

# sneak preview

## FIRST INTERVIEW: Andie MacDowell in "The 5th Quarter"

Actress and Asheville resident Andie MacDowell will star in the March 25 release of "The 5th Quarter" filmed in Winston-Salem. This feature film is based on the 2006 true story of one family's courage and inspiration in the face of tragedy.

Luke Abbate was killed in an auto accident just days before his sixteenth birthday. He accepted a ride with another teenager after a high school team practice and never made it home. His mother Maryann, played by MacDowell in the movie, still cries when she talks about the ordinary day that ended in heart wrenching sorrow.

Luke's older brother Jon, a football player at Wake Forest University, channeled his grief in an unusual way. He changed his jersey number to five, the same as his brother's high school jersey. He began holding up five fingers at the beginning of each game's fourth quarter to honor Luke. He stretched his hand toward his parents seated in the fifth section of the stadium. They returned the gesture.

Fans and even opposing players began to do the same. The Wake Forest Demon Deacons won a record 11 games that season, sometimes going into overtime — the fifth quarter. They went on to play in the Orange Bowl.

In her first interview about the movie release, MacDowell answered questions about her emotional journey in portraying Luke Abbate's mother, who was often on set during filming, along with her husband.

**Rapid River Magazine:** What was it like having Luke's mother on location?

**Andie MacDowell:** It was very intimate and powerful. Maryann was so gracious and supportive.

**RR:** How did Maryann and her husband cope with Luke's being an organ donor?

**AM:** The family really struggled with that. Maryann was the one who calmed everybody and reminded them that being an organ donor was Luke's choice. Being there for the filming brought it all back for them; they were still very raw.

**RR:** Did you use thoughts of possibly losing one of your own children to help you get into character?

**AM:** No, I thought about Luke instead. It was depressing playing that role, especially when I would be in my room by myself.

**RR:** How did you cope with those emotions?

**AM:** I would write poems about Luke to help the pain go away. It would not go away, though. It was a lonely experience.

**RR:** What strategies do you use in your career to keep you grounded when you are

playing various characters?

**AM:** It depends on what I am doing at the time. I use yoga, exercise, praying, and walking outside in the sunshine.

**RR:** How was it working with Aidan Quinn, who played your husband Steven, and with Ryan Merriman, who played your son Jon?

**AM:** They were both wonderful. I have admired Aidan for many years. We worked well together. We were all supportive of each other. There was a lot of camaraderie. Ryan was just adorable. He knew how important his job was.

**RR:** What was one of the things that impressed you about the movie?

**AM:** In one of the scenes, we were filming at a real Wake Forest football game. They went into the fifth quarter and won! I still get chills thinking about it. If you did not believe before that, you would have to wonder.

### Maryann Abbate

In a phone interview from her Marietta, GA, home, Maryann Abbate cried, as she described the loss of her son and the filming of the movie. She said that she and her husband cope by moving forward. "It is like dealing with a chronic illness; you learn to live with it and move on," Abbate said.

She was at home cooking supper and caring for their disabled daughter, when she got the news of Luke's accident. The speeding teen driver lost control on a one lane roller-coaster-like road with no guard rail. Luke's back passenger seat was crushed on impact. "I was numb," she said. "I operated out of instinct. When the numbness wore off about one month later, I crashed."

The hardest part about being on the movie location, Abbate stated, was the scene of MacDowell saying goodbye to Luke. "I had to leave the set; I cried and cried," she said. "Andie came and found me and asked 'Did I do it right?' I sensed she felt a great responsibility to do this right," she added. "I am grateful to her for that; she was my voice."

Abbate believes that good will come from the movie by warning teens about reckless driving and encouraging others to be organ donors. Five people received organ donations from Luke. "I did not want



Andie MacDowell stars in "The 5th Quarter" which will be released March 25.

INTERVIEWED BY CHERRY HART

tragedy to be the ending of Luke's life," she said. "It is interesting but not coincidental," she added, "that the movie is being released during the fifth anniversary year of Luke's death."

### Rick Bieber, Director

Rick Bieber wrote, directed, and produced "The 5th Quarter." No stranger to working with A-list actors, he started his movie career by producing "Flatliners," starring Julia Roberts, Keifer Sutherland, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, and Oliver Platt. He also produced "Made in America" and "Radio Flyer" for which he says he holds "a great affection."

In a warmly sincere voice, Bieber characterized MacDowell as "the consummate professional." He said, "She is technically skilled and takes her work seriously. Her performance in this role has such a strength, dignity, and integrity."

Bieber added that playing such a role would be challenging for any actor. "Andie had the added challenge and responsibility of portraying the experience of a real person who was watching the filming," he said. "This is one of her finest performances!"

MacDowell is known for her roles in films, such as Steven Soderbergh's "sex, lies, and videotape;" the romantic comedy "Four Weddings and a Funeral;" the holiday classic "Groundhog Day;" and "Short Cuts," which won the cast a Golden Globe for Best Ensemble. Two more obscure films, "Object of Beauty" and "Crush," are among her favorites.

"The 5th Quarter" opens March 25 in Winston-Salem and Charlotte. Pick-up the March issue of Rapid River Magazine for more details.

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