



Director Mark Feijó, right, works on his documentary film "B-17, Flying Legend." Below, the DVD cover.

Filmmaker in love with B-17s

Former NVHS student has made documentary on Flying Fortresses

By Barbara Baily
of the Daily Courier

Back in 1968, Mark Feijó was a Brazilian exchange student at North Valley High School who went to a prom and met his future wife, Darcie Christensen, then a Grants Pass High School senior. Today, the couple live in Van Nuys, Calif.; he's an award-winning film director and producer, and she's the travel manager for Capitol Records.

Feijó's "B-17 Flying Legend," a film about the legendary World War II bomber, won first prize at the 2003 Houston International Film Festival in the category of documentary film less than 60 minutes in length. The film also received the people's choice award at the Palm Springs Festival of Festivals, and it was honored at the Newport Beach Film Festival. In addition, the Discovery Channel in the United Kingdom recently obtained broadcasting rights.

The film also garnered high praise from World War II historian Michael Faley: "This new documentary is the most in-depth study of the last remaining flyable B-17s in existence today. (It's) beautifully edited with current and historic footage," he says.

The B-17, known as "The Queen of the Skies," has been credited with the defeat of Nazi Germany by the Allies in World War II. Although 12,731 of the planes were built during the war, only 13 are capable of flying today.

The film, a labor of love for Feijó, marked his debut as a feature film director. He conducted his own research, worked on the project daily for more than three years, and financed it out of his own pocket. Feijó completed the final cut in May, 2000, and "B-



"B-17 Flying Legend" was released as a DVD earlier this year.

"The film premiered at the Palm Springs Air Museum, 400 people attended, and we arranged for one of the last operating B-17s to do a fly-over afterwards. The whole crowd applauded, and many people were crying. The pilots who flew the plane in combat were amazing, and it's exciting when they thank us for telling their story. If I never see a penny out of it, I know I touched many lives with this project," said Feijó, 33, in a recent phone interview.

"Everyone thinks that B-17s are a subject that would appeal to someone from an older generation, but they've fascinated me ever since I dropped Darcie off at the Medford Airport in 1969 and saw one parked there. I didn't have \$3 with me that day to

pay for a tour of the plane though," he laughs, "but many years later I saw a PBS special about a stationary display of B-17s in Southern California. That show sparked my interest, and I fell in love with the subject."

Before Feijó established his "Fortress Films" production company and started in on the B-17 film project, he wrote and directed several short films and worked on hundreds of feature films.

As for his next project, Feijó says he's thinking about directing a film in Russia.

Feijó grew up in Rio de Janeiro and graduated from high school there in December 1987. Since he wasn't slated to start college until the fall, he accepted a friend's invitation to visit Merlin, and he enrolled as a senior at North Valley High School in January, 1988.

Get the picture

■ WHAT: "B-17 Flying Legend," Mark Feijó's award-winning, one-hour documentary film about the legendary World War II bomber. The film has just been released in a 211-minute DVD package, which includes filmmaker commentary, more than 200 historical photographs, a virtual tour of a B-17, pilot's notes, interviews, and footage of the last flying B-17s.

■ PRICE: \$24.95.

■ ORDER: For more information, or to order a copy, visit the "B-17 Flying Legend" Web site: www.b17flyinglegend.com. It may also be purchased at: www.amazon.com, and at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C.

"Merlin was quite a change from Rio de Janeiro, which is a very cosmopolitan city. I'd never mowed grass before, and I loved it, and there's nothing like waking up in the morning and seeing deer in the yard," he says.

Christensen's family came to this area generations ago, and her great-great grandmother, Mamie Wilken, was the first postmaster of Galice.

Feijó and Christensen kept in touch after they met: She went off to Western Oregon University in Monmouth, while he attended Rogue Community College for two years before graduating from California State University, Northridge, with a major in screenwriting.

The couple married and moved to Van Nuys, Calif., "but on the Fourth of July we go back to the Rogue Valley to visit with Darcie's family," Feijó says.

"Mark firmly believes in being an independent producer. He persevered, put his all into the film, and he's done a remarkable job," says Feijó's father-in-law, Jim Christensen of Grants Pass.

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