



# THE MERRY DEATH COLLECTOR

A Short Documentary by Ben Murphy



## Project Genesis

After literally running into Arnie Meredith during a brief visit to Lafollette, Tennessee, I knew he had a story to tell. He was offbeat but passionate. Six months later, I had the opportunity to tell someone's story. My mind instantly went to Arnie and wondered if he would be that person. I called him and asked what he was doing. He said he just bought an old plane to hang in a store he hoped to open within the next month.

I liked the creative challenges ahead of me. This was my very first documentary and I had no idea what would happen. How many weeks I would be filming for? Would this story be compelling enough? One doubt I did not have: What would happen if he gave up? From the moment you meet Arnie, you know he is not a quitter.



Arnie and his family hang a biplane.

## Challenges

With no way of knowing how long Arnie would take to open up his store, I buckled up for the journey ahead. During filming days, I rarely had a clue what we would be doing that day because neither did Arnie. He fell weeks behind his projected opening date of Thanksgiving 2014, but I continued filming until he finally opened in late December. I was editing along the way and finally got a picture lock in January. Countless hours were spent fine-tuning the style of the edit to match the energy of Arnie.



## Film Synopsis

Oddball antiques collector Arnie Meredith prepares to open a new store in Lafollette, Tennessee, but soon finds himself weeks behind schedule as his projected opening date nears. THE MERRY DEATH COLLECTOR is both a portrait of a passionate eccentric and a chronicle of the obstacles challenging small-town business owners.

## Production

Once scheduling was locked in, I filmed Arnie two to three times a week for three months. I enlisted the help of my skilled videographer friend Kerry Fillers to assist me on larger production days. Filming took place in his two buildings in Lafollette, TN and at Fanboy Expo, a comic and toy convention hosted in the Knoxville Convention Center.

## Exhibition

The target audience for this film is Tennessee native adults. How do I get this to its intended audience was the biggest question I had once I finished editing. The film will have its world premiere at the Nashville Film Festival April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The Nashville Film Festival only accepts 6% of it's over 3500 entrees. It is the oldest film festival in the South and one of the few Academy Award® qualifying festivals in the world. The short will continue to play on the film festival circuit throughout 2015 and will eventually have an online release in the summer.



Arnie waits for customers during Fanboy Expo.

## Impact

The Merry Death Collector concisely showcases the challenges facing small town business owners. I hope viewers who watch the film have a better appreciation for local businesses and that the project encourages the viewer to chase their dreams, no matter how big or small. Just do it your way.

