

THE GERMAN SOCIETY'S

Friday Film Fest Series



Witness

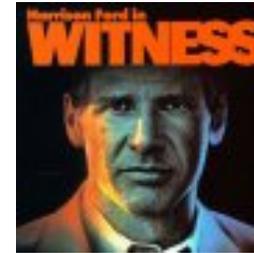
Director: Peter Weir
Writer: William Kelley, Earl W. Wallace
Music: Maurice Jarre

Language: English, German
Date: 1985
Genre: Drama
Length: 112 min.

Filming Locations:

30th Street Station
Intercourse, PA
Lancaster, PA
Strasburg, PA

Awards: 1986 Oscar Best Film Editing
1986 Oscar Best Writing



Precis – Karl Moehlmann

On Oct. 2, 2006, Charles Roberts stormed into a one-room Amish Schoolhouse in West Nickel Mines near Strasburg, PA and shot 10 young girls, killing five. This tragedy shocked the peaceful Amish community, Lancaster County, the entire nation and many people around the world. Millions of people sent messages and letters expressing their grief and sympathy and donated millions of dollars to a special fund for the victims.

But countless people were also inspired by the way the Amish reacted to this senseless act of violence. The church community expressed forgiveness toward the killer and his family, who were not Amish. Amish neighbors comforted Robert's widow and her three children only hours after the shooting and donated money from the special fund to them. Members of the Amish community went to the killer's burial service at the cemetery and hugged the widow and other members of his family.

These gestures of forgiveness made news around the world. The "outside" world gained compelling insights into the Amish and their beliefs, foremost among which was a refusal to balance hurt with hate and revenge. The

tragedy was used rather to inspire goodness and forgiveness. Great compassion and grace was poured out in the face of unimaginable acts of violence against members of their faith. The close knit families and community of the plain clothed Amish (who use no electricity and employ horse drawn buggies for transportation) evinced a powerfully resilient support system.

The old school was demolished and a new one was built in a different location. Four of the five surviving girls have returned to school while the fifth is confined to a wheelchair. Three of the families who lost daughters have had new babies and the family that lost 2 girls had a baby boy last year. Please, join us in a discussion of these events and of the Amish community in general after the film.

Forgiveness is the economy of the heart..
Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits. -Hannah More