

# FOUR SEASONS LODGE

A documentary film by Andrew Jacobs

97 minutes, color, digital/video, 2008



## FIRST RUN FEATURES

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## **Brief Synopsis**

In an inspiring and startlingly funny documentary, *FOUR SEASONS LODGE* follows a group of Holocaust survivors during what might be their final summer together at a bungalow colony in the Catskill mountains. Directed by *New York Times* journalist Andrew Jacobs, with beautiful cinematography by a team of filmmakers including Albert Maysles, the verite film explores the power of friendship and the drive to find joy despite painful memories. It is a counterintuitive Holocaust documentary: a fusion of ribald humor, stories of unimaginable loss, the last of the Borscht Belt crooners, and a family made entirely of friends and lovers. The characters dance, flirt, and fight as the fate of their community hangs in the balance.

## **Extended Synopsis**

*FOUR SEASONS LODGE* follows a group of Holocaust survivors, nearly all Polish Jews, who have spent 25 years summering together at an isolated rural compound in the Catskill Mountains of New York. They come for the raucous poker games, the dancing that goes on till dawn and the long summer days spent with others who understand their pasts, and their unfathomable pain.

The film focuses on a half-dozen characters over the course of a summer that might be their last one together. Among them are Tobias and Lola, who met in a Nazi concentration camp but only recently became lovers; Genya and Olga, two women whose 65-year-long friendship is alternately caustic, tender and revealing; Carl, the colony's president, who struggles to keep 100 demanding residents content while tending his ailing wife; and Hymie, the vice president, who is the colony poet, beloved jokester and a moody misanthrope who refuses to reveal his war-time past.

Midway through the summer, a rebellious knot of residents rises up to fight against the sale of the colony. Carl and Hymie, exhausted from the workload and dispirited by the death of so many friends, believe it is time to pack it in. Sides are drawn and the combatants dig in their heels.

But the rebels say that as long as they are alive, the lodgers should enjoy life in what they describe as "our paradise in the mountains."

During the film's second half, meetings are held, lawyers are hired and heated squabbles break out. The outcome comes as a surprise, even to the lodgers themselves.

Over the course of the summer, age-old rivalries are settled and cherished relationships come apart. As the summer draws to a close, the lodgers throw one last party, the fate of their colony undetermined but their spirits unbowed. Inevitably, sickness takes its toll. The film is a subtle exploration of aging and death, the power of memory and the ability of human beings to celebrate life despite numbing loss.

*FOUR SEASONS LODGE* is a counterintuitive film about the Holocaust: a verité, uplifting and insightful portrait of people who embrace their dark pasts with striking openness and, at times, black humor.

## FOUR SEASONS LODGE

### Principal Characters

**HYMIE ABRAMOWITZ** is the Lodge godfather, its unpaid handyman, resident misanthrope and an irreverent atheist who takes pleasuring in riling up the faithful. He is also a driving force behind the decision to dissolve the colony -- and the only one who can save it. **“They call this place paradise. It’s not a paradise for me. It’s a labor camp.”**

**TOSHA ABRAMOWITZ** is Hymie’s beleaguered wife and sidekick who, after 55 years of marriage, still finds his off-color jokes unbearable. She often provides a sobering counterpoint to Hymie, who uses humor to deflect questions about his agonizing past. **“No matter how hard I try, he doesn’t want to talk about it.”**

**ARON ADELMAN** embodies the raucous spirit of the Lodge. He may be 91 and grievously ill, but Aron drinks scotch like water, stuffs his face with artery-clogging kielbasa and dances the mambo like a young ruffian. **“The best thing in life is to eat, drink and be happy. When you’re finished, you’re finished!”**

**BASIE ADELMAN** is the bracingly frank wife of Aron and a Russian-born rebel who can dispense love and disdain with a single glance. **“He’s going to live like everyone else. Until he dies!”**

**OLGA BOWMAN** travels to the Catskills from her home in El Paso each summer to share a room with Genya Boyman, her life-long companion. Loving and insightful, Olga is the film’s unofficial narrator and a font of philosophical musings about life, aging and the value of friendship. **“Life is not easy for everyone. But life can be beautiful even when it’s not so easy.”**

**EUGENIA “GENYA” BOYMAN**, Olga’s companion, is an occasionally dour but eminently regal presence at the Lodge. She is a straight-shooter who heaps ridicule on those who hide their age, but when it comes to the past, Genya is incapable of talking about her wartime experiences. **“One day, one day I’ll tell my story – I suppose it will be on my deathbed.”**

**TOBIAS BUCHMAN** is a former soccer star who was the only Jew on the German team. After the death of his wife, he falls in love with Lola, a fellow lodger whom he first met at a Nazi death camp. Unexpected illness, however, tests the bonds of their blossoming affair. **“To be in love at my age is something I never expected. Somebody must be watching over us.”**

**CARL POTOK** is the president of the lodge and a selfless workhorse who struggles to keep the colony going even as he tends to his ailing wife, Cesia. He is also a pragmatist who has no use for religion. **“I was in concentration camp four years and I never saw no miracles. Luck yes. As far as I’m concerned God is about miracles.”**

**CESIA POTOK**, Carl’s wife, is battling Alzheimer’s disease and confined to a wheelchair. Her haunting cries, which reverberate across the colony, are an unwelcome reminder of mortality. **“We were together in one camp. When we were liberated she didn’t have nobody and I didn’t have nobody. Four months later we got married.”**

**LOLA WENGLIN** is the spunky paramour of Tobias Buchman who reluctantly agrees to leave the colony early after he gets sick. **“I’ll run away, find another boyfriend and come back to the country.”**

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

Is there joy after horror?

Can people who have survived unfathomable trauma find contentment?

In 2005, I stumbled upon a group of Holocaust survivors who share a rural compound in upstate New York. I was astounded by what I found. I expected the elderly residents of Four Seasons Lodge to be sad, broken and embittered. Instead I discovered a vibrant band of men and women who laughed like children, traded salty barbs over mahjong games and danced late into the night.

Of course there was plenty of sadness amid the revelry. Even when doubled over in laughter, the Lodgers were shadowed by harrowing memory: the pain of losing entire families to the gas chambers, the degradation of the Nazi death camps and the numbness that set in after liberation, when the Lodgers, then teenagers, realized they were orphaned and homeless.

That summer, I wrote an article about the lodge for the New York Times but when I found out the place was going to shut down and that the following summer would be the last, I decided I had to do something more. Although I had never made a film before, I realized only a documentary could accurately convey the essence of these remarkable people.

With the help of Albert Maysles and a team of seasoned cinematographers, we spent the next summer filming among the lodgers, whose warmth and openness were humbling. We ended up with more than 250 hours of footage but more importantly, we came away with valuable lessons: we discovered that people, regardless of age and despite having endured unspeakable atrocity, can experience happiness and joy. And, amazed, we watched people in their 80s and 90s flirt, find new romance and resolve 40-year-old rivalries.

“Four Seasons Lodge” tells a story that has never before been told. It is the story of Holocaust survivors who refuse to be victims, who chase after life with intoxicating zeal, and who have learned that there is no difference between friendship and family. In the end, the film is also a last glimpse of a vanishing world and an inspiring testament to the men and women who survived Hitler’s murderous Final Solution.

As we have screened the film in recent months before audiences young and old, Jewish and Gentile, the response has been astounding. “Four Seasons Lodge,” we have been told, is a important film that should be seen by people all over the world: it is heart-rending, uplifting and startlingly funny; but most of all, it is a film that offers indelible lessons about the challenges of aging, the comfort of old friends, the power of memory and the importance of embracing joy even in the face of mortality.

## FOUR SEASONS LODGE Production Team

Director ..... Andrew Jacobs  
Producers ..... Matt Lavine, Andrew Jacobs  
Coproducers ..... Roger Bennett, Rhoda Herrick, Elyssa Hess  
Editors ..... Kim Connell, Aaron Soffin  
Music ..... Eric Lewis  
Cinematography ..... Albert Maysles, Andrew Federman, Avi Kastoriano, Justin Schein  
Executive Producer ..... Kelly Sheehan

### **Andrew Jacobs**

Andrew Jacobs has been a staff writer at the New York Times for the past ten years, where he has covered a wide variety of beats, from the American South and the aftermath of Sept. 11, to New Jersey politics and the New York City Police Department. The idea for "Four Seasons" grew out of a six-part series Jacobs did for the Times about summer life in the Catskills. A graduate of New York University, Mr. Jacobs spent a year teaching and writing in China during the pro-democracy movement.

### **Albert Maysles**

Albert Maysles is a pioneer of Direct Cinema who, along with his brother David, was the first to make nonfiction feature films (Grey Gardens, Salesman, Gimme Shelter) where the drama of life unfolds without scripts, sets, interviews or narration. With his first film, Psychiatry In Russia (1955) he made the transition from psychologist to documentary filmmaker. In 1960 he co-created Primary. His 36 films include What's Happening: The Beatles in the USA (1964), five films of the projects of Christo and Jeanne-Claude (1972 to 1995), and three documentaries for HBO. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship (1965), a Peabody, an Emmy, five Lifetime Achievement Awards, the award for best cinematography at Sundance (2002) for Lalee's Kin, which was also nominated in 2001 for an Academy Award and most recently, the Columbia Dupont Award (2004). In 1999 Eastman Kodak saluted him as one of the 100 world's finest cinematographers. Albert's latest project, The Gates (1979-2005), is currently in postproduction.

### **Matt Lavine**

Matt Lavine was the co-producer, creative consultant and outreach coordinator of the critically-praised [Tying The Knot](#) (2004), winner of 11 festival awards, including best documentary at the Frameline International Film Festival. The film had a national theatrical release by Roadside Attractions, played in over 70 cities, 110 festivals, and 21 countries. Tying was aired nationally on television, and is now widely available on DVD. Previously, Matt was the Director of Education at Film/Video Arts, part of ten years' experience in non-profit media arts education. He's also been a field producer and an associate producer on reality and lifestyle series for the Fox network and Fine Living network. Additionally, he has produced and edited a number of short docu-videos, including pieces on deaf education.

**Kim Connell**

Kim Connell is the Founder and President of Rainlake Productions. Over the past 15 years she has directed, produced and edited award-winning television programs, feature documentaries as well as educational, corporate and non-profit videos. She recently completed Follow My Voice With the Music of Hedwig a documentary that premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and that aired on the Sundance Channel in June 2006. She is also the Executive Producer and Supervising Editor on the Rainlake film Crossing Arizona, which was featured in the 2006 Sundance Film Festival in the Documentary competition and has won numerous awards this year. Most recently, Kim was a Senior Editor at Showtime and the Senior Editor on Religion and Pop Culture a one-hour special for VH1. She edited and co-produced TLC's "Black Las Vegas: In Through the Backdoor" (2004 Silver World Medal) and a Discovery Health premiere, "Medical Profile: Christopher Reeve." Kim was also Senior Editor on the award-winning documentary feature film "The Making and Meaning of We Are Family," a film promoting tolerance and cultural understanding in the wake of the September 11th attacks. "We Are Family" was honored at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and aired on Trio.

**Aaron Soffin**

Aaron has been working as a long form documentary editor since graduating Yale in 2004. He cut two films about the war in Iraq, The Blood of My Brother and When Adnan Comes Home. These films played around the world including festivals in Iran, Dubai, Pakistan, and The Netherlands. When Adnan Comes Home recently won Best Documentary at the 2007 Vail Film Festival. The Blood of My Brother played theatrically in US theaters in 2006 and is now widely available on DVD.

## DIRECTOR ' S BIOGRAPHY

Andrew Jacobs, the director of Four Seasons Lodge, is a staff reporter at the New York Times. In his ten years at the paper, Jacobs has covered a wide range of beats and topics, including the New York City Police Department, Manhattan Criminal Courts, the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and, based in the Times' Atlanta bureau, the American South, where he covered news, politics and cultural trends in eight states. Jacobs also originated a beat for the Metro section, "New York at night," in which he wrote about the culture and the characters who populate the city after dark.

In 2002, he wrote an award-winning investigative series on a real-estate scam in the Poconos that destroyed the finances of hundreds of working-class New Yorkers who were lured to Pennsylvania by promises of affordable housing that turned out to be over-valued and poorly built. In 2001, Jacobs was part of a team of reporters who won a Pulitzer Prize for the Times' 9/11 coverage.

Before he was hired as a full-time staffer, Jacobs spent three years working as a contract writer for the paper's City section, where he was hired to write two dozen cover stories about the eccentricities of New York life and the unique characters that make the city so compelling; its rogue cops, privileged prep school kids, homeless can collectors, Pakistani cab drivers and East Village squatters.

Jacobs' journalism career began in 1989, when he was living in China during that country's pro-democracy movement. Then an English teacher at Hubei University, he began writing about the student protests and the government crackdown, contributing articles to Newsday, the Village Voice and the Associated Press. After returning to the United States, Jacobs continued writing for a collection of New York City publications and later served as the editor of Manhattan Spirit and its sister publication, Our Town. In 1991, he helped found a short-lived gay newsweekly magazine, QW, and was its news editor until the publication folded a year later.

Through the years, he has also held a number of other jobs unrelated to journalism: as a press secretary to City Councilman Tom Duane, as an architectural historian who led walking tours for the Municipal Art Society, as an English teacher and an architectural historian for the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Although Four Seasons Lodge is his directorial debut, Jacobs has been a lifelong videographer, a compulsion that began as a high school student in the early 1980s when his parents purchased one of Sony's earliest home video camera clunkers. Andrew was born in Newark, New Jersey, and attended New York University, where he studied architecture and urban design.

Jacobs' love affair with the Catskills began with family vacations at the Concord Hotel; and more recently has included the purchase of an abandoned dairy farm in Ulster County that he is currently renovating.

## FOUR SEASONS LODGE –SELECTED PRESS

CRITIC'S PICK! "Like a funny visit with your grandparents, multiplied by a dozen." - [New York Magazine](#)

"Surprising affirmative and joyous...remarkable... unexpectedly warm and affirmative film."  
-Kenneth Turan, [The LA Times](#)

"Gorgeously photographed... What is heroic [about] these rowdy, cantankerous survivors is their unquenchable appetite for the pleasures of the everyday...the awesome spectacle of life triumphing over annihilation."  
-Ella Taylor, [The New York Times](#)

"Life affirming and touching... pitch-perfect film provides an affectionate look at a brave, disappearing subculture-  
Lou Lumenick, [NY Post](#)

4/4 Stars! "spectacular cinéma vérité documentary... the feel of such classic Maysles brothers' works as SALESMAN and GREY GARDENS... an extraordinary accomplishment, a subtle yet unforgettable experience that is one of the best films of the decade." -[This Week in New York](#)

"Surprisingly upbeat docu debut... ultimately rewarding." -Ronny Schieb, [Variety](#)

"A full-bore cinematic feast." - Michael Atkinson, [Boston Phoenix](#)

"Film poetry akin to Michael Apter's ongoing Up series... an image-rich mosaic of group psychology that surprisingly illuminates the ineffable." -Joseph Jon Lanthier, [Slant Magazine](#)

"Captures the simultaneously timeless and fleeting quality of a memorable summer, juxtaposing a well-paced narrative and a compelling, unscripted storyline with tender, intimate moments in the subjects' lives."  
-Sol Israel, [The Boston Globe](#)

"Warm and gushy ...you'll likely leave the film with a smile on your face and a tear or two of happiness in your eyes." -Ed Symkus, [The Patriot Ledger](#)

"The funniest Holocaust-themed doc yet made... warmly entertaining, beautiful."--[Time Out New York](#)

"Surprising...lets moments of peace, sadness, and consternation play out gracefully."  
-Michelle Orange, [The Village Voice](#)

"Neil Simon should only write such dialogue!...these survivors are feisty, lively and spoiling for a fight."  
-George Robinson, [The Jewish Week](#)

"Jacobs has done the unlikely: He's put together and filmed a lovable ensemble of charismatic, lox-loving, life-loving Holocaust survivors." -[Heeb Magazine](#)

A lively and affectionate...as much a historical document as entertainment."  
-Matt Connolly, [The Times Herald-Record](#)

"Moving and uplifting." -Martha Mendelsohn, [The Jewish Week](#)

"One of the most moving documentaries I have seen this year and give it my strongest recommendation."-Louis Project, [The Unrepentant Marxist](#)

"A fascinating portrayal of human survival and community." -[Tribeca Film Blog](#)

"At once humorous, melancholy, uplifting and poignant." -[Times Herald-Record](#)

"Lands in a class of its own." - [IndieWIRE](#)



“Uplifting.” –*Jewish Journal*

“There's more laughter than sorrow in Andrew Jacobs's inspiring documentary about people who would rather look forward than backward.” –Rick Warner, [Bloomberg.com](https://www.bloomberg.com)

“Tickling funny bones: this community of elderly Catskill visitors never drown in misery, but instead live out their days with fervor.” –Matthew Nestel, [Boxoffice Magazine](https://www.boxoffice.com)

“Packs more wisdom than the best therapy session.” - Christian Toto, *Washington Times*

“Must-see.” – *Newsday*

“Charming, bittersweet.” –*This Week in New York*

“A bittersweet, life-affirming documentary.” - *Jewish News Weekly*

“A heartwarming, poignant, and surprisingly funny film.” - *East Hampton Press*

“Make a point of seeing this film, it is a remarkable one!” - *The Independent* (East Hampton)

“Exquisite!” - [Documentary.org](https://www.documentary.org), [International Documentary Association](https://www.internationaldocumentaryassociation.org)

“The power of friendship and the drive to find joy despite painful memories is explored in the emotional film.” - *Westchester Journal News*

*FOUR STARS!* –Kam Williams, *Newsblaze*

“A quietly revealing tribute.” –Nora Lee Mandel, [Film Forward](https://www.filmforward.com)

# The New York Times

MOVIE REVIEW

## Four Seasons Lodge (2008)



Hymie and Tosha Abramowitz in “Four Seasons Lodge,” directed by Andrew Jacobs.

## In the Catskills, Holocaust Survivors Forge a Bond

By ELLA TAYLOR

Published: November 11, 2009

The exuberant Jewish retirees gathering for their 26th summer at a modest Catskills bungalow colony in [Andrew Jacobs’s](#) documentary “[Four Seasons Lodge](#)” appear like any group of older Americans on vacation. They socialize, eat, argue, sing and dance, chortle at the risqué gags of cabaret entertainers, try their best to maintain the colony’s aging physical plant, care for ailing spouses and — like most people in their ’80s and ’90s — look death in the face on a daily basis.

The difference is that, at an age when most Americans were sowing oats or planning futures, just about everyone in “Four Seasons Lodge” had left the wreckage of Nazi-occupied Poland and arrived in the United States an orphan without kin.

In contrast with most survivor documentaries, this film has little formal testimony. These men and women, some of whom have regrouped into new couples after the death of their partners, vacation

together not to mull over the past but because their suffering is a base line they hold in common and see little reason to announce — at least until a filmmaker comes to call. When Mr. Jacobs prods them for memories or theories about why they survived when others succumbed, some cooperate eagerly, while others balk or change the subject.

“Four Seasons Lodge” grew out of a series of articles by Mr. Jacobs, a reporter for The New York Times and a novice director who was imaginative enough to enlist the help of the eminent vérité cinematographer [Albert Maysles](#) (“[Grey Gardens](#)”). The lyrically complicating hand of Mr. Maysles, who shot the film with several collaborators, is everywhere apparent in the way the camera picks a path around coherence, refusing narrative in favor of the thick detail of life unfolding: a small sea of umbrellas drips on a patio; several old women hobble from the clubhouse with plastic bags protecting their heads from an unexpected rain shower.

All the more shocking then is the almost casual revelation by the colony’s vice president that he was operated on by Josef Mengele, or the recollection by another resident of the exact time of day the Germans entered Lodz and hanged a Jew in public as a warning to the rest.

If Mr. Jacobs holds out modest hope for the temporary survival of this rapidly dwindling community, he nimbly avoids an inspirational ending, a pipe dream for those who have seen the worst that man can do. Call these sometimes rowdy, cantankerous survivors heroes if you like (some are more serene than others about death intruding for a second time); they certainly don’t. Several believe they survived through God’s help or because they were poor and knew better than the rich how to endure; others are convinced that dumb luck saved them. What is heroic is their unquenchable appetite for the banal pleasures of the everyday.

As the gorgeously photographed seasons pass over this tranquil place, they signal the endless cycle of decay and renewal, indifferent to human aspiration. What can Holocaust survival possibly mean but the awesome spectacle of life triumphing over annihilation by stubbornly reasserting itself, over and over again?

# Los Angeles Times

December 11, 2009

## MOVIE REVIEW

### 'Four Seasons Lodge'

A documentary about Holocaust survivors who gather at a summer retreat in the Catskill Mountains every year is surprising affirmative and joyous.

By Kenneth Turan, Film Critic

How does life go on, where does it go, when a person has had to confront the worst existence has to offer? Inspirational in unexpected ways, "Four Seasons Lodge" provides answers to those eternal questions, bringing a vibrant perspective to the familiar lines about the resilience of the human spirit.

Four Seasons Lodge is the name of a bungalow colony in New York's Catskill Mountains, a summer retreat for Holocaust survivors, people now in their 80s who were liberated from concentration camps as teenagers. "We survivors, we stick together like glue," one woman says. "We want to be together; we need it." Adds another, "We created a family from our friends."

This was a necessary act, because many of these individuals found at the end of World War II that they alone of their families had made it out alive. One man estimates he lost 300 relatives: "I was the only one left." A woman remembers, "We are free, but where do we go, what do we do?"

One thing they often did was marry each other ("Hitler was the matchmaker" is the sardonic way the phenomenon is described). In 1980, some two dozen families purchased the Four Seasons Lodge, but now, with the men who kept the place running dealing with personal problems and failing health, the group is facing "our last season in paradise," acknowledging that the summer of 2006 might be the final one.

Documentarian Andrew Jacobs, the director of "Four Seasons Lodge," is a journalist for the New York Times, not a filmmaker, but when he came across the lodge as part of a series he wrote, he clearly understood that these people, their experiences and their world needed to be documented before they disappeared.

Though this may sound like a sad story, it is, in fact, a joyous one. These people came out of their experience with an intense desire to enjoy life as much as possible. Not in a heedless, thoughtless way, but with a deep sense of how precious, how fragile, each moment was. As 91-year-old Aron, seen dancing in the film's opening sequences, puts it, "You try and do the best you can for as long as you can."

When these people say, "You live until you die," you know they mean every word.

Part of the pleasure of "Four Seasons Lodge" is meeting these indelible individuals, people who say irascible things like, "It was the poor kids who made it in the camps; German Jews didn't survive one hour." We meet a couple who got together when their spouses died, a man who worked on Hitler's cars, another who survived Mengele's sadistic experiments, and people who still can't talk about what they experienced, what they saw.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing this unexpectedly warm and affirmative film shows us about the survivors is that, far from blocking out their past, they've managed to enjoy these unexpected years despite continually living with their personal horrors.

"This is always behind your head, bad memories; no psychiatrist in the world can heal you from that," one man says. Still, as they all insist, "tomorrow is another day," and for people who never expected to experience so many tomorrows, that is a blessing indeed.

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Home » Articles » Film » Films Features » *A Couple of Many Seasons*

Wednesday, November 11, 2009

## A Couple of Many Seasons

In 'Four Seasons Lodge,' Andrew Jacobs details the lives of a group of Holocaust survivors who face their final summer together

By [Susan Reiter](#)



When Andrew Jacobs spent several late-summer days at Four Seasons Lodge, a close-knit Catskills bungalow colony, in 2005, he was there to write a feature article for the *New York Times*. But his experiences amid the longstanding community of aging but spirited Holocaust survivors affected him well beyond completing the article. Rapidly and efficiently, the *Times* staffer morphed into a documentary filmmaker. He felt compelled to capture the unique atmosphere and vivid personalities of the place particularly when he learned that the colony had been sold to a developer, and that the summer of 2006 was scheduled to be its last.

His film, [Four Seasons Lodge](#), is a portrait of the daily and weekly rhythms of the place, and of these 80-somethings most of them Polish Jews who not only survived unimaginable horrors in their youth, but went on to live long, rich lives. Shadowed by their ineradicable personal Holocaust histories, they nonetheless confront life with gusto, and through their shared experiences, form a close-knot community at this colony.

"I think that was the thing that drew me to them was this incredible dichotomy this contrast between giddy, joyous, fun-loving atmosphere part of the time, and then at other times you couldn't escape how grim and heavy and dark they are," Jacobs said, during a recent phone interview. Now a Beijing correspondent for the *Times*, he had just flown in for the film's opening this week at the IFC Center—its first theatrical run following numerous presentations at film festivals. Some of the residents, many of whose arms bear the ever-present reminder of ID numbers from Auschwitz and other camps, are forthcoming with narratives of what happened to them and their families under Hitler. For others, the memories are too painful to discuss.

Jacobs' four cinematographers were led by the venerable Albert Maysles, who came on board eagerly. They shot a total of 250 hours, following the colony's rhythms from the rainy early-June arrival day as old bonds are renewed, to the bittersweet farewells as autumn arrives. Saturday-evening celebrations, with everyone dressed to the nines, alternate with quiet, introspective conversations

around the unpretentious but pleasant surroundings. Jacobs shuttled back and forth, using his vacation time and weekends while continuing with his "day job" at the Times.

Among the film featured personalities are Carl Potok, the colony's indomitable president, and Hymie Abramowitz, his ornery assistant and the place's Mr. Fix-it. Despite their advanced years, they are determined to perform all necessary chores and repairs themselves. The dynamics of their longstanding marriages are quietly revealed during scenes at their homes, as are other poignant relationships. There are Tobias, who recalls being the sole Jew on his soccer team, and Lola, who have gotten together after each lost a spouse and who had originally met amid the horrors of the death camps. Especially vivid impressions are made by Olga and Genya, both of whom lost their husbands and whose close friendship and mutual support is touchingly clear. Inevitably, certain relationships are altered by illness.

"When Hymie told me they were going to sell, and the next summer would be the last, I sprang into action. I just threw it together," Jacobs explained. A journalist to the core, he noted that "I only really function with a deadline anyway so having that kind of deadline looming over me motivated me to make it happen. I got people together who could shoot, and help me raise the money and we just dove in.

"I thought I would see more serious types of personality dysfunction, with people that scarred and traumatized, but I was amazed how together they are. They're the fittest of the survivors -- living to be 80, after enduring what they went through during the Holocaust. They're so strong, physically and psychologically; here they are in their eighties, still dancing around." Some of them will be on hand for the film's Wednesday opening

It was "the looming end of the era" that inspired a sense of urgency in Jacobs. Beyond the threatened end to this decades-old summer colony, there was the reality of these aging witnesses to history. "Holocaust survivors have always been a presence, in my life, a reminder of this horrible period in history. In ten years, they pretty much won't exist. There's a certain disconnect when you no longer have the people who actually experienced it."

**>Four Seasons Lodge**

Directed by Andrew Jacobs

[at IFC Center, Nov. 11-17](#)

Film

## Holocaust Survivors Face Eviction in *Four Seasons Lodge*

By [Michelle Orange](#)

Tuesday, November 10th 2009 at 3:41pm



### Details:

#### **Four Seasons Lodge**

Directed by Andrew Jacobs

First Run Features

Opens November 11, IFC Center

*Four Seasons Lodge* has an elevator pitch—"A Catskills colony of Holocaust survivors is threatened with eviction after 25 summers together!"—that drew [Albert Maysles](#) on board as a cinematographer, and his instincts didn't steer him wrong. What's surprising about a documentary with such an obvious hook is its unforced but trenchant look at the crisis of faith dividing a small group of mostly Polish Jews who suffered through one of the most godless blights on human history. Out of a hundred or so tenants, director [Andrew Jacobs](#) focuses on a half-dozen, several of whom have known each other since the war; having lost almost every relative they had, they sought out not only a new life but a new family in America. Jacobs, a *New York Times* reporter who discovered the colony while reporting on Catskills living in 2005, lets moments of peace, sadness, and consternation play out gracefully among the elderly residents, who cajole and crab at each other like siblings. Survivors with increasingly numbered days (several have died since the filming), the most biting observations come from those, like groundskeeper [Hymie Abramowitz](#), who still revel in Jewish culture but left God where God left them: at the gates of [Auschwitz](#).



Posted: Mon., Nov. 9, 2009, 10:27pm PT

## Four Seasons Lodge

(English, Yiddish, Polish dialogue) A First Run Features release of a Four Seasons Project production in association with Rainlake Prods. Produced by Matt Lavine, Andrew Jacobs. Executive producer, Kelly Sheehan. Co-producers, Roger Bennett, Rhoda Herrick, Elyssa Hess.

**With:** Hymie Abramowitz, Tosha Abramowitz, Aron Adelman, Basie Adelman, Olga Bowman, Eugenia Boyman, Tobias Buchman, Carl Potok, Cesia Popk, Lola Wenglin.

By [RONNIE SCHEIB](#)

**A bungalow colony where a group of Holocaust survivors congregate every summer, as they have for more than a quarter-century, provides the subject of "Four Seasons Lodge," New York Times journalist Andrew Jacobs' surprisingly upbeat docu debut. With the legendary Albert Maysles heading the camera crew, the pic serenely unfolds at the slow and steady pace of its indomitable subjects, ultimately rewarding viewers' patience as individual personalities and stories emerge amid the threatened sale of the Catskills colony. Pic begins a limited run Wednesday, but its strong appeal to Jewish and/or elderly auds could widen its exposure when televised.**

These survivors go into few detail about the camps, though glimpses of tattooed forearms and offhand comments (about Josef Mengele's experiments or the scarcity of younger survivors because small children were automatically sent to the gas chambers) resonate powerfully. They do speak often of the experience of being "liberated" as youngsters, with their entire families missing or dead and with nowhere to go. In this context, the importance of their seasonal community looms large, the friendships forged there sometimes stronger than their hasty marriages. Their communal past vibrates more intensely than moments shared with children and grandchildren.

But the Holocaust supplies the subtext rather than the text of the docu, which concerns the fragile present, as octogenarians dance to "Cabaret" showtunes or applaud blue jokes by entertainers almost as old as they are. Lodgers can no longer dance until the wee hours or consume countless quarts of booze; infirmity and illness hover, the cries of a woman with Alzheimer's echoing more distant torments. But, having endured so much, most of them accept the inevitable with grace, determined to wring every possible drop of enjoyment out of their annual get-together.



Another end haunts the film: the impending dissolution of the jointly owned colony. Despite their constant kvetching, even the two founders in charge of maintenance -- though tired of the constant demands on their aging bodies (dramatized via a jaunty montage of petulant complaints) -- realize their dependence on the regular summer pilgrimage.

Maysles' camera lingers on the seasonal changes as snow blankets the locked-up colony, itself a remnant of the once-flourishing Borscht Belt whose heyday was so strikingly evoked in Tony Goldwyn's underrated "Walk on the Moon." There's even a traveling merchant who, though hardly resembling Viggo Mortensen, nevertheless charms the ladies with his rousing rendition of "Kinder-Yorn."

Directed by Andrew Jacobs. Written by Kim Connell, Jacobs. Camera (color, HD), Albert Maysles, Andrew Federman, Avi Kastoriano, Justin Schein; editors, Connell, Aaron Soffin; music, Eric Lewis; sound, Todd Dayton. Reviewed on DVD, New York, Nov. 6, 2009. (In 2008 SilverDocs, Hamptons, Mill Valley film festivals.) Running time: 99 MIN.

# ***NEW YORK POST***

## **Survivors' summers**

FOUR SEASONS LODGE 3 STARS

*Last Updated:* 9:58 AM, November 11, 2009

*Posted:* 3:34 AM, November 11, 2009

### FILM REVIEWS

LIVING well may be the best revenge, but for the Holocaust survivors of the life-affirming and touching documentary "Four Seasons Lodge," living well and long is superb revenge against Adolph Hitler

Every year for more than a quarter of a century, these well-to-do survivors of the concentration camps have spent their summers partying and remembering among themselves at a meticulously maintained bungalow colony in the lush Catskills.

This may be the last summer for the aging lodgers, who are in their 80s and 90s and are debating whether to try to reverse a deal to sell their retreat on the advice of their weary president, who is struggling with a very ill wife.

"Four Seasons Lodge" grew out of a six-part series that director Andrew Jacobs reported for the New York Times. His pitch-perfect film provides an affectionate look at a brave, disappearing subculture.

*Running time: 97 minutes. Not rated (nothing offensive). At the IFC Center, Sixth Avenue and Third Street. -- Lou Lumenick*



Film review

## Four Seasons Lodge

Dir. Andrew Jacobs. 2008. N/R. 97mins. Documentary.



**OLD JOY** Elderly vacationers find heaven on the dance floor.

It may be glib to call this the funniest Holocaust-themed doc yet made, but it's the truth. *New York Times* writer Andrew Jacobs makes his warmly entertaining directorial debut, inspired by a series of articles he filed on summers in the Catskills. For the past quarter century, a group of Holocaust survivors has headed upstate annually for rowdy poker games, kvetching and telling corny jokes. But the richest punch line is also the most melancholic: Celebrating the fact that they're still alive is their ultimate revenge on Hitler. Now the posse faces another tyrant—Death—as they reach their autumn years; the underlying drama here is that this might be the last time this community will exist.

Since the film is built mostly on caught moments, Jacobs couldn't have asked for a stronger point guard: *Vérité* pioneer Albert Maysles (*Gimme Shelter*, *Grey Gardens*) serves as his lead cinematographer. Some of the observations are priceless, like the man quietly boasting that Dr. Mengele liked him, and the film doesn't shy away from kick-in-the-gut moments like watching two men react to a sick woman screaming in the distance. But what's most beautiful of all is that this document ensures that these people will indeed live on forever. Take that, Nazis!—*Aaron Hillis*

# NEW YORK

## Documentarian Andrew Jacobs on Partying With Holocaust Survivors at the 'Four Seasons Lodge'

Read more: [Documentarian Andrew Jacobs on Partying With Holocaust Survivors at the 'Four Seasons Lodge' -- Vulture](http://nymag.com/daily/entertainment/2008/10/documentarian_andrew_jacobs_on.html#xzz0dAJYHxLH)  
[http://nymag.com/daily/entertainment/2008/10/documentarian\\_andrew\\_jacobs\\_on.html#xzz0dAJYHxLH](http://nymag.com/daily/entertainment/2008/10/documentarian_andrew_jacobs_on.html#xzz0dAJYHxLH)



*Photo: Courtesy of Andrew Jacobs*

Opening at the Hamptons International Film Festival this morning is *Four Seasons Lodge*, the debut documentary by longtime *New York Times* reporter Andrew Jacobs. It quietly chronicles what may be the last summer at a humble Catskills vacation colony a group of elderly Holocaust survivors have been visiting for decades. If that sounds like a bummer, think again — it's more like a funny visit with your grandparents, multiplied by a dozen. Not that the dark stuff isn't there. But it can't match the appetite for living these old friends and lovers have acquired the hard way. And it's shot with a detached, pastoral beauty by a team led by the legendary Albert Maysles. *Vulture* spoke with Jacobs — who's currently looking for a distributor for the doc — before he leaves in November to cover China for the *Times* for a few years.

### **How did you shoot this film around your day job?**

In the summer of 2006, when we shot, I took all my vacation days and scattered them around to make long weeks. And my camera guys were there all the time.

### **How did you hear about the Four Seasons Lounge?**

The summer of 2005 I was doing this *Times* series on Catskills summer life. I have a place in Napanoch about fifteen minutes from this place. Toward the end of the series, someone said, "You should go down the road and meet these Holocaust survivors at this colony." I thought, That's bizarre. There on the lawn were these people. I was kind of expecting a very sad, kind of broken group of people, but they were so ebullient and really funny and they really liked to party, dancing until midnight or later. The piece ran very short after Labor Day. So when I found out that the

next summer would be their last [because the colony would be sold], I decided to do something more, and that film was the only way to capture them.

**Was it tough to convince them to do it?**

It didn't take much — I just asked. They were thrilled that someone wanted to be around them and hear their stories.

**Do you think it helped that you're a nice Jewish boy?**

They probably knew I was, but I don't think they cared. Our sound guy wasn't Jewish. My family's from where they're from in Eastern Europe, but there are no Holocaust survivors in my immediate family.

**Right from the start, they're all so goddamned cute. Did you worry about the tone being too cute?**

They're not always so cute. They can get cranky, be very demanding. You see snippets of that. But these people did not survive for nothing. They know how to get what they need. I was trying to be careful about balancing the darkness with the levity. There was a lot of very dark stuff that could've been in the film. Who needs another depressing Holocaust movie?

**There is some dark memory-dredging as the film goes along, but not as much as I thought there might be. Was that a choice?**

It was. Actually, there was more Holocaust stuff that I took out — people were like, "Oh, this is depressing." I was trying to show them as vibrant living people in the here and now. I didn't want to make a movie where you feel sick toward the end when the lights come on. In the end, these people had lost their families and created this new family. They had this hunger for the little, simple things in life — that's what drew me to them.

**Maybe the most moving relationship is between Olga and Genia, who have been virtually married themselves for as long as they were married to men, both long dead. Was that a gay relationship in the middle of this colony?**

Who knows? It doesn't matter. They were clearly a very loving, attached relationship.

**One of them allows that she had a very unhappy marriage.**

They say of so many bad marriages, "Hitler was the matchmaker." That line gives me chills. A lot of couples were mismatched. You're 19, you've lost everyone, and you cling to the first person you find.

**So how did you get Albert Maysles involved?**

I called him and asked for a fifteen-minute pitch meeting, and he was like, "Sure." He was also their contemporary and Jewish, so he kind of related to them. I definitely wanted to do a kind of vérité, fly-on-the-wall thing, inspired by him, and he agreed that that was the way to go.

**One parallel your doc has to one of the Maysles's most famous docs, Grey Gardens, is that nature plays the role of an unjudging, silent observer, marking time.**

That to me is so obvious, I don't want to sound like I'm brilliant. The place is called Four Seasons Lodge, it's gorgeous, they're going through the final seasons. I didn't want to overplay it.

**The movie also made me think about America as this paradise-like cradle and refuge, which is interesting in light of the whole current immigration debate.**

Definitely. All these people were madly in love with America. Many spent a big chunk of their lives in refugee camps after the Holocaust. They could've gone anywhere, they could've gone to Israel, but they wanted to come to America, and the Catskills was this affordable place they could go every summer, these mostly blue-collar people.

**At the end of the doc, which is full of great live kitschy Borscht Belt musicians, by the way, you memorialize some of the folks who died by the time the film was finished. Like Aron Adelson, whose wife maybe has the best line when she barks at him, "Aron, drink your Ensure." Have any more died since?**

By some miracle, no one who's singled out in the film has died in the last few months. A few of them I talk to once a week or so, and others I'll call once month or two.

**Are you like a grandson to them?**

I've been called that. My grandparents are gone, and they remind me of my grandparents.

Published on International Documentary Association (<http://www.documentary.org>)

## From Beatles to Brecht: A Week of Pleasure at SilverDocs

By Barry Hampe [excerpts]

Attending a film festival is always a guilty pleasure. There's something almost sinful about spending a week immersed in watching movies. But not at SilverDocs, the AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival in Silver Spring, Maryland, which celebrated its sixth year this past June. I mean, these are *documentaries*.

SilverDocs offers a lot in eight days. This year there were 108 films, ranging from several three-minute shorts to all 12 hours of the landmark cinéma vérité series *An American Family*. Running concurrently was the SilverDocs International Documentary Conference, a series of panel discussions featuring people who do documentary business at the highest level. Plus, SilverDocs offers hands-on sessions, master classes, filmmaker breakfasts, brown bag luncheons, and a daily industry happy hour where one can hang out with other documentarians.



*From Andrew Jacobs' Four Seasons Lodge. Courtesy of Silverdocs.*

*Four Seasons Lodge*, directed by Andrew Jacobs, is an exquisite observational documentary that spends the summer with a group of old friends at the summer vacation site in the Catskills. Now in their 80s and 90s, they are all Holocaust survivors, and each year fewer of them return. This film does exactly what we want it to: It lets us get to know these people as they are. And they are wonderful.

Source: <http://www.documentary.org/content/beatles-brecht-week-pleasure-silverdocs>

# The Washington Times

## Surviving in style



Movies in Toto

POSTED 12:14 PM BY [CHRISTIAN TOTO](#)

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New York Times features reporter Andrew Jacobs says every third story he writes he thinks, "this would make a great documentary."

When he wrote about a group of Holocaust survivors three years ago who gather each summer in the Catskill Mountains, he decided to make such a documentary himself.

"[Four Seasons Lodge](#)," which enjoys its world premiere at 6:15 p.m. tonight (June 17) at the [Silverdocs](#) film festival in Silver Spring, Md., explores the uncommon bonds between the mostly 80-something residents of a bucolic bungalow in New York. (The film will also be shown at 5:30 p.m. June 22)

Each lost most, if not all, of their family members in the Nazi concentration camps. But for more than 25 years they've gathered at the New York resort to dance and unwind, even if the atrocities from their past are never too far from their thoughts.

The first-time filmmaker found his subjects more than eager to share their stories.

"In this country, old people are ignored. For people to be interested in their lives and their history and their current selves meant a lot to them," Jacobs says. "They were remarkably trusting."

Jacobs expected to find plenty of bitterness in his subjects, a "simmering anger" over what they've endured, he says. What he found was markedly different.

"They are sad underneath the surface, but they really had made a decision to embrace the daily joys of life. They recognize it's so precious and so easily lost," he says.

"Four Seasons Lodge" has its share of horrifying stories, but Jacobs honored the survivors by focusing on their enthusiasm, not their tragic pasts.

"There's been so many Holocaust films," he says. "I wanted to take a fresh approach ... and [the Holocaust] is not what they're about."

(Photo: Seniors gather to share both good and bad memories in the new documentary "Four Seasons Lodge")

JUNE 4, 2008



A scene from Andrew Jacobs' "Four Seasons Lodge." Image courtesy of Rainlake Productions.

### "Four Seasons Lodge"

Based on a series of stories he wrote in **The New York Times** in 2005, reporter **Andrew Jacobs** replaces his pen and pad for a video camera to further explore this community of Holocaust survivors who for decades have traveled to the Catskills of New York to relax, rejoice and remember.

"I felt I didn't do it justice," says Jacobs as to why he's making the doc, noting he'd stumbled across the community at the tail end

of his series. "And I just felt it was an extraordinary community, not only because they are all Holocaust survivors but their parties were astounding. They dressed up in formal wear and made these lavish meals."

But Jacobs had never made a film before, though he admits to being an obsessive videographer since he was a kid. So his friend got him in touch with legendary documentarian **Albert Maysles**. "We just proposed that he come on board during a pitch session and he was immediately enthused," Jacobs says. Maysles came on as an executive producer and shares cinematography credit with **Andrew Federman**, **Avi Kastoriano** and **Justin Schein**.

Shot in the summer of 2006 on DV, the doc takes a verite look at the community, highlighting the joke telling, free living and candid discussions shared with one another. "It's a different type of Holocaust film," Jacobs explains. "It's not a sit down interview, tell your story about the train to Auschwitz. That's one thing we wanted to convey in that these people are self selected. There are a lot of survivors who don't talk about [the Holocaust] and they do and they are drawn to each other because of that, they are able to deal with their past by verbalizing it."

World premiering in competition at Silverdocs this month, Jacobs also is hoping to create an educational program from the film that can be used in schools to teach about the Holocaust, tolerance issues and aging. Edited by **Kim Connell** and **Aaron Soffin**, producers are Jacobs and **Matthew Lavine**. Along with Maysles, the film's executive producer is **Kelly Sheehan**.

[For more information, please visit [the film's website.](#)]



# VARIETY



FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2006

## Inside Moves

### Journo gets behind camera

By STEVEN ZEITCHIK

**N**ew York Times reporters usually *write* the stories that studios option; they don't direct them.

But Times metro reporter Andrew Jacobs is getting behind the camera for a screen adaptation of his "Four Seasons Lodge," his piece about upstate New York's once-bustling Catskills region.

Project, still unfunded, would seem small except for one thing — it's attracted the attention of cult documentarian Albert Maysles. Jacobs announced on Thursday that Maysles will become pic's director of photography when it lenses this summer.

Story and movie are about a resort in the Catskills nicknamed the Four Seasons Lodge, where Holocaust survivors spend summers in typical Catskills fashion — playing cards, dancing and, in their case, occasionally sharing stories of the war. But the resort will be sold after this summer as the members reach old age, and Jacobs says he wants to "capture a piece of living history before it goes away."

Maysles is undergoing something of a resurgence — his best-known work, "Grey Gardens," has become an Off Broadway hit. He makes an appearance at the Tribeca Film Festival today with the artist Jean-Claude Christo for the opening of Maysles' new movie, "The Gates." He also shot another doc unspooling at the fest, "When the Road Bends ... Tales of a Gypsy Caravan," Jasmine Dellal's film following Romani bands through Europe and Asia.



Maysles

# Documentary captures humanity of survivors

By Germain Lussier  
Times Herald-Record  
glussier@th-record.com

A small, elderly woman named Ella Bernstein, wearing a blue dress with silver sequins, tiptoes up to the glass doors of the casino at the Four Seasons Lodge in Ellenville. It's raining, pouring.

A younger man holds Bernstein's left arm in one hand and an flimsy umbrella in the other.

This man is New York Times reporter Andrew Jacobs, and he's directing a movie. But not at this moment.

As they reach the door, two other men — who have been filming the unlikely couple — break one of the cardinal rules of documentary filmmaking.

They stop filming and hold open the door. They care.

A FILM CREW'S primary job when shooting a documentary is to capture the sights and sounds of their subjects, no matter what the situation. But at this moment, shooting the film is secondary to the comfort of the subjects in it.

And when you're shooting a movie about the final summer of a Catskill bungalow colony that's inhabited entirely by the Holocaust survivors, that type of humanity is necessary and appreciated.

"People often joke around with Andrew that he's going to come back next year and rent a bungalow," sound designer Todd Dayton says of his director. "He's part of the community already."

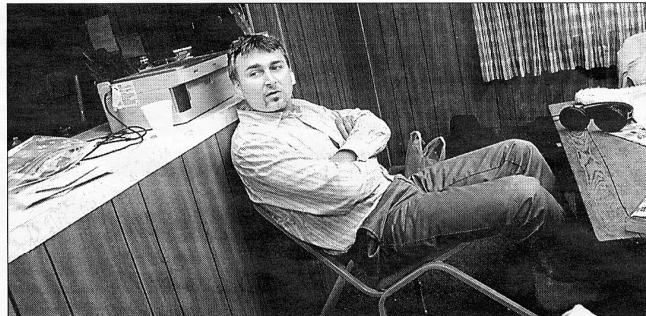
About a year ago, Jacobs wrote a New York Times story headlined "Where 80 is Young, All Friends Are Old Friends." The piece was about the Four Seasons Lodge and its Holocaust survivor residents.

But Jacobs wasn't pleased. "I felt the story didn't do justice to the characters," he said.

He wanted to follow it up, but even with a book, Jacobs surmised, the reader wouldn't get a sense of who these people were. "So I thought maybe a movie, but I'd never done it before," he said.

Through friends, the 41-year-old Jacobs, who splits his time between Manhattan and Napanoch, met cameramen Andrew Federman and Justin Schein. Then he met sound designers, producers and production coordinators. They even got legendary documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles ("Gimme Shelter," "Grey Gardens") to shoot for six days.

Camera-man Justin Schein films a scene Sept. 2 at the Four Seasons Lodge. The crew began production of the documentary in March.



Director Andrew Jacobs takes a break Sept. 2 while filming his documentary about the Holocaust survivors who stay at the Four Seasons Lodge bungalow colony in Ellenville.

"Documentary filmmaking is about building relationships with subjects, and he's the master," Schein said. Schein also mentioned how, with Maysles, who will be 80 in October, "he really related to these people in a unique way."

"On the one hand, I'm of their age, so I'm exactly their generation," Maysles said. "But because of the Holocaust experience, I think of them as another generation."

MAYSLES BECAME INTERESTED in the project because it offered a special perspective on the Holocaust.

"In spite of all the terrible stuff these people went through, they were able to pull themselves together and make something positive of their life," Maysles said. "Somehow, Hitler wasn't able to deprive them of their humanity. I think that's such a positive, beautiful message that recognizes the Holocaust, but at the same time recognizes something beyond it."

Funded independently through foundations and private individuals, Jacobs and crew began production in March, traveling to Florida to begin interviewing subjects before they traveled to the Catskills for the summer. They then made it to Four Seasons in late June to capture arrivals and have been there, in one capacity or another, for the entire summer.

When the survivors make their meals, when they play cards, when they exchange dirty jokes in their cabins and especially during their weekly Saturday night parties,

which are legendary in the Catskills, the crew has been with them. Watching. Filming.

"This has been the Taj Mahal of bungalow colonies for the last 25 years," Jacobs said while sitting in the casino area. That's because every Saturday night, they have some kind of special entertainment (be it band, singer or comedian) and in the past, people would line up to get inside.

Now, as people die and colonies are sold, the Saturday night party is not nearly as big as it once was. Still, the energy in the room before their last party of the season is palpable.

Before the party can begin, though, the crew changes out of jeans and into khakis, shirts and ties for the guys and dresses for the girls. It's gestures of respect like this that prove both the survivors at the colony and the filmmakers have become very comfortable with one another.

"In documentary filmmaking, it's as valuable to be interacting and building relationships without the camera as with the camera," Schein said. "There's always gonna be great moments, but it's building that trust that's the most important thing."

Trust and telling the world the amazing story of these Holocaust survivors.

"It's all there," Maysles said. "I feel confident that they're gonna have a very good film."

To help fund this independent project, click "Make it Possible" at [fourseasonsmovie.com](http://fourseasonsmovie.com).



Times Herald-Record photos/TARA ENGBERG

## Other voices

From the Four Seasons event

"Having this friendship with each other has enabled them to do this and really celebrate life because they love all their families. Because they can share the tragedy, they can also share the fun and the humor."

— Producer Matt Lavine

"These people are literally a dying breed. There are very few people like them left. There are a lot of Jews in the Catskills, but not a lot of Jews like them."

— Cameraman Andrew Federman

"They came here with nothing as refugees, and this is their reward. This place is their reward and their vengeance, in a way, on Hitler because they are still here. After all that, they are still here in their 80s and 90s kicking up their heels."

— Director Andrew Jacobs

"This particular story, in a way, has a happy ending in that, in spite of all the terrible stuff these people went through, they were able to pull themselves together and make something positive of their life and develop a whole community of good relations. Somehow, Hitler wasn't able to deprive them of their humanity."

— Director of photography Albert Maysles

"I've travelled just about everywhere. Been just about every place, but that location so benefits from its proximity to nature that it's just overwhelming. You feel suddenly, just totally at ease and totally enveloped by being in harmony with nature. I'm sure that helps them. Their return to their humanity is also their return to nature."

— Director of photography Albert Maysles

"You get a lot of people who want to know, 'Are you married?' 'Who's your wife?' 'How are your kids?' 'Where do you live?'" says sound designer Todd Dayton.

"They know everything," interjects director Andrew Jacobs. "So in some way you feel like they've adopted us as grandkids or great-grandkids a little bit," Dayton finishes.

FAREWELL AT THE FOUR SEASONS

# The Metro Section

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES **METRO** THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2005

INK

## Where 80 Is Young, All Friends Are Old Friends

By ANDREW JACOBS

ULSTER HEIGHTS, N.Y.

IT is, in a sense, not entirely surprising that the few remaining Catskill bungalow colonies have held out against the influx of Orthodox Jews who would be made up of Holocaust survivors. As colony after colony has yielded to the Hasidic men who pay hard cash, places like Silver Gate, Pleasant Valley and Four Seasons Lodge have held on — their residents, well into their 80's and 90's, determined to enjoy summers alongside others who have lived through the unimaginable.

"We get offers all the time," said Henry Himmelfarb, an Auschwitz survivor and president of Silver Gate, an immaculately maintained 52-unit bungalow colony in South Fallsburg. "Two million dollars. Can you believe it?"

Paradise, Sunshine and Cutler's Cottages, colonies dominated by men and women with tattooed forearms,



have sold out in recent years, their ranks too diminished, too exhausted to hold on. Hyman Abramowitz, the volunteer manager of Four Season Lodge, says it may be next. Surrounded by piles of unpaid bills, he explained the difficulty of finding a decent plumber, the stress of organizing the Saturday night extravaganza, the cold fact that 43 of his friends are no longer around.

"Listen, the youngest guy here is 80," he said. "An ambulance came



Photographs by Michael Nagle for The New York Times

The residents of the Four Seasons bungalow colony in the Catskills are comfortable and affectionate with one another, having shared the horrors of World War II prison camps and now enjoying a communal old age.

here six times this summer. We have a brand-new heated pool, but no one goes in." He sighed and looked away. "Like I said, the youngest guy is 80."

The possibility that their beloved community might be coming to an end is not reflected in the merry din that fills Four Season's social hall, where everyone gathers each night for coffee, Bundt cake and raucous card games, the banter a jumble of Yiddish, Polish and English.

Taking a break from mah-jongg, Linda Mandelbaum, 79, explained the deeply felt camaraderie, how so many survivors ended up marrying one another, and why outsiders do

not always feel comfortable in their midst. "Because we all lost our families, we have become each other's families," said Mrs. Mandelbaum, who survived a series of concentration camps. Almost everyone is a New Yorker or Floridian born in Poland. "We understand each other," Mrs. Mandelbaum said, "and we always talk about what happened to us." American-born Jews are not always eager to hear the horrifying details of loss, she said, and besides, she added with a sad smile, "none of them lifted a finger to help us when we were in hell."

On Saturday nights, there is a

sumptuous meal in the casino, followed by dancing, and a live show that sometimes runs until midnight. The men arrive in suits, the women in dressy outfits, the infirm ferried over by golf cart. The place has the comforting aroma of coffee, whitefish and perfume.

When the show is over, people are so reluctant to leave that Mr. Abramowitz is often forced to shut off the lights. "Go home already," he shouts, and the women stick out their tongues. Finally they stroll off arm in arm, giggling like children, the beams of their flashlights receding into the night.