

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Additional still photos, audio and video files provided upon request.



Above: Filmmaker Sprague Theobald on a scouting mission on the shores of the Arctic in 2008. Theobald departs in June to begin filming his next documentary *THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE*.

LOCAL FILMMAKER AND CREW TO CROSS 5,000 MILES THROUGH THE ARCTIC'S NORTHWEST PASSAGE

NEWPORT, RI (MAY 22, 2009) – DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER SPRAGUE THEOBALD AND HIS CREW FROM HOLE IN THE WALL PRODUCTIONS ARE DEPARTING RHODE ISLAND FOR THE VOYAGE OF A LIFETIME. THERE WILL BE NO TROPICAL DRINKS SERVED AND NO SUNBATHING ON DECK. ON THE CONTRARY, ITS GOING TO BE A COLD, DARK AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS TRIP.

THEOBALD, AN EMMY-AWARD WINNER, IS SETTING OUT TO BEGIN FILMING HIS NEXT DOCUMENTARY, *THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE*. THE TITLE REFERS TO AN ELUSIVE MARITIME ROUTE THROUGH THE ARCTIC AND CANADIAN ARCHIPELAGO-- A STONE'S THROW FROM THE NORTH POLE. WHEN ITS NOT FROZEN SOLID WITH "PACK ICE", THE FABLED NORTHWEST PASSAGE WATERWAYS CONNECT THE ATLANTIC WITH THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

RECENTLY, THEOBALD'S LATEST SUBJECT HAS BEEN HEATING UP-- LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY. CLIMATE CHANGE HAS RENDERED THE ARCTIC WATERWAYS FULLY NAVIGABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY -- AT LEAST DURING SUMMER MONTHS. THEOBALD TOURED THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE IN SUMMER 2008 WHILE RESEARCHING THE PROJECT AND SCOUTING LOCATIONS FOR THE UPCOMING FILM. HE WAS SURPRISED TO SEE THE PASSAGE'S WATERWAYS RELATIVELY CLEAR OF ICE. IN 2007 AND 2008, THE NORTH POLE'S ICE CAP RECEDED TO RECORD LOW READINGS. SOME WOULD SAY ALARMINGLY LOW. THE ICE CAP RECEDED MORE FROM 2007-2008 THAN IT DID FROM 1974-2007. LESS ICE IN THE PASSAGE MAKES IT THE TARGET FOR A NEW SHIPPING ROUTE. ONE THAT WOULD REDUCE SHIPPING TIME AND COSTS BY 25% WHEN COMPARED TO

TRADITIONAL ROUTE THROUGH THE PANAMA CANAL. LESS ICE IN THE ARCTIC ALSO MEANS EASIER ACCESS TO THE NATURAL RESOURCES THAT LIE BENEATH.

THE FIVE NATIONS SURROUNDING THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE ROUTE ARE IN DISPUTE OVER BOUNDARIES AND NEW LAND AND SEAS REVEALED BY THE RETREATING ICE CAP. RECENTLY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION BRAVED AN INCREDIBLE DIVE TO PLANT THEIR FLAG ON THE ARCTIC OCEAN FLOOR. OTHER NATIONS HAVE BEEN MORE RELAXED ABOUT THEIR CLAIM. UNTIL RECENTLY. THESE AND OTHER FACTORS HAVE RESULTED IN WHAT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC RECENTLY CALLED AN “ARCTIC LAND GRAB” (MAY 2009).

A U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY RELEASED IN JULY 2008 STATES THAT THE ARCTIC CONTAINS 1/4 OF THE WORLD’S UNTAPPED OIL AND NATURAL GAS SUPPLIES. DIAMONDS AND PRECIOUS MINERALS EXIST IN THE ARCTIC AND FISH STOCKS ARE REPORTED TO BE ALREADY DEPLETED AND POORLY MANAGED. THE RIGHT TO DRILL PORTIONS OF LAND FOR SAMPLES AND TESTING WERE RECENTLY AUCTIONED OFF FOR TOP DOLLAR.

THEOBALD SAYS HIS DOCUMENTARY’S OBJECTIVE IS “**TO SHOW WHAT’S AT STAKE AND WHAT WE RISK LOOSING IF WE DON’T TAKE ACTION NOW TO PRESERVE WHAT’S LEFT OF THE ARCTIC FRONTIER.**” THEOBALD ADDED THAT HE WILL BE INTERVIEWING U.N. OFFICIALS, POLITICIANS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE “**... TO DOCUMENT FIRST HAND THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED IN THEIR LIFETIMES.**”

DESPITE THREATS TO THE FRONTIER, ITS NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM. MUCH OF THE ARCTIC AND NORTHWEST PASSAGE REMAIN WILD AND PRISTINE. ITS STUNNING BEAUTY AND LURE OF SUCCEEDING WHERE MANY HAVE FAILED ARE WHAT FIRST ATTRACTED THEOBALD TO THE PROJECT. THROUGHOUT THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE, VAST EXPANSES OF LAND AND COASTLINE MEET-UP WITH SAPPHIRE COLORED SEAS THAT ARE ROAMED WITH WILDLIFE. THE SHEER CLIFFS AND TOWERING MOUNTAINS DWARF EVEN THE LARGEST SHIPS. ALL OF WHICH CAPTURED THE FILMMAKER’S IMAGINATION AND ARE SURE TO DAZZLE AND LEAVE LASTING IMPRESSIONS WITH VIEWERS.

A NUMBER OF TELEVISION AND MEDIA OUTLETS ARE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THEOBALD AND HOLE IN THE WALL PRODUCTIONS FOR RIGHTS TO THE FOOTAGE AND FILM THEY’LL PRODUCE.

IN ADDITION TO THE ARCTIC’S NATURAL BEAUTY THEOBALD HOPES TO HELP PRESERVE, THEOBALD WILL ALSO USE THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE AS AN EDUCATIONAL PIECE ENCAPSULATING MARITIME HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILDERNESS FRONTIERS LIKE THE ARCTIC CAN PROVIDE.

THEOBALD’S OPUS OF WORK SPANS FORTY YEARS IN WRITING, JOURNALISM AND FILMMAKING. A FEW CAREER HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE HIS DOCUMENTARY *58 HARRISON LANE*, WHICH TELLS THE STORY OF THE WOODHALL SCHOOL FOR EXCEPTIONAL YOUNG MEN, AND WAS ACCEPTED INTO THE 2009 NEWPORT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL. HE EARNED AN EMMY AS PRODUCER OF *THE 25TH DEFENSE*, A 48-MINUTE DOCUMENTARY ON THE

AMERICA'S CUP RACES. *THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE* MAY PROVE TO BE HIS GREATEST WORK YET. IT IS CERTAINLY HIS MOST AMBITIOUS.

THE FILMMAKER ALSO HAS AN INTERESTING FAMILY-CONNECTION TO THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE.

NEARLY TWO CENTURIES AGO, HIS GREAT (X6) GRANDFATHER RAN A SHIPPING FLEET OUT OF BOSTON BOUND FOR SAN FRANCISCO AND EAST-ASIA. **"I CAN ONLY IMAGINE HOW HE EYED THAT ROUTE,"** THEOBALD SAID. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, THEOBALD'S GREAT (X8) UNCLE BECAME THE FIRST PERSON TO SAIL A SLOOP AROUND THE WORLD. A FULL CAPTAIN AT AGE 19, HE SKIPPED THE SLOOP *UNION* (WHICH, COINCIDENTALLY, ALSO DEPARTED FROM NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND) TO A FULL CIRCUMNAVIGATION – AND COMPLETED THE TASK IN JUST 22 MONTHS DESPITE BEING SHUT OFF FROM NAVIGATING THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE. FOR THEOBALD, THE TRANSIT WILL HONOR THE QUEST LEFT UNFULFILLED BY HIS ANCESTORS.

KEEPING WITH FAMILY TRADITION, THEOBALD'S STEP-DAUGHTER DOMINIQUE TANTON SERVES ON THE CREW AS FIRST MATE AND HIS SON SEFTON IS ALSO INVOLVED WITH THE PROJECT. LONGTIME FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES CAPTAIN CLINTON BOLTON, DIRECTOR ALAN WEISSMAN AND WRITER MARC ROSENBERG ALSO MAKE UP THE DOCUMENTARY'S CREW. MASTER DIVER GREG DEASCENTIS IS ON BOARD WITH THE PROJECT AS WELL. DEASCENTIS' IS A COMMERCIAL DIVER AND PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER WHO, ALONG WITH OTHER PROJECTS, HAS WORKED ON AN UNDERWATER ARCHEOLOGICAL PROGRAM FOR OVER TEN YEARS. USING THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES, HE AND THEOBALD WILL BRAVE THE ICY ARCTIC WATERS TO SHOOT AN UNPRECEDENTED NEW COLLECTION OF UNDERWATER CINEMATOGRAPHY. IF THERE EVER WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY TEAM PREPARED TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL VOYAGE THROUGH THE ARCTIC THIS COULD BE IT.

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE HAS CLAIMED 300 LIVES AND 10 SHIPS IN MODERN HISTORY ALONE. FORTUNATELY THEOBALD HAS ASSEMBLED THIS EXPERT CREW OF SAILORS, DIVERS AND FILMMAKERS UNIQUELY SUITED FOR AN ARCTIC EXPEDITION AND WHO WILL CAPTURE IT ON FILM IN COMPELLING WAYS.

AND MODERN TECHNOLOGY IS ON THEIR SIDE. THEOBALD'S BOAT, A 57' NORDHAVN TRAWLER NAMED *BAGAN*, HAS BEEN REFIT WITH SPECIAL ARCTIC GEAR INCLUDING FORWARD-LOOKING SONAR (FOR SPOTTING ICEBERGS AND UNMAPPED SHOALS) AND HIGH-SPEED SATELLITE INTERNET ACCESS FOR SENDING PHOTOS, AUDIO, AND VIDEO OUT THE WORLD VIA THE PROJECT WEBSITE (WWW.NORTHWESTPASSAGEFILM.COM).

THEIR TENTATIVE ROUTE THROUGH THE PASSAGE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CHANGE ONCE THEY BEGIN NAVIGATING THE GLACIERS AND 3-FOOT THICK "PACK ICE". EVEN IN SUMMER, ARCTIC PACK ICE CAN MEAN NEW JERSEY-SIZED SHEETS OF 3FT THICK ICE THAT SHIFTS, COLLIDES, AND ERUPTS ABOVE SEA LEVEL SIMILAR TO TECTONIC PLATES BENEATH THE EARTH'S CRUST.

THEOBALD HAS ALIGNED THE DOCUMENTARY WITH SEVERAL KEY SPONSORS. WITH THEIR SUPPORT HE WILL PUBLISH DAILY PHOTOGRAPHY, AUDIO/VIDEO, AND NEWS REPORTS TO THE FILM'S WEBSITE (WWW.NORTHWESTPASSAGEFILM.COM). HE HOPES THAT BY MAKING LIVE BROADCASTS LIKE THIS TO THE WEB AND

THROUGH TV AND NEWS PARTNERS, HE WILL GENERATE SUPPORT AND AWARENESS FOR THE ARCTIC'S PEOPLE, WILDLIFE AND HABITAT. AT THE VERY LEAST HE HOPES TO DOCUMENT WHAT WAS THERE AND WHAT WE RISK LOOSING IN ONE OF THE LAST GREAT FRONTIERS ON EARTH.

A BON VOYAGE PARTY WILL TAKE PLACE JUNE 12 IN NEWPORT, RI WHERE SPONSORS AND GUESTS WILL BE ABLE TO VIEW A 10-MINUTE TRAILER OF THE FILM. A QUESTION/ANSWER SESSION WITH THEOBALD AND HIS CREW AS WELL AS TOUR OF THEIR SHIP, BAGAN, WILL BE PROVIDED.

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For high resolution images and access to audio/video clips during the 5-month voyage contact:

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