

**For Immediate Release**

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For additional information and/or downloadable images, visit  
[www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos](http://www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos)  
Program companion website, visit [www.pbs.org/lifematters](http://www.pbs.org/lifematters)

***INDEPENDENT LENS's "LIFE MATTERS" IS FILMMAKER KYLE BOYD'S  
FASCINATING PORTRAIT OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HIS FATHER,  
AN ABORTION DOCTOR IN PRE-ROE V. WADE RURAL TEXAS***

*"I decided this was important. This was a place where I could strike a blow  
for human freedom...for liberty."—Curtis Boyd, M.D.*

*Film by Kyle Boyd  
Premieres Nationally on "Independent Lens"  
ITVS's Acclaimed Series on PBS  
Tuesday, January 20 at 10:30 P.M.  
(check local listings)*

(San Francisco, CA) —In the era before women were able to get legal abortions, there were still some doctors scattered around the country who risked imprisonment, loss of license, and their personal and career futures in order to provide safe abortions to their patients. Filmmaker Kyle Boyd's father, Dr. Curtis Boyd, was one such individual. A rural Texan and one-time Pentecostal preacher, Dr. Boyd was transformed by the social revolution of the '60s and, as a small town physician, he performed thousands of abortions for desperate women from all walks of life. A surprising and myth-shattering look at a man, his times and his community, **LIFE MATTERS** airs nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Don Cheadle, on Tuesday, January 20 at 10 P.M. (check local listings).

Raised on a farm outside of Athens, Texas, Curtis Boyd became “the little man of the family” while his father served in WWII. Taking his responsibility very seriously, he worked hard, picking peas, milking cows and maintaining straight A’s in school. He was voted “Most Courteous Boy” by his high school class, and from the time he was a teenager, the local church elders were convinced he was a prophet and that he was “called” to preach—something Curtis accepted dutifully throughout his high school and college years. But his real interest was medicine, so the hometown boy made good, earning his medical degree and returning home to open a family practice. Along with his wife and three small children, Dr. Boyd was the pride of the community.

But then came the ‘60s, and social change was in the air, sweeping from New York to San Francisco, as well as to small towns across the country—including rural Texas. Always a student of philosophy and a proponent of human rights, Boyd was captivated by the issues consuming the country. The war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement and the women’s movement transformed him from a cautious, law-abiding physician into a political and social activist.

As surprising as it seems today, in 1965 Dr. Boyd was approached by the local leaders of a national organization, Clergy Consultation on Problem Pregnancy; the Texas chapter of the organization was based at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. The Clergy Consultation was a group of compassionate religious leaders from many denominations including Protestants, Jews and Southern Baptists, who were concerned about the growing number of women who were either too poor or too remote to obtain safe abortions. The group provided referrals to counseling services and doctors who were willing to provide abortion services.

While Boyd was hesitant to become involved in something that was clearly illegal, he felt it was imperative to provide a safe alternative to dangerous back alley abortions. As Boyd says, “This was important. This was a place where I could strike a blow for human freedom...for liberty.”

Once he decided to accept the Clergy’s offer, the response was overwhelming. Women from all across the country were referred to him through the nationwide network of clergymen. As the demand for his services grew, he was unable to keep his involvement secret. The town began to gossip and death threats and bomb scares eventually forced Dr. Boyd to leave his hometown and relocate his practice to Dallas.

The constant threats to his wife and children, the fear of losing his medical license and the possibility of being arrested were very real, and the pressure was ultimately too much for the family. In 1971, Curtis and his wife divorced. However, Boyd continued to perform abortions, determined to help women until the laws changed. In 1973, The U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision. Boyd was overjoyed, believing the battle was finally over, and the fears of imprisonment and harassment were behind him. Women could finally control their

reproduction—legally and safely. But ironically, it was after abortion was made legal that the most serious harassment began. To this day Dr. Boyd continues to practice and receives death threats and harassment on a regular basis. In recent years his clinic has been the target of multiple arsons, and is a favorite of Operation Rescue protests and activity.

In telling this personal story, Boyd uses extensive interviews with both of his parents, home movies, and testimony from Dr. Boyd's patients, co-workers, contemporaries and clients. Eschewing the angry, frequently combative rhetoric and sometimes violent debate surrounding the issue of abortion, **LIFE MATTERS** offers instead a very thoughtful, personal portrait of the filmmaker's father, a man whose convictions were unshakable and whose life mirrors the myriad paradoxes of his time and place.

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### **About the Filmmaker**

#### **Kyle Boyd - Producer /Director/Editor**

Boyd is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where he received the Award for Excellence in Documentary upon graduation. His student film, *Side Tracks*, won top awards at the NYU Video Festival, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Cinematography and Best Editing. In addition, he received the Student Emmy for Best Documentary at the 1990 Academy of Television Arts and Sciences College TV Awards.

Boyd has since directed more than a dozen award-winning documentaries and educational programs on such topics as teen suicide, apartheid, the history of trade unions, life after prison and understanding prejudice. Kyle Boyd is currently president and co-founder of Grayscale, LLC., a video production company based in Brooklyn, New York. Beyond producing and directing, Boyd is also an accomplished videographer and editor, working on several series for national broadcast television.

### **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is a weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their

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independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history, which prompted Nancy Franklin in The New Yorker to write "Watching *Independent Lens* ... is like going into an independent bookstore-you don't always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn't even know you wanted." Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community outreach campaigns. Further information about the series is available at [www.pbs.org/independentlens](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens). *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

### **About ITVS**

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org). ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.

### **About PBS**

PBS, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, is a private, nonprofit media enterprise owned and operated by the nation's 349 public television stations. Serving nearly 90 million people each week, PBS enriches the lives of all Americans through quality programs and education services on noncommercial television, the Internet and other media. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org), the leading dot-org Web site on the Internet.

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