





**ARTS**

## Film brings soldiers' stories to Encinitas

May 04, 2007

By Wehtahnah Tucker  
staff writer

 Print this story  
 E-mail this story

### MORE LOCAL NEWS

CARLSBAD  
CARMEL VALLEY  
DEL MAR  
ENCINITAS  
OCEANSIDE  
RANCHO SANTA FE  
SOLANA BEACH

### ADVERTISE WITH US

CLASSIFIED ADS  
DISPLAY AD RATES  
CONTACT THE AD DEPT

### CONNECT

CONTACT US  
FAQS

### SEND US INFORMATION

NEWS TIPS  
LETTER TO THE EDITOR  
OPEN HOUSE POSTING  
CALENDAR ITEM  
SUBMISSION  
TAKE THE COAST  
NEWS GROUP SURVEY!

ENCINITAS — The tragedy of war, the longing for family as a soldier braces for another day in a war-zone thousands of miles away from home and the voices of the loved ones left behind are part of a documentary that made its West Coast premiere at Encinitas' La Paloma Theater on April 28.

Narrated by Kevin Costner, "Muse of Fire" is based

on the best-selling anthology "Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families."

Compiled by the National Endowment for the Arts, or NEA, the anthology is the result of the endowment's effort to encourage soldiers and their loved ones to process their experiences through writing. The eyewitness accounts, private journal entries, short stories, poetry and e-mails were edited by Andy Carroll — best known for his work as editor of the bestselling books, "Letters of a Nation" and "War Letters." Carroll is also the founder of the Legacy Project, a national effort to preserve the letters and e-mails of veterans for posterity.

The relationship between the city and the NEA was solidified last year when the national book tour made one of its first stops in Encinitas. "This city does more for this project. There is a strong spirit behind the effort to have these stories heard," Carroll said.

Councilman Dan Dalager said he was pleased with the "Muse of Fire" and the positive response the film received from the audience. "This is not political," he said. "These are people's stories that are so universal and timeless."

Shot over a one-week period using the bare minimum in sets and backdrops, the documentary focuses on the spoken word of soldiers and their families. One former active-duty soldier whose wife was currently serving overseas explained the difficulties of raising children in the absence of their mother. "This is a war where our wives, daughter, mothers go to war. Gentlemen, we'd better be prepared," he cautioned.

His humor at times belied the pain and exhaustion of single parenting. "When they asked for a volunteer to be the cheerleader mom nobody looked at me," he said smiling into the camera. "Would you want me hanging out with your wife while you're fighting a war?"

Carroll moderated a panel discussion between the film's director, Lawrence Bridges, and contributors U.S. Army Capt. Ryan Kelly and Retired Lt. Col. Frank Correa of the U.S. Air force Reserve after the screening of the film to an enthusiastic audience.

Bridges said the idea of making the film was daunting. "I felt ill-prepared to make a film that represented the book. I didn't want it to be tragic but rather inspiring," he told the crowd.

Like many of the soldiers and family members in the film, Kelly and Correa explained the experience of writing down thoughts and emotions as "cathartic." Carroll said the NEA continues to accept writing submissions that are posted on its Web site.

Several audience members took the opportunity to ask the panel questions regarding their personal experiences in war and writing. One man who said he did not support the war in Iraq asked how he could reconcile his feelings with his desire to support the soldiers. "Supporting the troops means questioning your

government,” Kelly answered. “I fought for that right. Hold your government accountable.”

Correa followed up by saying that it wasn’t necessary to support a particular policy but that supporting the individuals was crucial.

For more information on “Muse of Fire,” visit the NEA’s Web site at [www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov). The NEA hopes to make the DVD available to the public soon.

Contact staff writer Wehtahnah Tucker via e-mail at [wtucker@coastnewsgroup.com](mailto:wtucker@coastnewsgroup.com).