

“Letters”, published by Camp Rehoboth, Rehoboth Beach DE

Letters

from CAMP Rehoboth

CREATING A MORE POSITIVE REHOBOTH

In This Issue

Welcome Home!
Here Comes the Sun
It's Time to Play

May 19, 2023
Volume 33, Number 4
camprehoboth.com





Before the Beach

BY MICHAEL GILLES

I (heart) Jack LaLanne: A Cartoon Memoir

“Lights, Camera, Action!!!” I’ve heard these words hundreds of times in TV movies, but was never sure of what they meant. I think it’s related to “Stop/Go,” or is that the yellow light at the nearest intersection? Whatever I may not know can certainly be answered by the new kid in town, LeAnn Erickson. Yes, LeAnn is the real deal, and she now lives by the shore. Perhaps she’ll make a movie about me. You know. “The Man Who Knows Nothing About Movies.”

Actually, LeAnn probably wouldn’t answer such rookie questions. Not because she wouldn’t care, but her focus is on her newest movie: *I (heart) Jack LaLanne: A Cartoon Memoir*. It’s an LGBTQ coming of age story that reflects LeAnn’s life as a lesbian as she grows up in Minnesota and Iowa, and finally Temple University.

It’s an interesting take on her life, and no matter what you read or hear, the short film is NOT a biography of Jack LaLanne. Jack was an idol of LeAnn’s, a guru who got a lot of kids and moms exercising. There was no one but him doing this in the 60s. He was very much a part of pop culture at that time and served as an inspiration for gay models.

But the movie is not about him, even though LeAnn loved him. A lot.

Rather, she used Jack to provide structure for the many memories she has of growing up in a house with little tolerance or understanding of gay people. These memories still have an influence on LeAnn. Thus, her creation of the *I (heart)* short film.

Using a playful visual aesthetic and humorous tone, the film tackles serious issues, including the impact of role models on children, coming out as gay in a less-tolerant era, and dealing with a late-in-life disability. In her junior year of high school she was riding her bike and was hit by a car. She was thrown 20 feet and shattered her knee cap. “When it came

time for my senior year, I came back and I was not that person anymore.”

Since then, LeAnn has taken on the mantle of an accomplished artist. She has been a co-producer/writer/director/ animator/editor.



Jack was an idol of LeAnn’s, a guru who got a lot of kids and moms exercising.

LeAnn is a university professor of film production and has been an independent media artist for over 30 years. Her work has appeared on public and cable television, in media and art galleries, and has won national and international recognition in film and media festivals. Her screenings include: Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival (Toronto, Canada), Oberhausen International Short Film Festival (Germany), Internationales Frauen Film Festival (Cologne, Germany), Women in the Director’s Chair (Chicago), and L’immagine Leggera Palermo International Videart, Film, and Media Festival (Italy).

In 2010 she completed *Top Secret Rosies: The Female Computers of WWII*, a feature-length historical documentary that has screened internationally and is distributed by PBS, Inc. In 2014 she released *The Computer Wore Heels*, an interactive ebook that shares the Top Secret Rosies story with young adults. Currently, she is pitching a television series based on the Top Secret Rosies story.

Like many people, LeAnn thanks her family for their support for her triumphs. She met her spouse, Julie Rasmussen, as an undergrad and they’ve spent the last 45 years together. Julie handles all the volunteer things (for example they are both CAMP Rehoboth members). Through his creative collaborations, her son Jake has produced, written, and directed hundreds of narrative shorts which have screened at international film festivals.

At Temple, she often referred to herself as a storyteller in that she has always sought to find the stories, whether her own or others. In her film, video, and media work she is attracted to subjects where people are at the center of an investigation. Whatever the subject, she feels all of her work is ultimately an exploration of herself.

Lights, Camera, Action, or Stop/Go? I can’t wait to find out!

Fun Fact: The day after I finished an interview with LeAnne, I found my spouse watching a documentary on women working in World War II. Its name: *Top Secret Rosies*. Coincidence? I think not. I don’t know how she did it, but I somehow think it was shown for my benefit.

Thanks, LeAnn!▼

Michael Gilles is a playwright, actor, and director from Milton, and a regular contributor to Letters from CAMP Rehoboth.

I (heart) Jack LaLanne: A Cartoon Memoir will screen as part of the shorts program at the Pride Film Festival. Sunday, June 11, at 12 p.m. | Cinema Arts Theater, 17701 Dartmouth Drive, Lewes, DE | Tickets went on sale May 5.