

“It’s a beautiful day in the neighborhood...”

Fred Rogers, Pittsburgh 1928-2003

"In Pittsburgh, even...!?"

Oprah Winfrey responding to “St. Elmo’s Fire” screenwriter Carl Kurlander’s claim that he found happiness in his hometown.

My Tale of Two Cities

A Comeback Story

PRODUCTION INFORMATION



In the tradition of documentaries like “Super Size Me” and “Roger & Me”, “My Tale of Two Cities” is a poignant and funny “comeback” story about coming home and people and cities being challenged to reinvent themselves for a new age.

They say you can’t go home again, but that’s what Hollywood screenwriter/producer Carl Kurlander (*St. Elmo’s Fire*, *Saved By The Bell*) did when he accepted a job offer to teach college in his hometown of Pittsburgh. Two years earlier, Carl was living above the Sunset Strip, with famous neighbors like Richard Simmons, David Schwimmer, and Bud Bundy, but his two year old daughter had a habit of dancing naked on coffee tables, which Carl’s wife Natalie pointed out, if they stayed in that neighborhood, might one day become a profession. So, like reverse pioneers, they put their stuff in storage, loaded up a U-Haul acting out the fantasy of many, by actually going home again.

Things seem to be working out better than they ever imagined, as Carl finds himself a guest on “The Oprah Winfrey Show” on a program about people who changed their lives, telling Oprah how he has found happiness teaching at the University of Pittsburgh, going sledding with his daughter in the park where he grew up, and living in a place where people actually know their neighbors. For it turns out, they have moved quite literally into “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood”— buying a house just blocks from where Fred Rogers had taped his TV show for 30 years. But perhaps it is a curse to tell Oprah you are happy. Because shortly afterwards, Fred Rogers passes away and Pittsburgh, which one hundred years ago had been one of the richest cities in the world, goes bankrupt.



Enter Carl’s dermatologist, Dr. Doug Kress, who offers Carl money to make a movie to show the world how Pittsburgh which built America with its steel, conquered polio, and invented everything from aluminum to the Big Mac, is trying—like many other cities—to reinvent its for a

new age. And Carl's cameraman Mark Knobil who insists on filming Carl asking his dermatologist for money for the movie, convinced the movie will probably be a train wreck, but that even those who don't care about Pittsburgh, may be amused at the subversive movie-within-a-movie about Carl's Don Quixote attempts to help his hometown.

Though the film is shot in the style of "Roger & Me", Michael Moore's film about the decline of the auto industry in Detroit, "My Tale of Two Cities" is more a "Mister Rogers & Me" as Carl first begins his quest visiting Fred Roger's trusted mailman Mr. McFeely (actor David Newell) in front of The Neighborhood's famous tree, talking about how on the show McFeely used to bring Fred tapes of things that were made in the neighborhood—most of which are no longer made here. "What can we replace that with?" Newell asks, noting. "The steel industry is never going to come back—at least not the way we hope it will... who knows, maybe fifty years from now, this movie will have helped turn Pittsburgh around... you never know."



Inspired by that optimism, Carl seeks out Mr. Rogers' real life neighbors in a journey that is both heartfelt and humorous. He ends up going shopping in Pittsburgh's Strip for cheese with Teresa Heinz Kerry who has given millions to the city through the Heinz Foundation and who tells us how what Pittsburgh needs is an "infusing of dreamers... because dreaming is contagious";



tossing a football with Steeler great Franco Harris and his surprising un-athletic son Dok Harris who has come back to the city to go to business school and law school, debating whether it will be catching a pass or getting young people to stay in town that will help the city; and eating breakfast with former Treasury Secretary Paul O' Neill at the diner where Paul would go to each morning at 5:30 when he was CEO of Alcoa, turning that company around just at the time where most corporations were fleeing the city. These neighbors and many others each offer their own wisdom about how this town they all care so much about might comeback and once again become "The City of Champions."

But the movie becomes intensely personal, exploring the complexities of coming home again, as it turns out Carl had a less than idyllic childhood in the place where he hopes to give his own daughter a better one. In fact, he first came to Pittsburgh as a boy only after his mother had divorced his father, a doctor from Cleveland, to marry Carl's step-father, a doctor in Pittsburgh. (His first joke was "my mother never got divorced—she just got referred to another husband.") As so to purge the demons of his past like Pittsburgh itself needs to do haunted by the ghosts of

the decline of the steel industry, Carl visits his old gym teacher, Bob Grandizio, who still teases Carl about not being able to catch a football; stops by the home of his first crush, Lynn Snyderman, who is the real-life girl who inspired “St. Elmo’s Fire” (Kurlander and Lynn both worked at the St. Elmo Hotel one summer); and in the film’s most dramatic scene, literally returns to his old home with his mother who had dramatically left Pittsburgh in the midst of Carl and his brother Tom’s childhood. In a further twist, Carl’s strong-willed and remarkably frank wife Natalie, not a Pittsburgh native, becomes increasingly uncertain about whether the family should stay in her husband’s hometown, which she concedes is better for their daughter, or return to their previous, more glamorous life in Los Angeles.



Though set in Pittsburgh, the movie could be about anyone’s return to the place they grew up—but time and again, Pittsburgh proves a place with fascinating characters, from Andy Warhol’s nephew Marty who works in a scrap yard and ponders what his Uncle would have been had he stayed in this city, to famed coroner Cyril Wecht who talks to Carl after he and his brother have just caught and eaten a fish from the Allegheny River, joking about whether they both will survive the experience. The filmmakers also talk to some of the massive Pittsburgh Diaspora which was formed as jobs left due to the decline of the steel industry, visiting these passionate faithful in Steeler bars where they congregates each Sunday around the country with their own dreams of returning to the homeland.

In the end, “My Tale of Two Cities” deals with issues of family, community, and place, and how it will take all of us neighbors to make a difference if we as a city—or as this movie seems more timely than ever—we as a country, will be able to comeback. It honestly explores just how hard it is to change as Carl even visits a nun, Sister Linda Yankoski, to ask her if Pittsburgh needs saving—to which she replies that salvation is the freedom to take risk, let go of our past, and believe in our future. The nun’s parish, Holy Family Institute, had burned down which paradoxically led to its rebirth as a bigger and better organization—illustrating the film’s theme that sometimes it is the worst times—whether a person or a city—that leads to our best times. With alternate doses of pathos and comedy, the film’s message is ultimately inspiring as it ends with Pittsburghers from Times Square to Beverly Hills to The Point where Pittsburgh’s three rivers



meet, singing Fred Rogers' theme song, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" and Carl realizing that "there are good neighbors everywhere. But it was my Pittsburgh neighbors who helped me to dream again."

Poignantly, Pittsburgh's beloved late Mayor Bob O' Connor attended this sing-a-long a week before he entered the hospital. Bob actually pops up in the film amidst an hysterical fishing scene where Carl wrestles with a catfish. The Mayor, who was then just running for office, points out a once polluted area of the river which has been transformed by a young city councilman into a family fishing hole, as an example of what neighbors can do. That city councilman Luke Ravenstahl would go on to become Pittsburgh's youngest Mayor, succeeding Bob, to whom the movie is dedicated along with his spirit that "if we work hard and believe in ourselves, we can do anything." Watching "My Tale of Two Cities", you too may also believe.



MEET OUR NEIGHBORS



Louie Anderson. Named one of the top hundred comedians by Comedy Central, Emmy-awarding comedian Louie grew up in Minneapolis which was named by Money Magazine the “Hot” city to live in the same year “Pittsburgh” was named “Not.” Louie is also the author of *The F Word: How to Survive Your Family* which he wrote with Carl Kurlander. In the film, Louie busts Carl for

thinking he is making a “Mr. Roger & Me”, and offers insights as why Minneapolis is thriving while Pittsburgh is struggling.

Franco Harris. In his rookie year, Franco Harris caught a pass in the play-offs, which became known as “The Immaculate Reception.” That single play transformed the Pittsburgh Steelers, a once losing franchise, into one of the most successful teams in NFL history, as Franco helped lead the Pittsburgh Steelers to four Super Bowls during the 1970s. Following his Hall of Fame career, Franco continues to live in Pittsburgh where he is active in many local charities and as a



businessman whose company Super Bakery is a leader in bakery nutrition producing “Super Donuts” and “Super Buns” which are marketed to school systems in all fifty states. In MTOTC, Franco appears on Pittsburgh’s North Side with his son Dok, talking about how Pittsburgh and all cities need to have everything work together like a team (business, medicine, the arts, and sports) to succeed and urges talent that has left Pittsburgh to “come on home.”



Richard Florida. Known as one of the world’s leading public intellectuals on economic competitiveness, cultural and technological innovation, and urban studies, Richard Florida formulated many of his public policy theories during his tenure as a professor at Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Mellon University from 1987-2004. His best known

theory is his concept of ‘creative class,’ knowledge workers and creative individuals who are shaping the future of urban centers, which he described in his best selling book, “The Rise of the Creative Class.” Florida’s most recent book, “Who’s Your City?” talks about how where you live is one of the most important life choices we make.

Teresa Heinz Kerry. Though known elsewhere as the wife of Senator John Kerry, Teresa Heinz Kerry has deep roots in Pittsburgh, having come here as the young bride of Senator John Heinz in 1971. Following the tragic death of Senator Heinz in a 1991 airplane crash, Teresa Heinz decided to remain in Pittsburgh to raise their three sons and run the Heinz Endowments, a philanthropic organization that ‘uses the Pittsburgh region as a laboratory for the development .of solutions to challenges that are national in scope.’ Mrs. Heinz married Senator Kerry in 1995. In the film, after shopping in the Strip district, Pittsburgh’s produce area, she talks about the need for the city to have “an infusion of dreamers...” for its future “because dreaming is contagious.”



Tom Kurlander has worked in the entertainment business for two decades, appearing as an actor in films such as "Dave", "Kindergarten Cop" and "Young Guns II", and on television including "Moment of Truth: Stalking Back", Danielle Steel's "Remembrance", and countless other television shows and commercials. Tom has also found success as a producer and director, co-founding Jump Start Films, a production company which creates marketing films for businesses and organizations, and Family Shorts, which makes high quality films that tell the stories of families. (www.jumpstartfilms.com and www.familyshorts.com) Over the course of the making of MTOTC, Tom, who had previously been living in Los Angeles, also moved back to his hometown of Pittsburgh as he began dating Heidi Weitz, a childhood friend from Wightman elementary school.

Paul O’ Neill. A world-renown businessman, Paul O’Neil came to Pittsburgh in 1987 to serve as Chairman and CEO of Alcoa just as many other companies were leaving the city. Restructuring the way this “old school” company did business, by the time Mr. O’ Neill retired in 2000, Alcoa was one of the top stock among the Dow Jones Industrials as Mr. O’ Neill was credited with “running an Old Economy company as though it were a New Economy company.” He also served as Treasury Secretary of the United States from 2001-2002. An local and national leader in addressing issues of patient safety and quality in healthcare, O’ Neill helped establish the Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative 1997. In the film, he talks about how the city is reinventing itself by cleaning itself up and the waterways which were once used as an industrial sewer are now “the central attraction point for new investment.”



David Newell. Best remembered for his role as Mr. McFeely, the mailman in *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, and his famous catchphrase, “Speedy delivery! Speedy delivery!” David Newell



continues to tour the country to this day promoting the show and espousing the positive values characterized Fred Rogers' show. He also serves as the director of public relations for Fred's company Family Communications. On the show, Mr. McFeely used to bring Fred Rogers tapes of things which were made in the neighborhood. But many of those are no longer made here. In

MTOTC, David Newell honestly addresses that “the steel industry is not going to come back to the way it used to be... even though we'd like that... it just won't happen... What can we replace that with?” he asks—which is the central question that many American cities are facing. David believes the answer may lie with “optimism.”

Mayor Bob O' Connor. Bob O'Connor, a lifelong Pittsburgher and former City Council President, became Pittsburgh's 58th mayor in January, 2006. During his short time in office, O'Connor spearheaded a campaign of urban renewal that “Redd up Pittsburgh,” hosted a Super Bowl Parade that brought back the “City of Champions,” and helped to propel Pittsburgh to regain its title as “America's Most Liveable City.” After serving as mayor for only several months, Mayor O'Connor died tragically of a rare form of brain cancer in August 2006. “My Tale of Two Cities” is dedicated to the Mayor and his belief that “if we work hard and believe in ourselves, we can do anything.”



Joanne Rogers. A concert pianist, Joanne Rogers was married to Fred Rogers for over fifty years, during which time they became parents to two sons and grandparents to three grandsons. Since Fred's death, Joanne has participated in the celebration of Fred's legacy, including writing the forwards to, *The World According to Mister Rogers*, *Life Journeys According to Mister Rogers*, and *Many Ways to Say I Love You*.

In MTOTC, Joanne talks about how she and Fred first came to Pittsburgh after Fred had worked at NBC in New York because he believed he could do something special with television and make programs that “help make good attractive.”

Dr. Thomas Starzl. Universally regarded as the pioneer of modern organ transplantation, Dr. Thomas Starzl performed the first human liver transplant in 1963, as well as the first heart and liver transplant in 1984. He has also performed groundbreaking research on organ rejection, which has greatly increased the safety



and success of transplant procedures. Starzl came to Pittsburgh in 1981 when he joined the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center as head of its organ transplant program. During his time as a surgeon in Pittsburgh, he established the city as the world center of organ transplantation and has authored over 2100 scientific articles, making him the most cited scientist in the field of clinical medicine. In “My Tale of Two Cities,” Starzl takes a walk with the dogs which he brings every day to his office, and talks about how what happened with his work in transplants “could only have happened in Pittsburgh.”



Bill Strickland. Although he has lived in the same community his entire life, Bill Strickland has influenced not only his hometown of Pittsburgh but also the world beyond. In 1968, while still a student at the University of Pittsburgh, he established the Manchester Craftman's Guild and Bidwell Training Center as a vehicle to give hope to residents in his North Side neighborhood. Today Manchester Bidwell offers a wide range of services such as art classes for students, a jazz program and art gallery, and training center which prepares adults for work. In 1996 he received a "Genius in the Arts" MacArthur Fellowship Program Award and has recently authored with Vincent Rause a book, *Making the Impossible Possible*, Strickland hopes will help people "generate a sense of purpose and power in their life that is the real engine behind genuine success." In MTOTC, Mr. Strickland makes a ceramic pot as he talks about how MCG has allowed kids who share the same struggles he had growing up to go “from darkness to light” through this arts center and beat the odds to go onto higher education.

Sister Linda Yankoski. Creativity, leadership, and positive thinking have characterized the career of Sister Linda Yankoski. Sister Linda, a native of Michigan, came to Pittsburgh in the 1970's to become a Sister in the Holy Family of Nazareth. Soon after arriving in the city she began working for the Holy Family Institute, an organization that helps displaced children and families who are struggling with violence and substance abuse issues. After a devastating fire in 1984, Sister Linda helped to rebuild Holy Family Institute into an organization that serves more than 6,000 children and families throughout Pennsylvania. In MTOTC, when asked about whether “Pittsburgh needs saving”,



Sister Linda replies that “salvation is the freedom to take risk... and if we are still holding on to old ways of being, old ways of doing things... then we do need saving.”

Dr. Cyril Wecht. Best known for his testimony before the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1978, where he argued against the findings of the Warren Commission

that President John F. Kennedy was shot by a single bullet, Cyril Wecht has established himself as a world renowned forensic pathologist. Wecht's expert consultation has been called upon for many of the most famous murder cases in modern American history including the JonBenet Ramsey and Vincent Foster murders. Wecht also served for forty years as coroner and medical examiner of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. In the film, Dr. Wecht examines whether Pittsburgh is a "dead town" and talks about how painful it has been for him personally to watch so many leave the city he loves as the Steel industry declined.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Carl Kurlander

Co-Writer/Director/Producer

My Tale of Two Cities is the directorial debut of Carl Kurlander who spent the previous two decades working in Hollywood as a screenwriter (*St. Elmo's Fire*) and television writer/producer (*Saved By the Bell*) before returning to his hometown to teach at the University of Pittsburgh for what he thought would be a one year Hollywood sabbatical. This journey was chronicled in Po Bronson's best-selling book *What Should I Do With My Life?* which led to Carl appearing as a guest on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. He is currently a Visiting Distinguished Senior Lecturer at the University of Pittsburgh where he is working on a documentary on how Dr. Jonas Salk and his team together with the community of Pittsburgh pulled together to defeat polio, the most feared disease of last century. Carl graduated from Duke University Magna Cum Laude where he wrote a short story about a waitress he had met while bell-hopping at the St. Elmo Hotel. That story helped him win the MCA-Universal Studios Scholar Award that would take him to Hollywood and eventually inspire the movie *St. Elmo's Fire*, which Carl co-wrote with director Joel Schumacher. During the 1998 Writer's Strike, Carl appeared in *3000 Miles, 21 Days, 10 Cents*, a pioneer Fox reality TV show in which he had to work his way across country on a dime with his mother, Jeanne Wechsler.

Stephanie Dangel Reiter

Co-Writer/Producer

A graduate of The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and Yale Law School, Stephanie Dangel Reiter is a former Rhodes Scholar, law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, and attorney. Her involvement in *My Tale of Two Cities* began when she took a graduate screenwriting class with Carl Kurlander to work on a screenplay she was writing on civil rights pioneers Marian Anderson and Walter White. Stephanie subsequently became involved in the Steeltown Entertainment Project, serving as the research coordinator on *Pittsburgh: Hollywood's Best Kept Secret*, a short film featuring Shirley Jones, *Chicago* director Rob Marshall (*Chicago*), *E.R.* producer John Wells, *300* producer Bernie Goldmann, and other Pittsburgh expatriates talking about how Pittsburgh nurtured them as artists and their

hometown's potential for becoming a hub in the entertainment industry. This short film premiered at the Andy Warhol Museum during the "Steeltown Entertainment Summit." Stephanie is now Board Chair of Steeltown Entertainment Project, a non-profit working to develop a sustainable entertainment sector in Southwestern Pennsylvania (See www.steeltown.org). She also continues to work with Carl on documentaries about the conquering of polio and the work of Manchester Craftsmen's Guild and Bill Strickland.

Janet Driscoll Smith

Producer

Janet Smith began her career working on nationally broadcast television documentaries at WQED, the nation's first public television station, where Fred Rogers taped his show for thirty years. Her producing credits include PBS' *Car of the Future* for NOVA, and unique projects such as the IMAX film *Pittsburgh's Big Picture* and the Emmy-nominated *Web of Life*, a PBS special on the worldwide biodiversity crisis. She has worked around the world for some of the most well-known television and documentary production companies, including WGBH, the BBC, NHK (Japan), The Discovery Channel, the National Geographic Society, WETA, the World Wildlife Fund, and NBC/Dateline. Ms. Smith, a fourth-generation Pittsburgher, is glad to be part of a film project that showcases her hometown.

Joe Seamans

Consulting Producer

For 25 years, Joe Seamans worked at Pittsburgh's WQED producing and photographing award winning PBS programming, including filming some of the classic "picture picture" segments for *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. His long list of credits for Emmy and Peabody award winning National Geographic classics includes producer, writer, and director of photography for *Great Lakes*, *Fragile Seas*, *Treasures from the Past*, and co-producer and director of photography for *Serengeti Diary* and *In the Shadow of Vesuvius*. He has produced many PBS programs dealing with social and environmental issues such as *Road to the Future*, which traces the impact of the car on the urban development of America. Most recently he co-produced, directed, and wrote *The Great Robot Race* for NOVA, and the upcoming *Car of the Future*, featuring Tom and Ray Malliozzi of *Car Talk* on NPR. Joe is married to Elizabeth Seamans, who continues to work with Family Communications, Fred Rogers' production company, and appeared on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* as "Mrs. McFeeley."

Mark Knobil

Director of Photography

Mark Knobil has been the cinematographer on numerous award-winning projects, and has individually been nominated twice for an Emmy for outstanding cinematography. His extensive

credits include the award-winning independent feature *The Bread, My Sweet*, Director of Photography on the Discovery Channel special *Titanic: Anatomy of a Disaster*, Supervising Director of Photography on an eight-part National Geographic Series for PBS, *The Shape of Life*, about the science of evolution, as well as *Strange Days on Planet Earth*, a four-part series, hosted by Edward Norton, about mysterious changes in the ecosystems of the planet. Mark served as videographer for many years on *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* and considers his work on *Mr. Rogers Visits USSR* a career highlight.

Tjardus Greidanus

Editor/Co-Writer/Cameraman/Co-Producer

Tjardus Greidanus directed his first feature at the age of 16 after his family emigrated from Holland to Alberta, Canada. *The Fire Within*, an historical epic about the Spanish invasion of Holland, won the Alberta Motion Picture Industry Award for best amateur film and opened the door to film school. Graduating with honors, Greidanus moved to Vancouver, where he worked as an assistant director on TV series and features including *The X-Files* and *This Boy's Life*. He began a new career in Los Angeles writing and editing HBO specials and DVD content for such films as *Almost Famous*, *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*, *Ali*, and *Collateral*. Four years ago he returned to the set as a DP, shooting behind-the-scenes for *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Miami Vice* and *The Golden Compass*. He has since photographed several feature documentaries and is currently shooting the cutting-edge PBS series, *Wired Science*.

Laura Davis

Co-Producer

Having grown up in Pittsburgh where she was Allerdice High School Senior Homemaker of the Year, producer Laura Davis first found success as a disc jockey for the legendary L.A. rock station KLOS. She then segued into a career producing "behind the scenes" documentaries for some of the world's most respected directors including Woody Allen, Martin Scorsese, Jim Brooks, Cameron Crowe, and Michael Mann. Over two decades, Laura Davis Productions has done countless productions that have ended up on HBO and Showtime for such movies as *Collateral*, *Miami Vice*, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *As Good As It Gets*, *Ali*, and *Dances With Wolves*. She has also produced several television movies for CBS as well as the one-hour special *The Architect and the Chef* for the Food Channel. Laura also volunteered her services to produce Steeltown's short film, "*Pittsburgh: Hollywood's Best Secret*," as described above and is currently involved in producing the documentary on Manchester Craftsman's Guild.

Jonathan Wayne

Web Design

Jonathan Wayne is a 2002 University of Pittsburgh graduate and a full-time freelance webdesigner and independent filmmaker. In addition to designing the site for “My Tale of Two Cities”, Jonathan has designed many other innovated sites including that of U2Station.com which was nominated for a VH1 website award. He also co-founded the student organization Pitt In Hollywood of which Carl Kurlander is a faculty adviser and created www.pittinhollywood.org which connects Pittsburgh with Hollywood. Jonathan is currently filming his own documentary that is being shot in both Israel and the United States of America.

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

Jim DiSpirito

Composer

Composer Jim Dispirito has enjoyed a long career in music both as a solo performer and as the percussionist for the band **Rusted Root** from 1993-2001. As part of **Rusted Root**, Jim recorded a number of major label releases, including the bands’ definitive recording effort, *WHEN I WOKE*. Touring extensively throughout the US, Canada and the UK, Jim has had the opportunity to share the stage with artists such as Santana, the Dave Mathews Band, the Allman Bros. Band, Robert Plant & Jimmy Page, Jewel, Joan Osborne, and Sheryl Crow. In addition to his work scoring the music in *My Tale of Two Cities*, Jim is also a three-time Emmy Award nominee for his music for television, and has composed music for independent and IMAX films. Jim continues to compose music for film and television and is an active session musician, performing regularly on many recording projects. Jim also continues to perform in a number of ensembles, from the singer/songwriter genre to world-music-fusion groups.

Carol Lee Espy

Composer

Carol Lee Espy is an award-winning writer, composer, producer, voice-over artist, a TV and Radio host and a pro-golfer wanna-be. In short a multi-hyphenate. Her favorite projects include collaborations with husband/composer Jim DiSpirito. She resides in Pittsburgh Pa., with husband Jim, their incredible son, a goldfish and screwball dog.

Additional Music by The Newlanders

The NewLanders are a group of Pittsburgh area musicians and songwriters who have researched and rediscovered songs written by, and about, the people of southwestern Pennsylvania. By forging these old tunes in their own style, the Newlanders have created a new sound -- while honoring and preserving the spirit of southwestern Pennsylvania's rich past. For more information, go to <http://www.newlanders.com>