

LIFESTYLE

How a South Shore father-and-son filmmaking team has helped save the environment



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Video: Everyone is an explorer with Trillium Studios Film on Norwell's exquisite rivers.

An excerpt from the film the late Cary Wolinsky and his son Yari made for the 50th anniversary of the North and South Rivers Watershed Association. *Trillium Studios Film*

NORWELL – In early spring 2020, as COVID-19 shut down Massachusetts, two filmmakers found themselves rising before dawn each morning to go exploring on the North and South rivers, which wind through four South Shore towns.

It was an exciting time for Cary Wolinsky, a retired National Geographic photographer, and his son, Yari, who worked together at [Trillium Studios Film](#) in Norwell.



Cary Wolinsky, right, and his son, Yari, in Central Australia in 1999 when Cary was photographing "The Lost City" in Litchfield National Park for a National Geographic Magazine piece, "Australia, A Harsh Awakening, July, 2000." *Provided By Family*

"We'd say, 'Today we have to get up and make the river look beautiful,' and it wasn't difficult at all," Yari recalled.

They had been hired to make a [50th anniversary](#) film about the rivers and the people who love them for the [North and South Rivers Watershed Association](#). Carey and his wife, Barbara, had lived in Norwell since the 1970s. Carey, a longtime member, served on the group's advisory board.



Cary Wolinsky films the early-evening light at one of his favorite places, the North River in Norwell, not far from where he lives, in 2020. [Turnaround Films](#)

"It was wonderful to be outdoors and to experience the river the way the watershed association wants everyone to experience it," Yari said. The rivers are designated as a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Wolinskys spent the spring, summer and fall filming some of the most beautiful river and marshland areas in Norwell, Scituate, Marshfield and Hanover.



Yari Wolinsky sets his sights on the effects of drought along a riverbank as he works on a project for [Turnaround Films](#).

The film, with stunning visuals and eloquent narration by others who also love the watershed, runs just under 7 minutes. Viewers see ospreys in a nest, bald eagles, herring running, seals, marsh marigolds, a yoga class next to the river, aerial views of kayaks moving and sweeping marsh grass.

"When I take a group (of young people) out, everyone becomes an explorer," Brian Taylor, a watershed educator, says in the film.

Pastel artist [Liz Haywood-Sullivan](#) describes her joy in seeing "every color in the rainbow in the marsh" and how "the more you look, the more you see the changes and it draws you in."

Haywood-Sullivan was filmed as she painted with pastels in the marsh. She said it was a privilege to work with the two "legendary filmmakers ... and seeing the caring working interaction between father and son was inspiring."

The assignment turned out to be especially meaningful and poignant for Yari Wolinsky. It gave him the chance to spend more time with [his father, who died unexpectedly this past June](#) at age 75, and to gain more insight into how he saw the world around him.



Norwell filmmaker Cary Wolinsky, left, watches as his son, Yari, shoots footage for a documentary in Chelsea. [Turnaround Films](#)

Father and son had worked together producing films since 2007; the anniversary film gave them a new focus. They began producing short educational documentaries about finding innovative solutions to some of the problems climate change is causing in the environment. [Turnaround Films](#) was created within Trillium Studios for that purpose. The Research Climate Group provided funding.

Using the power of stories to inspire change



One solution to pavement is to turn rooftops into green spaces. *Turnaround Films*

At its annual meeting Nov. 5, the [watershed association](#) presented this year's Barbara Pearson Memorial Award to Turnaround Films for finding "a way of replacing gloom about the world's future with inspiration."

"You understand how to use the power of storytelling to motivate people to have hope and work for change," [Samantha Woods, the watershed association's executive director](#), said to Yari and his mother.

The environmental films were made, Woods said, in "such a wonderfully personal way that hopefully inspires people to make changes we need."



Games can be used to teach environmental values. *Turnaround Films*

Turnaround Films has made nine short films. The latest one, on reducing road salt in Franklin, was released last week.

Using a similar format, each film first presents a problem, such as the extensive use of road salt, explaining how that affects people and the environment. Then the story of what people are trying to do to help unfolds. University students and community leaders explain potential solutions they are working on and how they are adapting their lives to change.



Malden resident Karen Buck, volunteer president of the grassroots organization Friends of the Malden River, has worked for years to clean up the river. She was selected as a 2023 Commonwealth Heroine in a ceremony at the State House. *Turnover Films*

In a time of "doom and gloom" about climate change, Yari said, "we want people to see these films and say, 'Here is someone who made a difference.' It can be hard to get past the inertia to inspire people."

The nine films are grouped in three series. In the first series, "[The Impervious Problem](#)" looks at how concrete and asphalt have covered over natural drainage areas and how roofs have cut off the sky from the soil. One result has been increasing flooding and runaway stormwater carrying trash.

The film "[Green Roofs](#)" presents an alternative: a rooftop covered with soil and plants, open to the sun.



The North River in Norwell is a favorite place for water exploration. *North And South Rivers Watershed Association*

"[Karen and the River](#)" tells the story of the remarkable [Karen Buck](#), who moved to Malden, was aghast at the industrial debris and trash in the narrow Malden River and began going out alone, fishing out trash in the water on her own. Eventually she had started an environmental movement, working with the Mystic River Watershed Association.

Keeping a sense of humor in her oily hip boots

Working with Cary and Yari Wolinsky was "an absolute pleasure and a tremendous learning experience," Buck said last week. "I had no idea how much time goes into making a film.

"They spent a lot of time out on the Malden River. And the warmth and respect they showed for the work and the mission and for me allowed me to relax."

That shows in the film, as she says, in good humor, that slogging around in oily water in hip boots is probably "good for my immune system."



The effects of prolonged drought on the Third Herring Brook in Norwell. *Turnaround Films*

"[Looking for Microplastics](#)" investigates what happens to all the plastic containers we use. A University of New Hampshire student follows the trail in the Hampton-Seabrook Estuary. Plastic containers end up breaking down into tiny "micro particles" that end up in rivers, oceans, fish and sea birds and now are found in the blood and lungs of humans.

In "[The Chelsea Cool Block](#)," Boston University experts and landscape architects work with the community to identify the hottest block in Chelsea. Over a year, they begin using proven strategies (shade trees, different road surfaces, painting rooftops white) to try to cool it down.

And in the just-released "[On the Road with Salt](#)," the Franklin Public Works Department develops a way to use less road salt in the winter, reducing harmful road runoff.

The second series, "[The Drought Problem](#)," has one film that looks at why we can no longer take water supplies for granted, focusing on the Ipswich River.



In "The X-Cel Conservation Corps," an underserved community trains for a career in wastewater. *Turnaround Films*

The third series has two films on climate education: "[The X-Cel Conservation Corps](#)" in Boston and "[Lessons in Change Making](#)," which is about a private school in Pennsylvania.

The films may be seen for free at turnaround-films.com/films and are available to subscribers for free use by schools, lawmakers, activists and organizations.

For all of its achievements and promise in finding new ways to communicate about climate change, Turnaround Films faces an uncertain future. The late Cary Wolinski was so much a part of the company, with his distinct set of skills and his vision.

Yari said he wants to continue the Turnaround approach but the original donor has stepped back and new sources of funding are needed. [Information about donations and grants](#) is available on the website [and the donor page](#). For more information about Turnaround Films, turnaround-films.com.