

# PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

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## Peninsula's big days in Seattle

Clallam screenwriter debuts film about veterans;

■ Ex-GI tackles Viet angst in 'Missing in America'

BY LAURA ROSSER  
PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

When screenwriter Ken Miller moved to Port Angeles in 1983 after retiring from the Army, the former Green Beret was seeking the isolation of the North Olympic Peninsula.

But Miller found that he couldn't hide from the Vietnam War experiences, thoughts and memories of what he had seen and done as a helicopter gunship pilot.

He managed to ease himself back into society with the compromise of living in a rural area.

Some veterans don't manage that compromise. Many who cannot escape the haunting nightmares seek isolation in the woods.

They are the inspiration for "Missing in America," a movie written by Miller that will make its world premiere this weekend at the Seattle International Film Festival.

Miller completed the screenplay five years ago, and the movie was finished just a week ago.

The story's inspiration, Miller said, came from a group of Vietnam veterans living in the foothills



CAROLE SEGAL/FOR PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

Port Angeles screenwriter Ken Miller, actor Danny Glover and director-writer-producer Gabrielle Savage Dockterman on location in British Columbia.

between Sequim and Port Angeles.

The independent film — which stars Danny Glover as a Vietnam vet who isolates himself from society by retreating into the woods only to find himself suddenly entrusted with a former platoon member's Vietnamese-American daughter — will be screened on Saturday and Monday.

### Anything but cathartic

After that, Miller said, producer/director Gabrielle Savage Dockterman is hoping the film will be picked up by a distributor and

sent to theaters throughout the nation.

Although the movie was filmed near Vancouver, British Columbia, Miller said people from the North Olympic Peninsula will recognize the names of places mentioned in the script.

Seeing the film, Miller said, will be cathartic for Vietnam veterans, but it was anything but that for Miller to write it.

"It took me places I'd been avoiding going all these years," he said.

# Film: Movie focuses on Vietnam vets

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"Everybody from Vietnam's got some guilt over what they did.

"I wrote it for the Vietnam veteran and his family."

The film will let vets see where they were in relationship to Vietnam and the war, and will let their families see why they are the way they are.

Miller said several veterans read the screenplay and saw themselves in Glover's character, Jake.

"[The film] will be good for anyone who's been forced by a job to do things they're not particularly proud of," Miller said.

Seeing the film, Miller hopes, will offer an opportunity for healing — to have people look at themselves, forgive themselves and move on.

Miller said his pain in writing the screenplay was worth the result of having Vietnam veterans be affected by the movie in a positive way.

"Whatever lifestyle they've chosen, there's a whole hidden inner world they exist in from Vietnam that sometimes their own family doesn't know about," he said.

"This movie is an attempt to touch that inner world . . . and get them to hopefully forgive themselves for doing some of the things they had to do."

## Agent finds producer

Miller, who said the Olympic Mountains have become something of a mecca for Vietnam veterans, used the Internet to get the movie picked up and produced.

He has an agent — Miller has written 18 screenplays, but this is the first to be made into a movie — with whom he worked to find Dockterman over the Internet.

The rewrites, done by Nancy Babine and Miller at Dockterman's request, were also done over the Internet.

Miller said he didn't meet Dockterman until two years



CAROLE SEGAL

**Danny Glover plays Jake and Zoe Welzenbaum plays Lenny in the film "Missing in America."**

## Premiere showing

"MISSING IN AMERICA," inspired by North Olympic Peninsula Vietnam War veterans and written by Port Angeles resident Ken Miller, will be screened at the Egyptian Theatre, 801 E. Pine St., Seattle, on Saturday at 6 p.m. and Monday at 1:30 p.m.

A question and answer period with the filmmakers will follow both screenings.

Admission to the showings is \$10.

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after the project started, and he will meet Babine for the first time this weekend.

While getting the movie filmed and ready to view was high-tech, the storyline is backwoods — way backwoods.

Places such as Olsen's Grocery, the cabin, fishing and crabbing spots are North Olympic Peninsula stomping grounds — as are the trailheads that play a prominent role.

Another vet from the area

would stop at the grocery store and take food up to the isolated vets, leaving the boxes at the trailhead.

In exchange, the "bush vets," Miller said, would leave wood for their benefactor to sell in the Goodwill Industries parking lot in Port Angeles.

The original title of the screenplay, Miller said, was "The Woodcutter," and he had actually scouted areas for filming around Port Angeles.

But for various reasons, the

movie was made in Canada.

Miller said vets returning now from Iraq are experiencing a different return than the Vietnam veterans — and that's good.

"I'm extremely happy for the returning veterans — as is every Vietnam veteran I've talked to," Miller said.

Veterans returning from Iraq are being greeted with signs of welcome.

Many Vietnam vets came home to rioting, protesting and being spat upon.

"I don't know why it's like that today — is society trying to redeem itself for the way it acted then?" Miller mused.

"A lot of people today don't like the way they acted during the Vietnam War. . . . At the time, it was the thing to do, but they, too, are shouldering the guilt."

The message to today's veterans from the film, Miller said, is "to take care of themselves."