

WMM A WOMEN MAKE MOVIES RELEASE

SALLY!



Photo: Silvia Turchin

She spearheaded some of the greatest battles for women's and gay rights. A brilliant and sexy superstar who inspired thousands. So how come you've never heard of Sally Gearhart?

"Superb documentary... a stirring tribute to a lesbian pioneer who deserves to be remembered and celebrated"

– Bay Area Reporter San Francisco



USA, 2024, documentary

Festival theatrical version: 96 min (broadcast length available)

Director Deborah Craig

Co-Directors Ondine Rarey, Jörg Fockele

Producers Deborah Craig, Ondine Rarey, Jörg Fockele

www.sallygearhartfilm.com

Excerpt: <https://vimeo.com/1020332326?share=copy> pw: sally

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

"Sally!" the feature documentary begins with Sally Gearhart at the height of her powers in the 1970s. She was one of second-wave feminism's most beloved icons, penned a cult classic fantasy novel about a female utopia and fought one of history's greatest battles for queer rights shoulder-to-shoulder with Harvey Milk. But fast forward to 2008 and Sally has been largely forgotten by history—not to mention erased from the Hollywood film "Milk." Yet rather than simply resurrecting her legacy and glorifying one woman's story, "Sally!" now takes a more collectivist turn. The film traces Sally's life trajectory through the eyes of the exceptional women who fought for justice by her side, revealing that Sally not only instigated the political movements that made her famous but was also deeply shaped by them. Finally, when we revisit Sally in 2014, she is living alone on Women's Land, without the community she helped create. What happened and what will become of her legacy?

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

In 2014, while shooting a documentary about lesbians and aging, I stumbled across octogenarian Sally Gearhart living alone in a remote cabin in the Northern California woods. Charmed by this fascinating woman—sporting paint-stained jeans, rumpled T-shirt, and bright pink lipstick—I realized that she was once a beloved lesbian-feminist icon and began recording her story. I filmed Sally repeatedly until her death in 2021 and had the deep pleasure of connecting with dozens of her equally brilliant friends, colleagues, students, former lovers, and fellow activists. As a 60+ gay woman I hope to underscore that both lesbians and older women are too often missing from the picture. Our struggle to find footage and photos of Sally, and even to get funded, is a message about underrepresentation even within the underrepresented LGBTQ+ community. In my own small way, I hope to change that with "Sally." Lastly, my mom came out at 50—when I did at 18—and "Sally" is a testimonial to her courage in being true to herself, despite being genuinely terrified.

KEY CREW & SUBJECTS

FEATURING Sally Gearhart

[Excerpts from NY Times, published July 26, 2021, updated July 28, 2021]

Sally Gearhart rose to prominence in the United States in the 1970s when she campaigned with Harvey Milk, a San Francisco city supervisor and the first openly gay politician elected in California, against Proposition 6, a ballot measure that would have banned gay and lesbian teachers from public schools. Because of Dr. Gearhart and Mr. Milk's efforts, the proposition failed in the statewide November election that year.

"Sally Miller Gearhart was born April 15, 1931, in the Appalachian town of Pearisburg, Virginia., and raised in a conservative Protestant family. Her father, Kyle Montague Gearhart, was a dentist; her mother, Sarah (Miller) Gearhart, was a secretary. "Mine was the childhood of the penny postcard and the ten-cent movie," Dr. Gearhart wrote in an autobiographical sketch [on her website](#), adding, "We were salt-of-the-earth people, believing in the Threefold God and in the everlasting virtues of hard work, a clean house, and strong drink."

Her parents divorced when Sally was young, and she spent much of her childhood with her maternal grandmother, who ran a women's boardinghouse. It was her first taste of a female-only community and one that stuck with her throughout her life.

She attended Sweet Briar College, a women's college in Virginia, earning a bachelor's degree in drama and English in 1952. She received a master's degree in theater and public address at Bowling Green State University in Ohio in 1953 and a doctorate in theater from the University of Illinois in 1956.

Dr. Gearhart hid her sexuality throughout her time in college and graduate school. [She recalled](#) ripping up books with gay themes lest anyone discover that she had read them. She did not come out until she moved to San Francisco in 1970.

In 1973 Dr. Gearhart had become one of the first openly lesbian tenure-track professors at a major American university when she was hired at San Francisco State. She taught classes on women and gender studies. In 1977, she appeared in the noted documentary "Word Is Out," which interviewed gay and lesbian people about their experiences and [is considered](#) one of the first feature films about the L.G.B.T.Q. community.

She wrote widely, both fiction and nonfiction, focusing on the environment, religion, feminism and lesbianism. Her writings include scholarly works examining the relationship between Christian churches, including Catholicism, and homosexuality; "The Feminist Tarot" (1975), which examined tarot card practices from a women's studies angle; and "The Wanderground, Stories of the Hill Women" (1978), a book of science fiction.

“The Wanderground” is about a utopian community of women who communicate psychically with one another. It explored themes of women’s inherent connections to the Earth and to one another. Remaining in print for over two decades, the book was one of the first major instances of lesbian representation in science fiction, a traditionally male genre.

Dr. Gearhart created her own Wanderground later in life: a community she called Women’s Land in Willits, a city in redwood forest country about 140 miles north of San Francisco. She considered it the culmination of her lesbian separatist philosophy.

“I keep saying that feminism as I understand it is an ideology of possibility, not probability,” she said in [an interview in 1980](#). She lived there with her “land partner,” Jane Gurko, her dog, Bodhi, and an eclectic group of women, many of them lesbians, who wanted to experience life closer to nature and, in many cases, farther from men.” – NYT Annabelle Williams

Sally Miller Gearhart died on July 14 2021 in Ukiah, California. She was 90.

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER Deborah Craig

Deborah is an award-winning documentary director and producer whose films use compelling personal stories to raise awareness about the challenges and strengths of underrepresented communities. Her work has played at LGBTQ+, women’s and documentary film festivals in the U.S. and internationally. Deborah’s most recent short, “A Great Ride,” a 33-minute documentary about lesbians and aging, premiered at the Frameline LGBTQ+ Film Festival in San Francisco in 2018, was picked up for distribution by Frameline, has screened at over 50 film festivals around the globe, and has won multiple awards. “Sally” will be her first feature-length documentary. Deborah has a BA in history from Columbia University, did undergraduate work in photography at California College of the Arts, and has a Master of Public Health from San Francisco State University, where she currently teaches in the Public Health Department.

CO-DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, EDITOR Ondine Rarey

Ondine is a filmmaker, editor, and writer. Her documentary “Fools and Heroes” was a Grimme-Preis nominee (the German equivalent of an Emmy), airing on ARTE in France as well as stateside on PBS. She has edited well over a dozen documentary features and shorts, including “Now en Español” (for PBS), “A Great Ride,” “Who Will Write Our History” and, “Rebel Hearts,” an official selection at Sundance 2021. She has edited on multiple TV series, including “Keeping up with the Kardashians” and “Alien Encounters.” Ondine received a BA from UC Berkeley in History and a BFA in Documentary and Journalism from the Munich University for Television and Film in Germany. She currently resides in Southern California, where she teaches Documentary Editing at Chapman University.

CO-DIRECTOR, PRODUCER Jörg Fockele

Jörg Fockele is an award-winning filmmaker with a career spanning over 25 years. He has written and directed over 10 short films, four feature documentaries, and numerous music videos and PSAs. Of the awards and distinctions Jörg has received, the most important ones

are retrospectives at the Goethe Institutes New York City, San Francisco, Chicago, and Mexico City, two Emmys and a special prize from the International Film Festival in Berlin. In addition, Jörg is a critically acclaimed television producer of award-winning shows such as Bravo's "Queer Eye," ABC's "Wife Swap," the Sundance Channel's "Big Ideas for a Small Planet" and AMC's "Small Town Security." He has also directed and produced shows for MTV, CBS, Oxygen, Discovery Network, PBS, Fine Living Network, and the SciFi Channel.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Corey Tong

Corey Tong is an award-winning filmmaker, producer, executive producer, photographer. He is also a creative and public relations consultant for festivals/exhibitions, film programming, sales/acquisitions, distribution and award campaigns, and frequently hosts and presents film and cultural programs with a special expertise on Pacific-Asia, international and LGBTQ stories. He has produced, represented films/distributors and directed/programmed festivals for many years with CAAMFest, Frameline, OutFest, SFFILM, DocEdge FF, PBS (Frontline, KQED, World, ITVS), NatGeo, ABS-CBN, Cinetic, Forum des Images Paris. His films have been nominated for an Oscar, two Emmys, screened in over 40 countries and 90+ festivals. Notable titles include (producer) "Forever, Chinatown;" "Curiosity Man;" "Kaimana" (film/art installation); "The Land Has Eyes;" (exec producer) "Last Day of Freedom;" "Jimmy in Saigon;" (consulting producer) "Defender;" "Point of no Return." He has partnered with award-winning film teams for broadcast, theatrical distribution, award campaigns including "The Last Repair Shop;" "Island In Between;" "Cairo Conspiracy" (Boy from Heaven); "The Queen of Basketball;" "A Thousand Cuts;" "For Sama;" "Jane;" "Sea of Shadows;" "Departures;" "Beautiful Boxer."

CINEMATOGRAPHER Silvia Turchin

Silvia Turchin is a gifted DP with an emphasis on documentaries and experimental documentaries. Her experimental documentary, "F-Line," won best experimental film at the Fargo Film Festival. Her other films include "Dogs of the Ninth Ward," "A Great Ride," "Circles: A Poem in Three Parts," and "Summer Light for Tula." Silvia's work has screened at the Ann Arbor Film Festival, Big Sky Documentary Festival, Pacific Film Archive, Dresden Filmfest, Mill Valley Film Festival, Frameline, and Haverhill Experimental Festival. Silvia has taught film production at UC Berkeley, San Francisco State University, the San Francisco Art Institute, and Cal State Monterey Bay.

ARCHIVAL PRODUCER Shanti Avirgan

Shanti Avirgan is a documentary producer and archival researcher who has worked on several films related to the AIDS crisis including "Pills Profits Protest" (2004); "Sex in an Epidemic" (2009); "Larry Kramer in Love & Anger" (2015); "5B" (2019) and "All the Beauty and the Bloodshed" (2022). She was a producer for National Geographic's climate change TV series "Years of Living Dangerously" and associate producer for the feature documentaries "The Yes Men Are Revolting" (2014) and "Life, Animated" (2016). Shanti holds degrees in Latin American studies, medical anthropology and documentary filmmaking from UT Austin and NYU and was a Fulbright Scholar in Brazil at the Federal University of Bahia. She grew up in Tanzania and Costa Rica and has lived in Brooklyn since 1999.

ARCHIVAL PRODUCER Jenni Olson

LGBT film archivist and historian Jenni Olson has been working to connect filmmakers to archival footage for more than 30 years. Most recently she served as archival producer for the Scout Productions LGBT history series, "Equal" (HBO Max, 2020) and was a consulting producer on the acclaimed Netflix original documentary, "Disclosure" (2020). Footage from her personal archive has been utilized in dozens of films including such acclaimed documentaries as "Stonewall Uprising," "Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood," "Regarding Susan Sontag," and "I Am Divine." Among her many efforts championing LGBT films and filmmakers, she is a founding advisory board member of the Outfest UCLA Legacy Project for LGBT Moving Image Preservation. A 2018 MacDowell Fellow, Jenni is now in development on her third feature-length essay film, "The Quiet World" and an essayistic memoir of the same name.

GRAPHIC ARTIST/ANIMATOR Maddy Montoya

Maddy is a recent graduate of San Francisco State University. They majored in Cinema and minored in Animation, with Editing and 2D Animation being the main focuses of their education. Maddy is very passionate about animation and has been making art since they were a little kid. They would describe their style as dark fantasy, as their biggest inspirations are the movies "The Nightmare Before Christmas" and "Coraline." Maddy is most passionate about animating and telling stories about underrepresented groups, including the LGBTQ+ community, as well as focusing on topics of mental health. She is very excited to be a part of the Sally team and is working hard to bring The Wanderground to life!

AUDIO RECORDIST Laretta Molitor

Laretta Molitor first discovered her love of documentary in high school as an assistant editor and production assistant for her local Public Broadcasting Station, KPBS in San Diego, CA. After a stint at San Francisco State University, she settled into a career in sound as a freelance recordist. Three decades later, she has experience in all types of production including commercials, industrials, television, documentaries, and narrative features. Many of her projects have been nominated for and/or won Academy Awards. Laretta was personally nominated for an Emmy for Best Sound in Documentary for "The Celluloid Closet." Recent projects include the documentaries "Inequality for All," "She's Beautiful When She's Angry," "We Were Here," "Dolores," and "Crip Camp."

ORIGINAL MUSIC & SOUND DESIGN Brad Dujmovic

[Bio forthcoming]

ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS

Jewelle Gomez

Jewelle Lydia Gomez is an American author, poet, critic and playwright. She lived in New York City for 22 years, working in public television, theater, as well as philanthropy, before relocating to the West Coast. Her writing—fiction, poetry, essays and cultural criticism—has appeared in a wide variety of outlets, both feminist and mainstream. Her work centers on women's experiences, particularly those of LGBTQ women of color. She has been interviewed for several documentaries focused on LGBT rights and culture.

Cherríe Moraga

Cherríe Moraga is a Xicana feminist, writer, activist, poet, essayist, and playwright. She is part of the faculty at the University of California, Santa Barbara in the Department of English since 2017, and in 2022 became a distinguished professor. Moraga is also a founding member of the social justice activist group La Red Xicana Indígena, which is network fighting for education, culture rights, and Indigenous Rights. In 2017, she co-founded, with Celia Herrera Rodríguez, Las Maestras Center for Xicana Indigenous Thought, Art, and Social Practice, located on the campus of UC Santa Barbara.

Cleve Jones

Cleve Jones is an American AIDS and LGBT rights activist. He conceived the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, which has become, at 54 tons, the world's largest piece of community folk art. In 1983 at the onset of the AIDS pandemic, Jones co-founded the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, which has grown into one of the largest and most influential advocacy organizations empowering people with AIDS in the United States.

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SELECT PRESS

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“She helped change history.”

– [New York Times](#)

“A woman who helped shape more than one movement.”

– [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

Website: <https://www.sallygearhartfilm.com/>

Excerpt Link: <https://vimeo.com/1020332326?share=copy> pw: sally

Stills, Clips: upon request



**Frameline
Completion Fund**



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