

# Maple Grove, Osseo on the 'big screen'

## Area resident finishes film

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Steve Elbert of Maple Grove can pinpoint the moment when he put his dreams of filmmaking into action. He and his family were at a friend's daughter's bat mitzvah and when the rabbi spoke, his message was, "If not now, when?"

"Afterwards, we were leaving and my son said to me, 'Why don't you make your film, dad?'" Elbert recalled.

The next morning he sat down and began writing "Not a Word was Spoken." The momentum didn't end there. The film has been shot, mostly in Maple Grove and Osseo, and Elbert is in the process of editing it. He plans on premiering the film this summer.

The unique film features no dialogue, a style that has recently been cast into the spotlight by the Oscar triumphs of another silent film, "The Artist."

"Without dialogue,



Maple Grove resident Steven Elbert, second from right helps with the filming of his film "Not a Word was Spoken." Helping him are Dave Hodgson, Steve Friederichsen (behind camera) and JD Dreher. (Photo by Jana Anderson)

you have to have more to make it compelling," Elbert explained. "The talent needed to use subtleties and body language. There's also written things in the film that you have to be watching to keep up with it: a card, a note, something written in the snow."

A.J. Lund plays the female lead, Ali, and she

says that the part was a great fit for her.

"I do more modeling than acting so this was perfect, I loved it," she said. "It's rare to find a project without words. You can do so much more with it."

She said the toughest part was revealing that she was eight weeks pregnant before an action sequence.

"I had to tell everyone to be careful about how things were going to happen. And I had to be careful, myself," she said.

Lund's daughter, Landry, was born in December.

Lund and Elbert met when she was acting in a piece for Elbert's day job as Vice President of Event Production for Ameriprise Financial.

Elbert has enjoyed 25 years with Ameriprise and in that time has honed many of his skills in producing, directing, editing, and just about everything else.

"I manage conferences and events, I do video production, produce, direct, whatever it takes to get it done," he said. "I just shot my first 3D video announcing a conference in Denver. I've worked with Peter Graves, we did a Mission Impossible piece."

His job has also taken him to many exciting locations, most recently to New York and Phoenix and soon to Istanbul and

Greece.

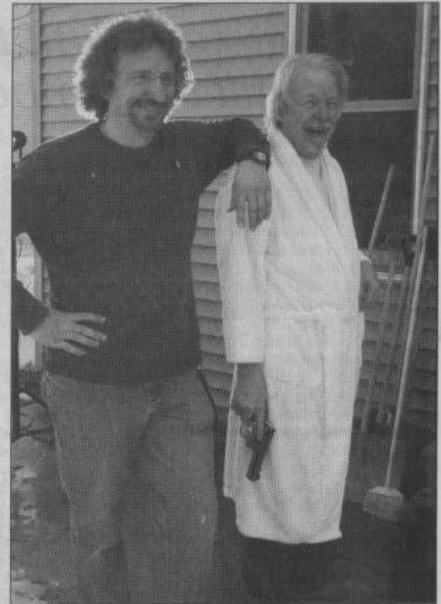
It has also helped him keep up with filmmaking technology, which is apparent in the film's beautiful cinematography.

"Technology has really come a long way," he added. "Small HD cameras are very reasonable these days. You don't have to rent extremely expensive 35 mm cameras anymore. It allows independent filmmakers to tell a story with quality much more easily."

Which is important for a film that was mostly self-financed, with donations from friends and others who believed in the project.

One person who believed in the project was one of Elbert's stars, Robert Hammel. A well-known local actor and arts enthusiast, Hammel passed away unexpectedly in February.

Lund responded, "It's heartbreaking. But to see his work, it makes this project more special."



Steven Elbert, left, and Robert Hammel take a break during the filming of "Not a Word was Spoken" last year. Hammel passed away unexpectedly last month. (Photo by Jana Anderson)



Lead characters in "Not a Word was Spoken" AJ Lund and Roger Wayne film one of the scenes of the movie. The movie was mostly filmed in Maple Grove and Osseo. (Photo by Jana Anderson)



RIGHT: Ingrid Wulf and Charlie Bultman pose for the final scene of "Not a Word was Spoken." (Photo by Steve Friederichsen)

Elbert hopes to get Hammel's and the other actors' work in the film out to a larger audience.

"I want to approach the Lifetime Channel, Hallmark, and OWN," Elbert said. "It's a feel-good Christmas story, which I think would be right for them. It's a long-shot but I've got to try."

But whatever happens, Elbert is pleased that he's launched his career as an independent filmmaker and has lots more in store.

He said, "It's been an amazing journey. It's always been a dream. I love what I do on a day-to-day basis. I love telling stories through film and video. It's a real passion."

For more information on "Not a Word was Spoken" and Elbert's other upcoming projects, visit [www.newcenturypictures.com](http://www.newcenturypictures.com).