



Kurt Kuenne

Television Documentaries (Network/Syndication Service/Program Service)

WINNER: KURT KUENNE, MSNBC

"Dear Zachary: A Letter to a Son About His Father"

"Dear Zachary" is a first-person account of the life and murder of Dr. Andrew Bagby (1973-2001), whose killer fled to Canada, went on to bear his child and walked free on bail awaiting trial, giving her the opportunity to kill again. Her second murder exemplified how truly disturbed she was. She not only killed the father of her child — she killed her own son.

Filmmaker Kurt Kuenne wrote that his film "was never supposed to be seen by you [or] seen outside my immediate circle of loved ones, and it was certainly not supposed to be a crime story or a piece of 'journalism' in any way." Instead, the film was "prepared for an audience of one — the Zachary of the title, my late best friend's son, born after his death — as a way for him to get to meet the father he would never have the opportunity to know in life."

Bagby was gunned down at the age of 28 in a state park in western Pennsylvania in November 2001. His ex-girlfriend, Shirley Turner, the prime suspect, fled to Canada, where she discovered she was pregnant with his son.

She named him Zachary.

"This was supposed to be a tribute film," Kuenne wrote. "I considered forgetting about the project after Zachary was murdered on August 18, 2003, because my intention had been to give him the film as a present when he was old enough to watch it. But when I realized that I now had a responsibility to tell his story publicly, I picked it up once again."

One judge said: "In a category packed with some of the year's most incredible journalist undertakings, this was the entry I still can't stop thinking about, even weeks after first watching it. It is a more thorough and complete work than I have ever seen in the span of a 90-minute documentary. You'll want to hug your family, call a long-lost friend, then go to work combating systematic governmental breakdowns that allow evil to destroy that which is most important to all of us."

Kuenne observed that "the most difficult aspect of this whole experience was not the making of the film, but living through this nightmare in real life, watching my friend's family be annihilated by this monstrous woman, and watching the government of Canada help her do it. Documenting it was easy; living through it was excruciating." **ΣΔΧ**