

### **Knee Deep**

81 Minutes, USA, 2007, Color

An Ingonish Films/Moenkopi Group Production

Produced by Michael Chandler & Sheila Canavan

Written & Directed by Michael Chandler

Photographs available online at

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***KNEE DEEP is a mystery, a comedy, a deft character study and, ultimately, a bracing critique of how development is contributing to the disappearance of the family farm.***

--Jurors for The Maysles Brothers Award, Denver FF

***A stranger-than-truth tale both amusing and appalling...*** --Dennis Harvey, Variety

***A rural Rashomon and like the masterful movie it most resembles, 1992's Brother's Keeper, it is up to us to figure it all out. Amazing... mesmerizing... one of the best documentaries on closed off communities and human politics ever mounted.***

--Bill Gibron, DVD Talk

***Darkly satiric...Chandler is a master at gauging the values of a community in crisis.***

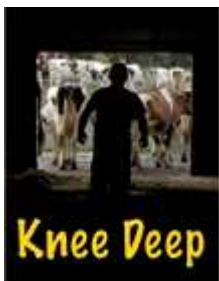
--Erin Clements, Timeout New York

***Relentlessly surprising. Hilarious. Plays like a rural film noir directed by Errol Morris.***

--Chris Gray, The Phoenix

***A satiric study of rural American values wrapped in an attempted murder mystery. Funny, chilling, and eye-opening on every level.***

--Roger Moore, Orlando Sentinel



A Film by Michael Chandler

## LOGLINE

Matricide gets a modern twist in this bittersweet true-crime story of a Maine boy who believed the family farm was his, right up until the day his mother evicted him--the day Mom got shot.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

Every time Josh Osborne found himself exhausted from work and knee deep in cow manure, his parents reminded him that someday their Maine dairy farm would be his. But then Dad died, and Mom reneged on the deal. So Josh and a motley crew of backwoods friends and relatives hatched their hare-brained scheme: kill Mom and keep the farm.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

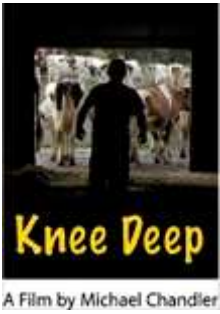
If you travel through Maine and leave behind the familiar coast of summer vacations, you find yourself in a different Maine, the Maine of fields, farms, work and dirt. It's a place most tourists never see—as the locals say, the real Maine.

This is where Josh Osborne was raised, on his family's third-generation dairy farm in Farmington, with his mother, father, and two sisters. Pulled out of school in the sixth grade, Josh would get lost on the five-mile trip to town and faced a life of hard labor. As an uncle says: *Once your ass hits the tractor seat, those days are just as long as a full-grown man's.* He worked on the farm every day for a dozen years on the promise that it would someday be his.

But things didn't turn out that way. Which is why on a beautiful summer's day, this 22-year-old farm boy found himself aiming a rifle at his mother.

Drawing from verite footage, home movies, interviews, police tapes, crime scene videos, love letters, and re-creations, *Knee Deep* asks the question: *Why would a son try to kill his mother?*

The answers are surprisingly tragic and comic.



## FILMMAKER STATEMENT

After many years away from Maine, my wife and co-producer Sheila and I returned to Maine intending to spend a part of each year there relaxing with our families. We were busy fixing up our little place on Westport Island and getting to know our neighbors who considered us “PFAs” (“People from Away”), even though I was born in Bangor and raised in Portland. Our neighbors Buddy and Dennis took great pleasure in teasing us for our lack of useful skills. They, of course, could fix anything. Although they were kind and helpful from the beginning, it wasn't until they'd wandered over while I was knee deep in mud, digging a trench for my generator in the freezing rain, that I felt we had a real chance for friendship.

We never intended to make a film in Maine but I could not help myself once I saw this headline in the local paper:

**Some in town stand behind man accused of shooting mother**

● Joshua Osborne's uncle says Joshua's father meant to bequeath his Farmington farm to his son.

**The Associated Press**

FARMINGTON — Some people who live in the farm community where Joshua Osborne lived and worked are standing behind the 22-year-old man as he stands accused of attempted murder in the shooting of his mother.

His supporters have tended Osborne's nose, offered him jobs and filled out for court appearances, saying they understand but do not condone what he allegedly did.

Joshua Osborne is charged with shooting his mother, Janette, in a dispute over the family farm.

mother returned from Colorado, where she had been living for years. She decided to sell the farm, and not to Joshua Osborne.

According to a police affidavit, Osborne tried to hire a woman to kill his mother for \$10,000 up front and \$2,000 more when she was dead. The woman refused.

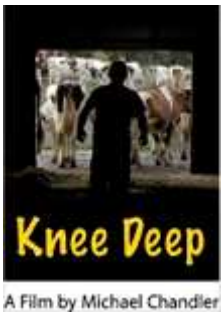
The story of this young dairy farmer from Farmington, Maine, who shoots his mother but has the support of the community, captured my attention. I am attracted to stories about young men at the crossroads. In an earlier film, *Forgotten Fires*, I told the story of Tim Welch, who got involved with a bunch of aging Ku Klux Klansmen and wound up burning two black churches. I wanted to

know if the Osborne incident was part of a larger story. We started to film out of necessity on the day the farm was being torn down to make way for a residential housing development.

The first time I met Josh, he was in the Franklin County Jail awaiting trial. He'd been putting off the interview for a long time, and one of the jailers finally let me know that Josh didn't want to be seen in prison orange. They agreed to let him wear street clothes for our interview. Josh was used to being outdoors for sixteen hours a day. In jail, he slept all day, refusing to socialize or attend therapy sessions. I brought books on dairy farming and asked him questions about the animals. His description of feeding a calf from a bucket and his memories of childhood led to one of the more touching scenes in the film. Josh finally began to talk. In fact, questions poured out of him as he tried to make sense of what had happened, "Ain't that a good question, though?"

My approach to the film was initially deadly serious. After all, in addition to the Osborne story, dairy farming is very hard work and Maine has been losing farms at an alarming rate. Robin Chase (The Pie Lady) and her husband Pat, who let us film at their dairy farm, allow themselves one overnight trip each year to Boothbay Harbor to recharge their batteries. This year they were so tired on the way that they stopped the car by the side of the road and fell asleep on the grass. A way of life and our native food supply are threatened by the favored status given to the housing development industry. But the fact that Josh's mother was not seriously wounded allowed us to take the film in the direction the story led us. Humor is an important part of life in Maine and of the film. Plotting Mom's death was wicked, but it was also--as we say around here-- "wicked" funny.

Now that we've finished the film and have had a chance to reflect a bit, I realize how important returning to Maine has been for me. As our neighbors and the people of Farmington have reminded me, Mainers have a special feeling for hard work and the land. We hope the film honors this devotion.



### **Michael Chandler, Producer/Director**

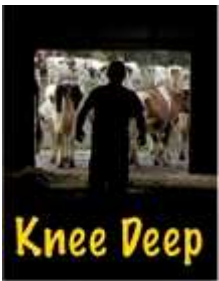
Michael Chandler is an Academy-Award nominated filmmaker, working in non-fiction and fiction film. Michael's film ***Forgotten Fires***, on the burning by Ku Klux Klansmen of Black churches in South Carolina, aired on over 250 PBS stations. It has won critical acclaim and numerous awards, including a Golden Spire at the San Francisco International Film Festival, a Crystal Heart from the Heartland Film Festival, and a Juror's Choice Award at the Charlotte Film Festival. Bill Moyers said about it: "If we wanted a real dialog about race in America, we'd start with this film." Michael has also produced and directed documentaries for the PBS series Frontline. ***Blackout***, a co-production with The New York Times, looked at the roots and repercussions of the California energy crisis and was the first media program to expose Enron's financial manipulation of energy markets. ***The Future of War***, an examination of the U.S. Army's ability to meet emerging global military threats, won a Silver Plaque for Investigative Reporting from the Chicago International Television Competition. ***Secrets of the SAT*** dealt with the impact of standardized testing in college admissions and won First Prize in Broadcast Journalism from the Education Writer's Association. Michael wrote and edited the documentary feature ***Freedom on My Mind***, which chronicled the voting rights struggle in Mississippi during the sixties. The film earned an Academy Award Nomination and the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. He also wrote and edited the Academy Award-nominated Waldo ***Salt: A Screenwriter's Journey***, the Emmy Award-winning Yosemite: ***The Fate of Heaven***, and ABC's ***Can't It Be Anyone Else?***, for which he received the Christopher Humanitarian Award. Michael has also edited feature films, including ***Never Cry Wolf***, ***Mishima***, and ***Amadeus***, for which he was nominated for an Academy Award.

### **Sheila Canavan, Producer**

Sheila Canavan is a nationally-known attorney in consumer law and predatory lending fraud, specializing in financial abuse of the elderly. She has just completed a three-year term on the Federal Reserve Board's Consumer Advisory Council, which advises the Board on its responsibilities under the Consumer Credit Protection Act. Her film credits include ***Waldo Salt: A Screenwriter's Journey*** and ***Yosemite, The Fate of Heaven***.

### **Blake Leyh, Composer**

Blake Leyh is a Composer, Sound Designer, and Music Supervisor who lives in New York City. He has composed scores for more than a dozen feature films, including B-Movie schlock classic ***American Cyborg***, the challenging independent drama ***Star Time***, and the award-winning documentary ***Twist Of Faith***. In 1996 he composed the score for the Sundance Jury Prize-winning documentary ***SICK: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist***, which marked the beginning of a long-term collaboration with filmmaker Kirby Dick. In 2001, Blake became the music supervisor on HBO's dramatic series ***The Wire*** and also composed the theme music for *The Wire*.



A Film by Michael Chandler

## CREDITS

An Ingonish Films/Moenkopi Group Production

### CREW:

Written & Directed by  
Produced by  
Music by  
Editing & Cinematography by

Michael Chandler  
Michael Chandler & Sheila Canavan  
Blake Leyh  
Michael Chandler

Re-recording & Sound Editing  
Color Grading  
Mastering

Kent Sparling  
Gary Coates  
Video Arts

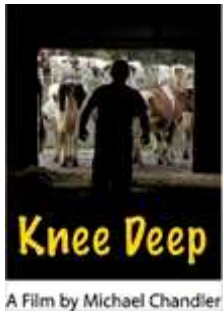
*Jerusalem Breakdown* courtesy

Greg Boardman

### CAST:

The Farmer  
The Girlfriend  
The Older Cousin  
The D.A.  
The Sister  
The Pie Lady  
The Pie Lady's Husband  
The Pie Lady's Son  
The Uncle Next Door  
The Cousin Next Door  
The Aunt Next Door  
The Cow Leaser  
The Old Girlfriend  
The Hired Hand  
The Defense Attorney  
Aunt Jo  
Aunt Rachel

Josh Osborne  
Donna Enman  
Jeffrey Jackson  
Andrew Robinson  
Julie Harmatys  
Robin Chase  
Pat Chase  
Isaiah Chase  
Bill Osborne  
Dustin Osborne  
Sandy Osborne  
Gerard Castonguay  
Kim Hardy  
Brian Orr  
Kevin Joyce  
Josephine Boutelier  
Rachel Crick



## PRESS & REVIEWS

One of the strangest, most deadpan, most intricately constructed docs at this year's festival... A satiric study of rural American values wrapped in an attempted murder mystery. Funny and chilling, beautifully shot, cunningly edited, and eye-opening on every level.

--Roger Moore, *Orlando Sentinel*

A stranger-than-truth tale both amusing and appalling.

--Dennis Harvey, *Variety*

Darkly satiric. Chandler, whose *Forgotten Fires* detailed the KKK's burning of black churches in a small Southern town, is a master at gauging the values of a community in crisis.

--Erin Clements, *Timeout New York*

One of 2007's best 'believe it or not' documentaries, Michael Chandler's amazing documentary *Knee Deep* is a rural *Rashomon*. Everyone has a version of events, and like the masterful movie it most resembles, 1992's *Brother's Keeper*, it is up to us to figure it all out. While it may be cliché to say it, the craftiest writer in the world couldn't create these people. ..While one has to remember that all "true life" tales are being filtered by the creator's camera (and choices), this is the rare effort that feels rightfully authentic. One of the best documentaries on closed-off communities and human politics ever mounted....A compelling cinematic experience...Highly Recommended

--Bill Gibron, *DVDTalk*

*Knee Deep* is a mystery, a comedy, a deft character study and, ultimately, a bracing critique of how development is contributing to the disappearance of the family farm.

--Jurors for The Maysles Brothers Award, Denver FF

*Knee Deep*, a relentlessly surprising feature by Michael Chandler, plays like a rural film noir directed by Errol Morris. In its stab at explaining an attempted murder in Franklin County, the film coherently lays out a story that doesn't make any sense, while leaving ample room to explore themes of urban development, the rural work ethic, and the curious overlap between truth and mythmaking. It's also hilarious and full of memorable characters.

--Chris Gray, *The Phoenix*

With his documentary *Knee Deep*, filmmaker Michael Chandler etches out a resonant and darkly comic glimpse of what happened when a young man foresaw the destruction of his only dream.

--Nathan Southern, *All Movie Guide*

Chandler's work furthers the current documentary approach of showing every side and every nuance, shifting the viewer's sympathies with almost every cut.

--Michael Fox, *KQED Arts & Culture*

The fact that this film has a strong sense of the ironic and a darkly humorous streak makes it all the more compelling to watch. My favorite documentary at the festival.

--Jeremiah Rancourt, *The Maine Edge*

*Knee Deep* provides not only a tongue-in-cheek account of a true crime story in the words of Osborne's family and neighbors, but also a peek into farming as a way of life that is swiftly vanishing.

--Joel Elliott, *Morning Sentinel*

A thoroughly enjoyable *Fargo*/*I Love You to Death*-esque portrait of a hilariously close-knit family ... a compelling look at a simple man driven to extremes, and what it takes to maintain a way of life.

--Zack Smith, *The Independent Weekly*

Audience members' jaws may be agape all through this strange-but-true story, about a sheltered Maine farmboy who attempts the matricide of his estranged, negligent mom...But what's even more shocking about the attempted murder is how most of the townspeople don't blame him for committing the act. Yeah, it's that kind of documentary.

--Craig Lindsey, *Raleigh News & Observer*

Interesting and intimate and at the same time about big topics like class and the American way. I especially liked the onion peeling nature, where the story keeps getting deeper and more complex. Great.

--Deborah Hoffmann, director, *Long Night's Journey Into Day*

This is a huge film. Josh's sense of desperation, hurt and betrayal is astounding. The sister is heart-rending. Donna is straight out of *The Maltese Falcon*. And *The Pie Lady* is like a wonderful tragic chorus. What have these people done to anybody but get up and work like rented mules for decades? So much is contained here: the end of family farming, the destruction of everything by the real estate machine, and perhaps most profoundly, the decline of whites--what I mean by that is these are proud, self-sustaining folk who have always felt themselves to be an integral part of the workings of the country and the economy. Now, in Friedman's *Flat World* they're being cast aside. What is going to become of them? There's a level where this is a kind of Sam Shepard tale, but there's another level below that that is epically tragic, because it makes us see that something is indeed coming to an end in America. I kept thinking while I was watching, "This is a Robert Frost poem, no, it's a Faulkner novel, no, it's Frost..."

- -Anthony Walton, author of *Mississippi: An American Journey*