



mike cassidy  
in my opinion

## Movie brings togetherness after tragedy

When the movie ended and the lights came up in the downtown San Jose theater, Kate and David Bagby made their way down the aisle to the front of the auditorium.

Those who had been clapping stood up and clapped louder.

"I'm not making the movie," Kate Bagby, 66, said, "and I get a standing ovation."

But the crowd at this week's Cinequest screening of "Dear Zachary: A Letter to a Son about His Father" wasn't cheering the Bagbys because they made the documentary. They were cheering them because they had lived it.

It was a terrible story, an unbelievable story, presented powerfully by Kurt Kuenne, a filmmaker the Bagbys have known since he was a little boy. I wrote about the Bagbys, married four decades, last year. About how their only child, Andrew, a promising doctor, was gunned down in Pennsylvania by an estranged girlfriend. About how she fled to Canada, where she gave birth to Andrew Bagby's son while fighting extradition.

I wrote about the Bagbys' dedication to each other and devotion to their grandson, Zachary. About how they moved from Sunnyvale to Newfoundland to be near the baby and to fight for custody. About how the Bagbys built a gut-wrenching life of joint-custody with Shirley Turner, the woman accused of killing their son. About how Turner was released on bail and given Zachary to care for as the legal fight dragged on.

And I wrote about how on a stormy August night in 2003, Turner took 1-year-old Zachary to the Atlantic Ocean and jumped in, drowning herself and the baby.

### 'It rips me up'

"Watching the film," said David Bagby, 62, sitting in a coffeehouse across from the Camera 12 complex, "every time I see it, it rips me up."

The Bagbys had just watched Kuenne's film for the third time in three days. They watched the scenes of their son as a baby, as a rascal goofing off in home videos. They saw his serious side and heard colleagues praise him as a gifted doctor.

They saw him dancing and cutting up with Turner. They relived the nightmare of their son's murder and the nightmare of the Canadian courts. And finally, they saw their son's dead body, lying face-down in a Pennsylvania park parking lot.

Can you imagine?

It meant something, David Bagby said, that many who knew the family had come. That some of those gasping, sniffing and sobbing in the dark once knew and loved Andrew.

### Grief shared

"We know a lot of people in the audience are feeling what we're feeling," he said. "If they actually knew Andrew, it cuts deeper."

David Bagby puts himself through repeatedly watching the film for one primary reason: "I'm in PR mode. I have an agenda."

The agenda? Reforming Canadian bail laws to prohibit those accused of murder from being freed while they await trial. Indeed, a year ago David Bagby published "Dance With the Devil," the story of the crimes and an argument for changing Canadian law. He's fond of saying he'll talk to anyone who puts a microphone in front of him.

And yes, there was a microphone at Cinequest. No, David Bagby said during a post-film Q&A, not much has changed in Canadian law since Zachary's murder. And yes, as a matter of fact, there was something filmgoers could do: Write to Canadian authorities. Go to the Dear Zachary Web site, [www.dearzachary.com](http://www.dearzachary.com), he said, and follow the directions there.

"If this affected you," he told the 150 or so who lingered, "tell them."

The crowd started to shuffle out past David and Kate Bagby. And then something happened that's far more poignant than the standing ovation at the movie's end: One by one, friends and complete strangers stopped and gave Kate Bagby a hug.

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Read Mike Cassidy's *Loose Ends* blog at <http://blogs.mercurynews.com/cassidy>. Contact him at [mcassidy@mercurynews.com](mailto:mcassidy@mercurynews.com) or (408) 920-5536.