

Milestone Film & Video
presents

A film by Anthony Howarth

PEOPLE OF THE WIND

The Chronicle of a Nomadic Chief



There are two hundred miles of impassable mountains to cross.
There are no towns, no roads, no bridges.
There is no turning back.

Featuring the voice of James Mason

Academy Award® Nominee: Best Documentary
Golden Globe Nominee: Best Documentary

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People of the Wind

Executive Producer ----- Elizabeth E. Rogers
Producers ----- Anthony Howarth and David Koff
Director ----- Anthony Howarth
Script ----- David Koff
Cinematographer ----- Mike Dodds
Location Sound ----- Ivan Sharrock
Editor ----- Carolyn Hicks
Music ----- G.T. Moore and Shusha Guppy

Featuring the voice of James Mason as the voice of Jafar Qoli, *Kalantar* (chief) of the Babadi tribe.

Production Services by AKA Film Services, London
Music recorded at The Music Centre, London
Stereo/Mono sound by Todd A-O
35mm blowup by Cinema Research, Los Angeles
Color by Deluxe
1976. 35mm. 1.77.1
Running Time: 110 minutes.

Restored by Milestone Film & Video and TapeHouse, NYC.
High-Definition Transfer: TapeHouse, NYC.
Film to Tape Engineer: Ron Stetler, TapeHouse
Production Coordinator: Tim Spitzer, TapeHouse

An Elizabeth E. Rogers Production

The story of the Babadi, one of the Bakhtiari tribes of Southern Iran, was shot entirely on location in the Zagros Mountains, just north of the Persian Gulf. No scene was acted or re-enacted.

The Babadi of the Bakhtiari tribe.

People of the Wind is the chronicle of Jafar Qoli, the Kalantar, or Chief, of the Babadi tribe. The Babadi are one of the sub-tribes of the Bakhtiaris of Southern Iran.

It is the time of the Spring Migration. The hot sun is turning the winter pastures into desert. If their great flocks of sheep are to survive, the Babadi *must* go in search of new grass.

Jafar Qoli has the responsibility of leading his thirty thousand people to their summer pastures. His closest companions on the journey are the members of his camp group, his *maal*.

Nessa is Jafar's hard-working and stoic wife, the only one of his three wives to travel with him.

Jalali is Jafar's right-hand man, whose great strength fails in the icy waters of the Bazuft River.

Zenab, the lively widow, competing for attention with her attractive and independent daughter, *Iran*.

Mendeni is Jafar's retired chief shepherd, old and wise.

Nezam is Jafar's impoverished cousin, burdened with too many children and too few pack animals.

Bahman is the unreliable chief shepherd whose arrogance leads to disaster.

Rashidi is an enterprising and crafty sheep trader.

Golbahar is Mendeni's eight-year-old daughter, the beauty of the family.

There are two hundred miles of impassable mountains to cross.

There are no towns, no roads, no bridges.

There is no turning back.

Synopsis

The film opens by introducing Jafar Qoli, *Kalantar* or Chief, of the Babadi. At a dinner given by Ali Agha, the *Kalantar* of another tribe, the question of when to leave for the summer pastures is disputed. Jafar indicates that he is going to ignore Ali Agha's arguments because he must make the decision for his own people.

Jafar introduces the member of his *maal* or camp group, and points out that the number of tents is smaller this year. He complains that his *maal* is short of strong young men to help on the migration.

The word is sent around to all the 30,000 Babadi to prepare for the journey. Jafar, Jalali and others from the *maal* ride to the nearest market town, Lali. They buy provisions for the eight-week journey and Jafar orders a new coat from the weaver. He buys a new, ready-made one for Jalali. Lali used to be an oil town but now the wells are dry and the buildings are decaying. It is here that some people, who cannot afford the pack animals or provisions for the journey, have to sit out the heat of the summer.

After a few false starts, Jafar's *maal* and the first group of the Babadi set off for the summer pastures. First they travel through the foothills and the oak trees. At the end of each day they camp and relax. The *maal* has moved perhaps fifteen miles but life goes on as it would in a settled village.

The going gets harder; there are dry river beds with 20-foot boulders to negotiate, then small mountains, and then Cholbar, the first river. The crossing is exciting and chaotic, but it is more fun than hardship, despite the fast flowing icy water.

Jafar is invited to a wedding. The people are dressed in their most colorful clothes but the bride is unimpressed. She is reluctant to the end, despite the enviable good looks of the groom.

The landscape changes and the people are confronted by the first real mountain. The Monar is 8,000 feet tall. The film concentrates on Golbahar. Only eight years old, she carries a large calf all the way to the summit. The weather changes as Jafar tries to get his people into the beautiful valley of Shimbar before the storm breaks. The rain starts as they unload. The storm is wild with thunder and lightning. The nomadic life quickly loses much of its glamour.

After the rain the campsite dries out and the valley of Shimbar is revealed to be as beautiful as Jafar had predicted. Before leaving Shimbar, Jafar pays a visit to his sister, the one known as the Lion Woman. Conveniently, Jafar's brother-in-law is the *Kalantar* of the Mowri tribe. Jafar has to mediate a dispute

between a Mowri and a Babadi over a marriage contract. Later, Rashidi the sheep trader, tries to enlist Jafar's help in getting the price of the Mowri's sheep down.

On a new high and dangerous mountain path — the pass of the women — a trio of baby goats cause some breathtaking moments.

Jafar and his men have to rebuild the ramp at the foot of the waterfall. Every year the winter rains wash away this flimsy structure. The new ramp will have to support the weight of hundreds of thousands of people and millions of animals before it is rebuilt the next year. The waterfall is at the foot of a 10,000-foot mountain. The Babadi call this “the pass of a thousand hazards.” Jafar agrees. The animals start to protest and the journey is slowing down.

Jafar and his people reach the valley of the Bazuft, the boundary between winter and summer pastures. The Bazuft River is deep, cold and swift. The start of the crossing is tense. The widow and her daughter play a prominent part in the drama. After great difficulty, the people and the pack animals overcome the river. Getting the flocks across is a different matter. Bahman, the shepherd, disobeys an order and forces unwilling sheep into the river. Several sheep and leader goats are drowned and Jalali collapses from the exhaustion and cold.

Jalali recovers slowly, and the whole caravan gets underway again. The people are tired. Jafar is tired. The weather is somber and the valley of the Bazuft is unpleasant. But this is where Jafar must make his crucial decision about when to cross the snow.

Zardeh Kuh, the last mountain before the summer pastures is monstrous — over 15,000 feet tall. The only practical route is directly over the summit. The alternative routes mean a detour of forty to fifty miles to the south or the north.

The crossing starts at 4:00 AM. By nightfall the ill-equipped families must be off the highest parts of the mountain. Many Bakhtiaris have died in storms on Zardeh Kuh, whole flocks have been destroyed. The weather is always uncertain and the melting snow is treacherous. Mules roll down the steep slopes, a gale starts to blow and it becomes very cold.

Suddenly the wind drops, the sun comes out and there it is, the first valley of the summer pastures — as green and fresh as they could have wished.

Background (written in 1976)

People of the Wind, a film by Anthony Howarth, is set in Southern Iran during the remarkable semi-annual migration of the Bakhtiari tribes. No scene is acted or re-enacted.

Between 300,000 and 500,000 people and their millions of animals *must* cross the Zagros Mountains when they travel from their winter to their summer pastures and back again. This mountain range, which forms a natural barrier running from the USSR, through Syria, Iraq and Iran, is as high as the Alps and as broad as Switzerland.

The Bakhtiari probably originate from the Caucasus Mountains. Several thousand years ago they started their migration south. Some reports suggest that they have been in their present pastures for more than 2,500 years. Others believe that they stayed for many centuries in Syria and only came further south about 700 years ago.

The Bakhtiari say that they successfully defied Alexander the Great. They certainly have a long history of military success and of causing “trouble.” To this day they are feared as “bandits” by the people of Teheran and the settled peoples of Iran.

In the 19th century the Bakhtiari Khans rose to positions of great power and wealth. By the early 1900s they ruled Iran. In 1908 the Iranian oil fields were found on their land. The original Bakhtiari Old Company is the root of BP Oil and the Royal Iranian Oil Company.

In 1923, the team of Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack and Marguerite Harrison made the remarkable documentary of the Bakhtiari migration, *Grass*, which has also been restored and distributed by Milestone Film & Video.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Khans lost their power and some of their heads. The tribe was forced to settle and was considerably weakened. In the 1940s, the nomads destroyed their new “houses” and returned to a way of life that suited their flocks.

The tribe that was once described as “the most important tribe in the British Empire” is no longer in the mainstream of Iranian politics and has no interests in the oil fields. The Bakhtiari are once more what they were before the rise of the Khans — a large group of nomadic shepherds. There is less feuding between sub-tribes and more concentration on the business of sheep farming.

The semi-annual migration of the Bakhtiari is not just a tradition, it is essential. Essential if the tribe is to maintain its flocks at their present level and hence a certain economic strength and independence. When the winter pastures in Khuzistan dry up, the summer pastures are still under snow. To truck the sheep, if there was a road and enough trucks to move that many animals, would be a disaster as sheep must eat all the time. The four to eight week journey gives time for the snow to melt and for the grass to grow in the highlands near Esfahan. The journey also allows the tribe to make use of the fresh spring grass within the mountains, valuable pasture that would otherwise go to waste and deteriorate (like the Highlands of Scotland).

The lifestyle of the Bakhtiari is an ecological pattern that works. More than that, they have strategically protected themselves over the centuries by not building the roads and bridges within their mountain refuge that would make their life easier. Today they may not be in danger of military attack, although that possibility should not be ruled out (as has tragically happened this last decade with the Kurds) especially as the government would like to see them “settled.”

This journey has been reasonably described by the *Daily Telegraph* in London as “the most hazardous test of human endurance still undertaken year after year by an entire people.” The migration filmed by Anthony Howarth is the exact trek filmed fifty years before in *Grass* for the same reason — for among the Bakhtiari tribes, this is the hardest, most difficult migration of them all.

The Making of the Film

The Bakhtiari tribes are particularly inaccessible. Once within the mountains the visitor has no option but to travel as the Bakhtiari do, on foot or by mule.

Anthony Howarth had the unique advantage of having made the journey the year before. He knew that the crew would have to be small, tough and mobile. Small in numbers in order to maintain the close relationship which had been built up the previous year. Tough and mobile because the Bakhtiaris wait for no one once they start moving.

Award-winning British cameraman Mike Dodds was chosen because of his professional approach and his ability to shoot with sensitivity under arduous conditions. Ivan Sharrock had worked as a sound recordist with Anthony Howarth in East Africa. His qualifications were the same as Dodds'. Sharrock later went on to win an Academy Award for his sound work on *The Last Emperor*. As it turned out, Ivan could even out-walk the Bakhtiari, to say nothing of the rest of the crew. Alan Jones made up the complement as Camera Assistant. Shusha acted as interpreter and through her contacts in Iran, was instrumental in gaining access to the tribe. She proved herself just as tough as the rest.

There could be no errors in the organization and there was no turning back for the crew as well as for the nomads.

Every piece of equipment had to be duplicated over and above normal contingency allowances. Thus there were two generators for charging the camera batteries. Generators required gasoline in considerable quantities. There were four cameras, although it was never intended to shoot with more than two. There were light-weight camera and blimped cameras. A mass of sound equipment allowed Ivan to supply the film with sync sound throughout, despite numerous accidents. His best day was the descent from Zardeh Kuh when he broke five microphone cables and several other items.

In order to keep the weight down it was decided that the crew would eat with Jafar's family and would live during the day in his tent. Tiny mountaineering survival tents were taken strictly for sleeping in and to protect the equipment.

In the end it took twenty-three mules to carry the crew and their two tons of equipment. The single heaviest item was the 100,000 feet of Kodak Ektachrome film stock. This film was carried from beginning to end of the migration by three long-suffering mules. The exposed film went through rivers, over the snow and even rolled down a mountainside, but not one foot was lost. This was a great tribute to the sure footedness of the Bakhtiari mules and the skill of the muleteers.

A system had to be worked out to give the crew maximum mobility. Each of the four members had two mules, one to ride and one to carry the equipment and stock required for that day. In this way the main body of the supplies could be sent off ahead or left behind to keep the camera equipment out of the shots. Thanks to Alan Jones' efficiency, no one ever ran out of film. Alan found the journey hard and eventually was sent ahead when the *maal* reached the snow. He had lost so much weight that the cold was becoming too much for him.

The worst accident occurred when Mike Dodds' equipment mule rolled at least one thousand feet down a precipitous tree-covered hillside. One of the Bakhtiari chased after it and caught up with the unfortunate animal in time to pull the girth strap loose and allow the camera to roll on for several hundred more feet while he tended to the mule. At the same time this incident seemed to represent a

very real sense of values, after all, their lives almost depended on the mules. The smashed eyepiece of the camera was skillfully repaired by Alan.

The journey was hard for everyone on the crew — but no one would have missed it. The Zagros Mountains are exceptionally beautiful and Jafar has a knack for choosing camp sites with quite exquisite surroundings. The pace of life in the mountains is slow except when there is a major obstacle, such as a 15,000-foot mountain, to cross in one day. There was a lot of time to read, to talk, to walk and to think. Such time is rare in our societies and is to be valued.

Note: Jafar Gholikhan died in April of 2003.

A Letter from the Director, Anthony Howarth (1976)

People of the Wind is now in distribution. As with most films there is a long hard struggle behind that simple statement. In the spring of 1971 I was asked to photograph the migration of the Bakhtiari by the *London Daily Telegraph Magazine*. Shusha Guppy was the writer assigned to the story.

At that time the direction of my work was changing. For the previous twelve years I had worked as a photographer for most of the principal American and English magazines. However, in 1970 I had become involved, as co-producer and co-director of *Black Man's Land*, a trilogy about the history of colonialism in Kenya. This included three one-hour films, *White Man's Country*, *Mau Mau* and *Kenyatta*. It was there I had made a conscious decision to change from still photography to film direction.

I was led to expect that the migration would take about two weeks. In fact, it took eight. Quite early on in the journey I realized that I had found a remarkable subject for a film (at that time I hadn't even heard of the film *Grass*, made in 1925). As the weeks stretched out and I became closer to my companions, I became aware of new possibilities for the film. The migration itself was an obvious structure and rhythm for the film but beyond that there was the opportunity to identify with a people who might normally be considered "exotic" or 'primitive.' I did not want to make an anthropological film that examined, dissected and informed from outside. Instead, I felt that, with the Bakhtiari, I could make a film that would allow the audience to relate directly to the people, to know their names, to share in their successes and failures and to understand them as just regular folk.

It was my intention to achieve this closeness between subject and audience with completely non-directed and authentic action. The events would be actual events of one migration and the characters would define themselves as they participated in those events.

Since that first migration in 1971, five and a half years have passed. Initially I managed, with my co-producer David Koff, to get together just adequate funds to shoot the material. I had a BBC contract for a one-hour show, and they would not allow a longer version. It was not the film I wanted to do, nor the film I shot for.

By July 1973, I had fulfilled my obligations for the one-hour film and had finished the African trilogy. At that point everything came to a halt. It seemed that until the existing films had made their budgets back I would be unable to take the Bakhtiari project forward. Given the long-term nature of the markets in which the films were being distributed, prospects were bleak. I spent a couple of months writing a script, *The Uninvited*, about two mercenaries, one white and one

black, traveling across Africa to the Rhodesian 'war.' Today the concept looks quite prophetic but at that time it was apparently too remote for public interest.

I then went back to still photography for almost two years. Thanks to good friends in England and the incredible patience of Lloyds Bank, the film project stayed alive and intact — just.

In 1975, almost exactly four years after I first met the Bakhtiaris and three years after the material was shot, Elizabeth Rogers agreed to guarantee the finance for a full-length feature documentary for theatrical release. This was the kind of gesture that keeps independent film making alive and for which I am deeply grateful. It took a year and almost \$400,000 to complete *People of the Wind*. The total budget, including the location shooting, is around \$550,000.

Apart from my gratitude to Elizabeth Rogers, without whom there would be no film. I would like to mention the following people: Carolyn Hicks who did such a superb job on editing the film. Shusha who walked and rode the migration twice and who made it possible to reach the tribe and to get so close to the people. Also without her voice, the soundtrack would lose much of its impact. Mike Dodds, Ivan Sharrock and Alan Jones for their excellent location work. James Mason for agreeing to do the dialogue and for his fine performance. David Koff, my co-producer and scriptwriter, for years of encouragement, and everyone whose name appears on the credit.

An email from David Koff, September 2000

The genesis of the film was a photographic mission that my then filmmaking partner, Tony Howarth, did on behalf of the London Sunday Telegraph magazine. An Iranian folk singer, Shusha Guppy, had proposed the idea to the Telegraph magazine editors in 1971, and had the contacts to assure access to the Bakhtiari. Tony was asked to photograph the migration, and did so, coming back with thousands of kodachromes which eventually were used in National Geographic and many other magazines and textbooks. The journey was as detailed a reconnaissance as one could have for film purposes, and so we decided to go back the following year with a film crew. We knew about *Grass*, but deliberately didn't view it. It was not our intention to 'follow up' on *Grass* fifty years later. It was primarily the opportunity provided by the first journey and the prospect of having Shusha's assistance the following year to gain access to what was obviously great potential cinema.

We raised the money from a distribution contract with the U.S. film distributor, Films Incorporated, from an advance from a BBC series called *Disappearing World*, and from private investors who, in those days, could gain certain tax benefits by investing in films, even if (and preferably if) they didn't make a profit....

The original cut, for British TV (shown later in Canada and elsewhere), was a fifty minute version with voice over narration. This was in 1974. In early '76, Tony met someone who was willing to back a feature length version, cut from the original material. We brought all the negative and cutting copy from London to Los Angeles, reassembled all the cutting copy, and edited the feature version. During the neg cut for the feature, the original neg that had been used in the 50-minute version was introduced into the new cut. We then blew up to 35mm, remixed all the sound at Todd-AO in Hollywood, went to London to record the original music, and then to Geneva to have James Mason to the voice of Jafar Qoli. We placed it theatrically in some repertory cinemas in San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and got great reviews as well as an Academy nomination for Best Feature Doc of 1976. The Academy Award winner for that year in that category was *Harlan County USA*, by Barbara Koppel. But on the basis of the Academy nomination, and a Golden Globe nomination, we decided to try a serious release

as a "G" rated feature. We booked it in a theatre in Ann Arbor, Michigan, did spot TV and radio ads, and had a PR team pushing the film. It did better in the week it ran than lots of big name features, but not well enough to fund a similar 'four-wall' operation in another city. So that was the end of theatrical distribution. We then placed the film with Tricontinental films, a distributor in New York we knew well, for non-theatrical distribution and any theatrical rentals possible. Soon after, Tricontinental went bankrupt, and all their prints disappeared into other people's hands. We never knew what happened to the *People of the Wind* print. Meanwhile litigation developed around unpaid lab bills; there were disputes between the woman who had produced the film (E.E. Rogers) and the distributor. From 1978 to 1999, the film effectively vanished, although by 1994 or 95, I believe, Dennis Doros of Milestone was on the trail of resurrecting it.

Letter from Shusha Guppy to Milestone

(This letter was written to Milestone after reading the press kit in the hopes of presenting Ms. Guppy's point of view.)

Ever since I had seen *Grass* I had longed to travel with the Bakhtiaris on their spring migration. I offered the idea to John Anstey, then the Editor of the Telegraph magazine, which was at the time considered the best of the Sunday magazines. He agreed to commission a long reportage, of which the magazine would cover the expenses if I managed to obtain the necessary permits. At the time the Tribes were under the supervision of the National Security Office (SAVAK) and not easy to visit. Thanks to the chief of the tribes, the late Agha Khan Baktiar, one of the Directors of the National Oil Company, and a friend of my father, as well as my own brother, then Deputy Prime Minister, I was allowed to travel with the tribes, taking a photographer, and to write a reportage afterwards.

So In April 1971, I went to Teheran and from there to the South, accompanied with Anthony Howarth, the photographer assigned by the Telegraph, and from Teheran to the Persian gulf where we joined the tribe before the start of their migration. My host was Jafar Qoli, the Chief of the Babadi sub-tribe, and Mr. Agha Khan Baktiar paid for our journey — insisting that he was the host, and I was the guest, and that, therefore, I should not pay for anything during the migration.

Before leaving, I arranged for Anthony Howarth, whom I did not know before, to see *Grass*, so as to get an idea of what to expect. During the trip, I had the idea that after nearly five decades, one could make *a new film*, which would have colour and sound, and music, and incorporate all the changes that had taken place since 1924 when the original documentary was made. Anthony Howarth said that he had set up a film company with his friend David Koff, and that they had already made a documentary on Kenya.

On our return to London, I wrote a long reportage, with beautiful photographs by Anthony Howarth, which was published as a cover story in the Telegraph magazine. It was a great success.

After a few months Anthony Howarth rang me to say that he had been to America and secured the finances for making the documentary on the Bakhtiari migration, if I could set it up. Now this was a different matter, as showing the living conditions of the tribes on film was not something the authorities were keen on. It was agreed that I would be in charge of the Persian operations as Co-producer and scriptwriter, and that he would be the Producer. He gave me a contract, which stated my position, and agreed to pay me 10% of all profits for any film we would make on the journey. I agreed. Please note that as an artist I was keen on making a work of art, the material side was not important, although of course I wanted to be justly rewarded should the film make any money. I did not know, *then* — as I do now — how to read a contract and also that there is no such thing as "profit" in movies! The accounts are rigged to always show deficit, and that is why stars insist on *gross* percentages. *

At any rate, getting the permission to film turned out to be so difficult that even Mr. Baktiar could not help — only the Prime Minister, a family friend, and the Empress, enabled me to succeed. We went back to Persia the following spring, with an excellent crew and traveled for three weeks with the tribes, and made what became, eventually, *People of the Wind*. Meanwhile I had taken my guitar with me and they also filmed me singing along with the track, which ended up becoming *Shusha*, a short musical film.

On our return I wrote the script, and narrated it for a 55-minute version of the film, entitled *A Persian Odyssey* for the BBC. It was shown several times. I also recorded the music with my musicians. We made a separate contract for the music (thank God!) whereby if the soundtrack were issued separately, I would renegotiate, and at any rate, my rights and percentages were secured.

Next thing I knew Anthony Howarth, who had gone to America to sell the film, was planning a longer version. I suggested that he secure James Mason, whose voice I had always loved, to narrate the script in first person, as if he were Jafar Qoli, and that it would make the film more intimate, less cold and documentary — more like a feature film. To his credit he took my advice, and James Mason did record the sound track. Then friends began to write to me from America congratulating me on the music, and sending me reviews of the film. When I inquired about it, Anthony Howarth sent me a copy of the record and a cassette, and said that all my rights “would be honored,” and that whatever happened I would get accounts and be paid for the music as well as the films. This was when *People of the Wind* was nominated for an Oscar® for Best Documentary, and he hoped it would win.

Alas, it did not. And apart from California, the film, according to him, did not make any money. When I inquired about royalties for the music and the records he had issued and sold, he said he would be sending accounts and cheques soon.

That was the last I heard of him. He simply vanished into thin air! I heard that he lived in Holland with the new editor of the film, and that was that.

The year before last someone sent me a newspaper cutting about him being tried for fraud — some story about a car he had designed for Africa which would run on wood! I heard he was in London, found his number and rang him to say how sorry I was to hear about his tribulations, and that I bore him no grudge and expected no payment. (I could have made trouble for him by writing to the Judge and telling him how he had swindled *me*.) Then he went to jail, and I wrote to him again saying I felt sorry for him. He wrote back a letter full of self-pity and self-justification, saying that he had not meant to swindle anyone, that it was all a misunderstanding. He said he would ring and come and see me with Caroline when he came out of jail, a year or so later. Again I never heard from he — he had vanished again.

When I saw the video you sent me of *People of the Wind* and after I saw you in New York and we talked, I understood who had financed the film, and as you said how he had played the vanishing act on everybody. What has saddened me, and frankly made me angry, is not the money — as I said I wanted to make the film and financial rewards were not my aim — but the fact that all the credits were taken from me on *People of the Wind* of which the idea, the production, and the text were mine.

Agha Khan died in exile in London, in poverty and loneliness; Jafar Qoli was alive up to two years ago — I have no fresh news. John Anstey died a few years ago.

The important thing is that the film exists, and that in the years to come people will be able to see how the tribes lived.

— Shusha Guppy, 14 March 2000

*Editor's note: The costs of the theatrical version of *People of the Wind* cost well over \$300,000 and may have been upwards of \$500,000. To date, the film has yet to gross \$100,000 in theatrical, television and video income.

The Restoration

In 1990, Milestone Film & Video acquired and restored the classic silent film, *Grass*. When it was released on video, *Grass* became one of the company's best-selling titles and was voted one of the ten-best releases of the year by the *New York Times* and *Video Magazine*. At the time, many of the buyers of *Grass* asked us about a 1976 color re-make of the film, *People of the Wind*. They described it as a "lost" film and remembered it vividly. It was hard to believe that a film only fifteen years old could be lost, but it seemed to be. Thus began our search for the rights, materials and owner of *People of the Wind*, an on-and-off quest for that took many twists and turns over the next few years.

Just for fun, we looked up reviews of *People of the Wind* in the New York Public Library's Performing Arts division. There was a small story in the *New York Times* by Vincent Canby which mentioned that a wealthy heiress from the "Chicago Bridge and Iron trust," Elizabeth Rogers, had financed the film. Images of old money and eccentric widows filled our minds and we placed phone calls to every Elizabeth Rogers in the Chicago phonebook — to no avail. We asked friends and colleagues at newspapers around the country to search their records for any obituary of Ms. Rogers. Still nothing.

Then, by chance, we found a press kit for the film at a flea market for 25¢. It was a bargain, because in it we found the credit: "Color by Deluxe." One phone call to the owner of Deluxe, Bud Stone, was sufficient. Indeed, the internegative, optical soundtracks and subtitle bands *were* still held by the lab. But there was another catch. Their records showed that the material was being held for Crown International, a long-time Hollywood producer of B-movies. It seemed odd that such a company would hold the rights for a 1976 documentary on the Bakhtiari. A phone call to Scott Schwimer, senior vice-president at Crown, proved to be a highlight of our search. He told us that he wasn't aware of *People of the Wind*, but that it could have been from an earlier regime. He asked, "Who stars in the film so I can check my database?" Our reply, "Bakhtiari nomads from the south of Iran," brought gales of laughter. Schwimer agreed that Deluxe's records must be mistaken and sent out a letter that day releasing any claim by Crown on the material. It was an unusually kind and generous gesture that gave our search new momentum.

So we had located the original materials, but we still needed to find out who owned the rights to the film. Deluxe explained that in these cases, permission from the producers credited on the film would suffice. Our search then turned to the producers: David Koff and Anthony Howarth. Pam Wintel of the Smithsonian's Human Studies Film Archive, suggested that Mr. Koff might be living in Los Angeles. Luckily, not only was there a David Koff in the Los Angeles phone book, but it turned out to be the very man we sought! At first, Mr. Koff was a bit surprised by our inquiry, but volunteered his permission for our planned restoration and release of *People of the Wind*. He explained that we should contact Anthony Howarth and Carolyn Hicks (it seemed they had met editing *People of the Wind* and were still together). He did not know where they could be found, but suggested they might be somewhere in England. But first, he told us, we need to get permission from Ms. Rogers. When we suggested that she must be old or perhaps dead, we again elicited gales of laughter. Ms. Rogers, who was in her twenties when she produced the film, was a mother of four and quite alive. But again, he had no idea where she might be. He suggested contacting her old friends, authors Michael Arlen and Peter Matthiessen, and told us that she had a summerhouse on Captiva Island. Although nothing showed up

in our search of Captiva and we couldn't get hold of Michael Arlen, we had had previous contact with Mr. Matthiessen when we released *The Young One*, a film based on one of his short stories. So we wrote to him, but he replied he hadn't seen Ms. Rogers for years.

So we went back to an earlier clue: Ms. Rogers' connection with Chicago Bridge and Iron. Sure enough, a phone call to David Koff reminded him that she did have a lawyer representing her and the trust: a Chester W. Nosal of Winston & Strawn. We left a message for Mr. Nosal and then waited for days without answer, our hopes fading. But the next week a very suspicious assistant of Mr. Nosal returned our call. After we explained that we were a distributor who wanted to contract for the rights for *People of the Wind*, Mr. Nosal got on the line and gave us the long-sought-after phone number for Elizabeth Rogers. It had take almost five years of searching, but at last our quest was almost over. We called the very much alive Ms. Rogers and she immediately met us with kindness and enthusiasm. We told her of our long quest and at the mention of Peter Matthiessen, she was surprised — after all, she saw him every Sunday at his Buddhist ashram. This time, the laughter came from *our* end of the line. We quickly negotiated and signed an agreement for Milestone to release *People of the Wind*. Ms. Rogers then helped us get in contact with Anthony Howarth's friend and agent, Woodfin Camp, who led us to the elusive Mr. Howarth himself!

Next came the hard part. Deluxe kindly sent over the *People of the Wind* materials to John Allen's restoration lab, Cinema Arts. The first inspection report was disturbing — the rolls of film totaled only 110 minutes — seventeen minutes short of the original running time. We contacted Howarth, Koff and Rogers and were enlightened. The film had been made on deadline and Howarth had never been entirely happy with the 127-minute version. He felt that it dragged in places and the co-producers and critics agreed. They went back and re-edited, creating a 110-minute version which all agreed was superior. Strangely enough, only one print of the new shorter film was struck (for Howarth's personal use) and the new version seems never to have shown elsewhere.

Back at Cinema Arts the materials were inspected and declared in good condition. But unfortunately, the optical tracks were mono and were vastly inferior to the \$200,000 surround-sound stereo that had been made for the film. Luckily, Ms. Rogers still had *everything* from the production — over nineteen boxes of soundtracks, out-takes, and various odds and ends to pour through. In Box Numbers 7A and 7B we discovered the original 35mm full-coat soundtracks! All these materials were sent to the Tape House Editorial Company, the premiere film-to-tape lab in the country. We had decided that *People of the Wind*, an Oscar® and Golden Globe nominee for Best Documentary, deserved the best treatment possible. With the extremely kind cooperation of Mark Polyocan and Tim Spitzer of Tape House, the film was transferred to High Definition using the Spirit. Colorist Ron Stetler did a masterful transfer — the colors popped off the screen and the film never looked better. But when the sound for the third reel was being laid down, another disaster struck. Halfway through the reel, the full-coat 35mm mag tracks turned into optical negative. Even more mysteriously, it wasn't even from the same film! So we had to make a print of the optical track for the third reel from the original negative. We then sent the print to TrackWise in New York where they created a DAT transfer for the video master.

We encountered more trouble when the technicians at TrackWise discovered that the film used a Dolby DBX application that no longer exists and the DAT would not be properly encoded. In desperation, we called the Hollywood headquarters of Todd A-O, the original producers of the soundtrack. Fortunately, they still had the DBX card that would properly encode the sound master and they generously sent it overnight to their New York branch to get the transfer done quickly. Todd A-O even volunteered that they had back-up sound masters to the original film! Unfortunately, these proved to be in mono (made for the 16mm release) and were for the older, longer version. However, the company sent them on to Milestone for preservation.

At last, with everything finally in place, Tape House transferred *People of the Wind* to High-Definition video using the restored soundtrack and original 35mm negative. This breathtaking film is now ready to be seen once again — and it only took us nine years! In the second half of 1999, a new 35mm print will be struck and preservation materials will be made on the film.

Milestone Film & Video

“Since its birth the Milestone Film & Video Co. has steadily become the industry’s foremost boutique distributor of classic and art films — and probably the only distributor in America whose name is actually a guarantee of some quality.”

— William Arnold, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

Milestone is a boutique distribution company with more than 13 years experience in art-house film distribution. The company has earned an unparalleled reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces, new foreign films, groundbreaking documentaries and American independent features. Thanks to Milestone’s rediscovery, restoration and release of such important discoveries as Mikhail Kalatozov’s award-winning *I am Cuba*, Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Mamma Roma*, and Alfred Hitchcock’s *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, the company now occupies an honored position as one of the most influential independent distributors in the American film industry. In 1999, the *L.A. Weekly* chose Milestone as “Indie Distributor of the Year.”

Amy Heller and Dennis Doros started Milestone in 1990 to bring out the best films of yesterday and today. The company has released such remarkable new films as Manoel de Oliveira’s *I’m Going Home*, Bae Yong-kyun’s *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?*, Hirokazu Kore-eda’s *Maborosi*, and Takeshi Kitano’s *Fireworks (Hana-Bi)*.

Milestone’s re-releases have included restored versions of Luchino Visconti’s *Rocco and His Brothers*, F.W. Murnau’s *Tabu*, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack’s *Grass and Chang*, Henri-Georges Clouzot’s *The Mystery of Picasso*, Marcel Ophuls’ *The Sorrow and the Pity* (a Woody Allen presentation) and Hiroshi Teshigahara’s *Woman in the Dunes* and *Antonio Gaudí*. Milestone is also working with the Mary Pickford Foundation on a long-term project to preserve, re-score and release the best films of the legendary silent screen star. In recent years, Milestone has re-released beautifully restored versions of Frank Hurley’s *South: Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition*, Kevin Brownlow’s *It Happened Here* and *Winstanley*, Lotte Reiniger’s animation masterpiece, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, Michael Powell’s *The Edge of the World* (a Martin Scorsese presentation), Jane Campion’s *Two Friends*, Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Wide Blue Road* (a Jonathan Demme and Dustin Hoffman presentation), Conrad Rooks’ *Siddhartha* and Rolando Klein’s Mexican classic, *Chac*.

Since its beginning, Milestone has had a fruitful collaboration with some of the world’s major archives including the British Film Institute, UCLA Film & Television Archive, George Eastman House, Museum of Modern Art, Library of Congress, Nederlands Filmmuseum and the Norsk Filmintitut. In August 2000 the Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York premiered Milestone’s 10th Anniversary Retrospective. During the New York run and the nationwide tour that followed, all revenues from retrospective screenings were donated to four major archives in the United States and England to help restore films that might otherwise be lost.

In 2003–2004, Milestone will be releasing an important series of great silent films restored by the world’s foremost film historians and preservationists, Photoplay Productions. These stunning versions, never before available in the United States, include the horror classic *The Phantom of the Opera*; André

Antoine's early neorealist adaptation of Emile Zola's *La Terre*, and an astonishing historical epic of Polish independence by Raymond Bernard, *The Chess Player*. Video highlights for this year also include Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle and Buster Keaton's *The Cook & Other Treasures*, and a special DVD series of incredible animation including *Cut-Up: The Films of Grant Munro*; *Norman McLaren: The Collector's Edition*; and *Winsor McCay: The Master Edition*.

In theaters, Milestone will be releasing Tareque Masud's remarkable *The Clay Bird* from Bangladesh and *The Big Animal*, directed by and starring Jerzy Stuhr, from a script by Krzysztof Kieslowski.

Milestone received a Special Archival Award in 1995 from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I am Cuba*. Eight of the company's films — Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*, F.W. Murnau's *Tabu*, Edward S. Curtis' *In the Land of the War Canoes*, Mary Pickford's *Poor Little Rich Girl*, Lon Chaney's *The Phantom of the Opera*, Clara Bow's *It*, Winsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur*, and Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack and Marguerite Harrison's *Grass* — are listed on the Library of Congress' National Film Registry.

Cindi Rowell, director of acquisitions, has been with Milestone since 1999. In 2003 Nadja Tennstedt joined the company as director of international sales.

"Milestone Film & Video is an art-film distributor that has released some of the most distinguished new movies (along with seldom-seen vintage movie classics) of the past decade"
— Stephen Holden, *New York Times*

Milestone would like to thank

Mark Polyocan, Ron Stetler and Tim Spitzer, Tape House

David Koff, Anthony Howarth and Elizabeth E. Rogers

Fran Bowen, TrackWise

Scott Schwimer, Crown International

Bud Stone, John Schaffer and Flo Palumbo, Deluxe Labs

Tony Mazzei and Valerie Roberts, Todd A-O

John Allen, Cinema Arts

Margie Compton, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

Pam Wintel, Human Studies Film Archive, Smithsonian Institution

Marvin and Ida Heller

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