

# The Martha's Vineyard Times

## Film : Summer Film Series

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Published: July 9, 2009

Island film lovers will have a summer-long pick of interesting films among three interesting series: Martha's Vineyard Film Society's Summer Films (MVFS), just starting up; the Summer Institute Film Series at the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center; and the Martha's Vineyard Film Festival (MVFF) at the Chilmark Community Center.

MVFS's showing of "Mine," at the Oak Bluffs Tabernacle, is directed by GERALYN PEZANOSKI, who will attend the 8 pm screening and answer questions. It tells the poignant story of New Orleans pets, their caretakers and original owners in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Island adopters of Katrina pets will be admitted to the screening free of charge.

When mandatory evacuation of New Orleans began in August 2005, thousands of animals were left behind. Motels, hotels, and shelters refused to take in pets, and many evacuees, believing they would return home in days, left their cats and dogs behind with food and water. No one expected the level of devastation that occurred or the length of the dislocation.

"We realized you couldn't rely on the government in a disaster like this," one of the bitter evacuees says. Already overwhelmed by residents' needs, the government made no provisions for their pets.

Ms. Pezanoski shows heartrending images, taken in the aftermath of the 21st century's worst storm in the U.S., of dogs left on rooftops, cats peering from hiding places. By September, volunteers poured into the city to help rescue animals, even though residents were still banned.

The issues grew unexpectedly complicated. Most of the animals had to be transported to shelters in other parts of the country. They needed vaccinations and microchips for identification. Used to keeping animals for a maximum of five days, shelters adopted out Katrina pets before their owners had time to reclaim them. Some of those adopters would not relinquish their new pets when the owners turned up.

Ms. Pezanoski lets this remarkable story tell itself without imposing embellishment. It reveals shocking tales of rescuers who didn't think the residents who had "abandoned" their pets, whether unwillingly or not, should get them back.

Through the stories of a handful of evacuees, "Mine" demonstrates the importance of the connection between people and animals. For Jessie, who spent many years homeless on the streets of New Orleans, his dog J.J. symbolized rehabilitation. Evacuators had to carry out a woman named Gloria, who refused to leave without her beloved black lab, Murphy.

The good news is that many residents were reunited with their pets, and they often forged new friendships with the people who cared for their pets in the interim. Congress responded by passing the Pets Evacuation & Transportation Standards Act, which requires states to accommodate pets in their emergency planning.