

AN HOMAGE TO THE SWORD

IF YOU HAVE BEEN
AROUND THE
SPORT OF FENCING
LONG ENOUGH TO
TRAVEL TO A NORTH
AMERICAN CUP,
IF YOU FOLLOW TEAM
USA THROUGH ITS
OLYMPIC EXPLOITS,
CHANCES ARE
YOU'VE HEARD OF
CARL BORACK.

BY CYNTHIA BENT-FINDLAY

Borack has been a fixture on the fencing scene since his teens. In 1969, he became the youngest male to win a National Championship title, at the time at just 21 years old. Since then, he competed on an Olympic Team ('72), served as team captain to four U.S. Olympic Teams ('88, '92, '96 and '00) and countless other international competitions, and served as chef de mission for the 2016 U.S. Olympic Fencing Team.

His professional life may not be as well known to those in the fencing community, however. Borack is an experienced film, television and stage producer. His credits range from major motion pictures such as "The Big Fix" with Richard Dreyfuss starring, to NFL games to productions of "Othello." Dreyfuss and Borack remain close to this day, with the actor even giving Borack's introduction speech when he was inducted into the U.S. Fencing Hall of Fame in 2012.

Now, Borack has married his two passions into a pair of documentary films, 2016's "A Path to Excellence" (narrated by Dreyfuss) and 2017's "What Is It About Fencing?"

For Borack, the making of the films is beyond personal.

A bout with cancer that began in 2011, he says, put new urgency and inspiration into his long-held desire to pay homage to his sport through film.

"It was the first professional thing I wanted to do once I recovered. No more waiting, time is too precious," he said.

It wasn't simply his love for the sport that jolted him into action, though. Borack credits the grit he learned from his years of fencing as helping to save his life.

"A Path to Excellence" details the story of Peter Westbrook and the Westbrook Foundation. The film gives voice to PWF fencers past and present, and brings to life the story of how fencing and the PWF have changed the lives of thousands of inner-city kids.

The documentary features footage fencing fans will savor, from West-

On the way to becoming good fencers,
they became **inspired** human beings.



A Path to Excellence

From street to elite.

The story of Olympians paying it forward.

A BHHS Doc LLC/Galloping Dog Production • A Carl Borack Film • "A Path To Excellence"
Written, Produced, & Directed by Carl Borack • Narration by Richard Dreyfuss
Director of Photography: Bruce Schultz • Edited by Scott C. Silver & Thomas Sabinsky
Music by Holly Tatnall

**"SO MANY ACCOMPLISHED
FENCERS HAVE GONE ON
TO GREAT SUCCESS IN
THEIR PROFESSIONS...
HOW DOES FENCING PLAY
IN THEIR SUCCESS?"**

— CARL BORACK

We get to hear the musings of Emmy-winning producers, entrepreneurs, CEOs and other professionals in a wide range of industries about why they love fencing – and how it's helped them build their successful professional lives.

"So many accomplished fencers have gone on to great success in their professions, and I wanted to explore how the sport impacted their lives. How does fencing play in their success?" Borack mused.

"One of the things that has always occurred to me are the values that fencing teaches that are applied to life. Famed fencing coach Csaba Elthes used to say 'You are in fencing as you are in life.' Just the whole process of learning how to fence, let alone excel, the powerful influence of the discipline gained from the fencing lesson and constant practice," Borack said. "In my experience ... I think the most important ingredient I gained was confidence. I chose a difficult profession, film producing, not an easy career choice; yet I was not dismayed with the onerous path, I persevered. I can thank fencing for that."

Those who have seen the films agree.

"Sport can contribute great lessons for life, and, in this case your film is putting this together showcasing it through the sport of fencing," said Thomas Bach, former Olympic fencer for Germany and current president of the International Olympic Committee, in a testimonial to Borack. "Thank you very much again for your dedication to the promotion of sport in general, and fencing in particular beyond the field of play."

Mandy Patinkin, star of perhaps the most beloved "fencing" movie ever – "Princess Bride" – responded: "It's a must see for anyone in any walk of life. You don't even need to be a fencer to learn the lessons from this beautiful film. It is so inspiring, thank you, thank you, thank you."

Borack says his goal for the films is simply to widen the audience for the sport. There's some possibility they may run on the Olympic Channel. "A Path to Excellence" also was an official selection to the 2017 San Francisco Black Film Festival.

"What Is It About Fencing?" also was screened at the Orlando Film Festival on October 20, and Borack says more showings are in the works. ■

brook's own glory days on the strip through the era of his students' great Olympic successes, including Erinn Smart (foil team silver, 2008 Olympic Games) and her brother Keeth Smart (saber team silver, '08).

The movie also touches base with PWF students and parents of students, interviewed in front of the backdrop of the busy Saturday morning classes at Fencers Club in New York.

It's a grand in-depth look at the Foundation, which Borack has been watching grow since even before its inception in 1991. The movie features a 1988 NBC film clip of Westbrook voicing his vision for the PWF as he prepared for the '88 Games.

"Over the years I watched [Peter] create the Peter Westbrook Foundation along with Don Anthony, Bob Cottingham and Michael Lofton (Mikhail Sankofa), all guys on teams that I had captained," Borack said. "As PWF produced some amazing fencers and they started winning medals and making the U.S. teams on which I served as captain or chief of mission, I grew more and more impressed and intrigued, and felt it was a great story to tell."

"What Is It About Fencing?" tells a different story. It's Borack's attempt to get at what draws us into this unique sport. Through a series of interviews, Borack takes us on an intimate exploration of what many of the sport's luminaries have taken from fencing into life beyond the strip.