

# Pat Brown documentary is a family affair

## Film is an intimate focus on a grandfather and politician

by *SABINA DANA PLASSE*

Many people wonder about the state of things in California in 2011. Sometimes, taking a look back in time can help visualize things for the future.

"California State of Mind, The Legacy of Pat Brown" by Sascha Rice is a documentary film about a man and a family who believed in each other and in government working on behalf of its citizens. Rice along with fother amily members, including her sister Hilary Armstrong, the film's executive producer, capture a portrait of a man and a state worth knowing.

"California is the canary in the coal mine," Rice said. "What happens there moves across the world."

Rice set out on a very ambitious project to tell the story of her grandfather Edmund G. Brown Sr., otherwise known as Pat Brown. It took seven years to complete the film.

"I am a filmmaker and my last film was a romantic comedy," she said. "The love story of my grandparents moved me. My one big obstacle in making the film was my personal relationship to the material."

She made a decision to tell the story from the perspective of Pat Brown being her grandfather. Rice's family is full of successful California politicians, including Gov. Jerry Brown and, her mother, former Treasurer Kathleen Brown.

"I wanted the film to have a structure and not be just a list of accomplishments," she said. "Making films is a way to communicate with the public. I made the film so people can be inspired to face what is going on in California."

Pat Brown accomplished a great deal for California, including a massive water project, which was a government-funded effort that worked. In addition, he suffered losses, stood by his convictions when no one else did and believed in public service working for the good of citizens.

"People say they will never have another Pat Brown because it was easier and more simple times—a golden era for everyone. [But] many people then didn't have rights and privileges," Rice said. "I wanted to show the grand projects of California to re-inspire people. Everybody is saying California is in the toilet. It's still one of the most beautiful states in the nation with great diversity."



Former California Gov. Edmund G. Pat Brown, left, and Edmund G. Jerry Brown Jr., at a ceremony for former hostages in February 1981. Photo by Sacramento Bee/ZUMApres.com

Brown has been called "the architect of the Golden State," but Rice takes a more critical look at her grandfather's life. When the Vietnam War shifted the nation's consciousness, Pat Brown was caught in the middle of the cataclysmic 1960s, with the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, fiery race riots in Los Angeles and the United Farm Workers movement in the Central Valley. His epic battle against capital punishment unleashed an international uproar. The Pat Brown story is an American dream story of humble beginnings with an incredible life's journey.

Rice said she wants the film to be accessible, and has started the process to make it available for educational use.

The film has been well received by festivals and will screen at the Mill Valley Film Festival and the Carmel Film Festival.

Rice and Armstrong, along with other family members, are having a free screening of the film at the Magic Lantern Cinemas in Ketchum on Thursday, Aug. 18, at 4 p.m. The film is free because more than 450 people donated money, in amounts ranging from \$25 to \$200,000, toward Rice and Armstrong's mission to make this documentary. To RSVP to the screening, email

[hilary@patbrowndocumentary.com](mailto:hilary@patbrowndocumentary.com).

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