd say goodnight to one another almost every evening on the phone but on Nov. 18, 1986, for some reason, I insisted on saying 'goodbye' – so that's kind of eerie, I guess," he says.

Little of what Joshua knew of his grandfather were from any memories he had of his own. That, he says, is what made the idea of doing a documentary on his grandfather so appealing.

"The documentary was a great opportunity to get to know him as best I could. Actually, the interview I had with

Don Hollett was the closest I'd ever felt to what it must have been like to be with him because he shared so much time with my grandfather. It was a pretty moving conversation," he says.



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St. John's International Women's Film Festival.

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Joshua conducted over 25 interviews, each running about 40 to 90 minutes long, and he remembers each conversation vividly. "They were each very special conversations that I let myself fully sink into," he says. The most fascinating thing he discovered would probably be that the declaration for the 200 mile limit protection zone was signed at his family's kitchen table. "That was something my grandfather worked on with fellow Atlantic ministers Romeo LeBlanc and Allan MacEachen at the time."

Although hearing stories from Ottawa helped uncover who his grandfather was, what about the rest of the Jamieson clan?

"The entire family was immediately supportive of the project and I wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise, he says.

There is little doubt that making this film required dedication, sweat and many hours of hard work.

"Our production phase lasted a total of three months, during which I went home to Swift Current (while Joshua was born in St. John's, his grandfather's hometown of Swift Current was a place he spent much of his time), down to Burin and Marystown as well as off to Ottawa twice and Montreal with a crew of three or four," he says, noting the team usually included his production manager Lynn Andrews, one of three cameramen on the project – Brad Gover, Nigel Markham and Roger Maunder – and a sound person, Phillip Carnes or Gerry Turchyn.

### PREMIERED ON NTV

And then came what he calls the actual "brain work."

"(After the interviews) there came many, many hours of post-production where about 30 hours of film was shot, listed and transcribed before a finalized script was done. That would guide myself and the project's editor, Darryl Couch, through many evenings and weekends filled with many fun and hard decisions on what would make the final cut," he says.

*Just Himself* premiered on NTV on Oct. 30, 2011.

"Each of my family members anticipated watching the film for the first time in different ways. I think it was a general mix of excitement and nervousness," he says. "I was focused on ensuring I told the story in a factual way, and for that reason consulted my mom, aunts and uncle quite a bit. They all had a general idea of what would ultimately be included, but actually seeing it moved them pretty heavily."

Joshua admits he wondered for a while if his grandfather would have enjoyed *Just Himself*.

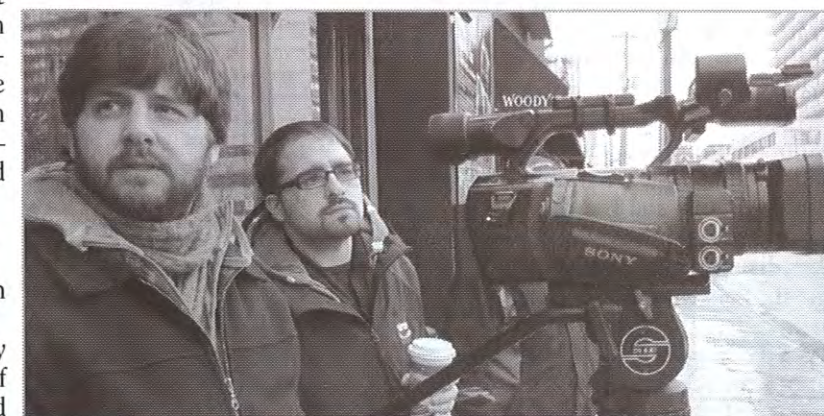
"I think my grandfather would be pretty satisfied with my path in life thus far. My life actually mirrors his quite a bit. We both started on air in radio, and we both published books at one point or another (Joshua wrote *The Teenage Year*, while Don wrote *No Place for Fools*, *A World into Itself*, and *The Trouble Air*) of our

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lives. Many people have suggested I was following his path, but I like to think I am making my own."

Speaking of similar interests, might he follow in his grandfather's political footsteps? Besides being a filmmaker, Joshua is Communications Officer with the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council. However, he does hold a double major in English and Political Science.

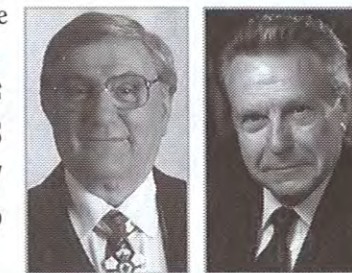


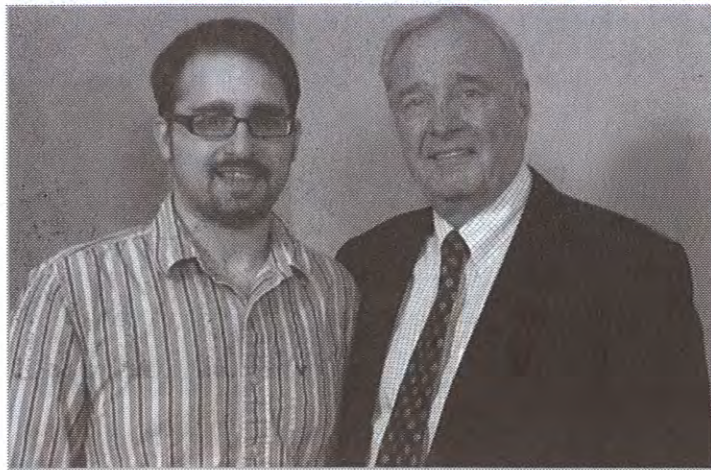
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"I've certainly grown up watching and being involved in politics, and I'm sure that will continue. I'm a news junkie and follow politics at all levels," he says. "I don't expect that everyone in our community would be so consumed with following everything, but apathy is a scary thought for democracy. I think the string of minority governments federally has caused the last number of years to be politically tepid and that now, with a majority in place, we're seeing a real governing style, for better or worse.

"I personally disagree with many of the cuts that the federal government has been making as of late; many of them affect our province – SAR, Service Canada, the changes to OAS, and so on."

I'd say that's a 'yes' for political interest. Joshua just smiles. What about Confederation? "Former Prime Minister Paul Martin puts it well in the film when he mentions that the





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the film-making process — fascinated him even before that. "I was always enamoured with staging, blocking and angles from the time that I was very young — though I had no idea that when I was imagining my action figures doing a jump kick in slow motion and seeing it happen in my head that that's what was going on," he says. "I do remember now as an adult, though, that I'd even go back and repeat moves I made with them if I wasn't satisfied with how I imagined it to be versus how it happened. Obviously I eventually figured out that I loved thinking about how entire stories would unfold, and directed my first play while in high school at the Theatre at St. John's Lane — *All I Really Needed To Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. In between that realization and now, I was always interested in music videos and how they visually came off. It was, and still is, a dream of mine to eventually be offered the opportunity to direct a music video," he says.

process Newfoundland and Labrador went through to join Canada was really a defining moment," he says. "We were given a choice, that was rigorously debated — and I would expect nothing less from our people. I do believe the best choice was made, and I know my grandfather did as well once the dust settled even though he had campaigned for the Economic Union with the United States. It's speculative as to how that might have turned out. But what we do know is that post-Confederation history has brought about some iconic nation-defining programs and policies like the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, peacekeeping initiatives, the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Health Act. Not to mention that the country has a developed consciousness around the economy, multiculturalism, First Nations and the environment. There is a lot to be proud of, and a global reputation to preserve," he says.



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Taking into account his family history, and his education, his pursuit of becoming a filmmaker was sparked when he enrolled in Memorial University's Communications and Performance Media program. "The program was blended between stage and film, with courses that lead students to ultimately direct a stage scene, produce a play as a class, edit a commercial, make a short film and study documentary and the journalistic approach to film," he says.

In 2007, Joshua was the Assistant Director to Broadway choreographer Lisa Stevens, through the National Artists Program, at the Canada Winter Games in Whitehorse. "That was a pretty amazing project and opportunity," he says.



But film — and

1951, he obtained a licence, in partnership with *Herald* founder Geoff Stirling, for a new radio station in St. John's.

While Stirling was heavily interested in the business aspect, Jamieson became known to Newfoundlanders as the host of the nightly *News Cavalcade*. The program featured a main news segment, weather and an extended interview that included guests from hockey legend and former Stanley Cup champ Howie Meeker to then-premier Joey Smallwood. He became president of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters in 1961, and remained in that position for four years.

Jamieson entered politics by successfully contesting a 1966 by-election as a candidate for the Liberal Party of Canada. He was re-elected in the 1968 election, and joined the Cabinet of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau as Minister of Defence Production. In 1969, he became Minister of Transport retaining that portfolio

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until 1972 when he became Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. In 1976, he became Secretary of State for External Affairs.

He was re-elected in the 1979 election that brought down the Liberal government. Jamieson then moved to provincial politics, winning the leadership of the Newfoundland Liberal Party one month before the June 1979 provincial election. Jamieson's Liberals were defeated, and he resigned as provincial party leader in 1980.

In 1982, he was appointed Canada's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, and served until 1985.

He returned to Newfoundland to run his broadcasting interests before dying of a heart attack in 1986.

So what's next? Creatively, Joshua says he has a few irons in the fire. Film-wise, he's working on adapting a book into a screenplay which he's hoping will become a film sometime next year. "It's a fictional drama, and is a nice change from my first foray into film with the documentary. The doc genre will always be one that I love though, but I'm enjoying the new challenge," he says.

Any final thoughts? Joshua says he finds comfort in the fact that he now knows his grandfather better, thanks in large part to all the people who have been kind enough to share their memo-



ries of his grandfather with him, both on and off camera. "I don't think that just because I've stopped filming that it will stop or change, and I'm thankful for that. I just think (my grandfather) had exceptional values that I admire deeply."

Joshua says he values the 'little things' he learned most of all. Stories about how his grandfather always said 'thank you' and how he always addressed people by their name, are particularly touching.

His aunt, Donna, shares that one morning, Don Jamieson used a different door to enter Parliament because the name of the doorman on his regular route in had slipped his mind temporarily.

"There's a lot of stories like that, and I can only hope to even partially measure up to (my grandfather's) record. But, I live every day under his values that have been passed down to me." ▲



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