

PRESS KIT

NO LIMITS **History's Greatest Drug Scandal**

From Academy Award Winning Director John Zaritsky

WORLD PREMIERE

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Academy Award winning director John Zaritsky picks-up the stories of Thalidomide survivors for his third film on the subject and finally unveils a sinister and long hidden complicity by the drug manufacturer.

NO LIMITS reveals the true story that Grünenthal, the German inventor and manufacturer of Thalidomide knew about debilitating effects of its drug on babies but continued to sell the pills to unsuspecting pregnant women around the world who were taking a drug they were told was 'safe', to offset their morning sickness, and who ended up giving birth to thousands of severely disabled children. Previously sealed court documents have now come to light that reveal Grünenthal's culpability.

Since thalidomide was released 50 years ago, the Wirtz family, owners of Grünenthal, has accumulated a personal fortune in the billions, and Grünenthal now employs 4200 people in 26 countries with annual revenues approaching \$1.3 billion. But they have not taken full financial responsibility for the disastrous effect of thalidomide and only just recently (2012) have made a half-hearted apology when faced with the release of these long sealed court documents as a result of a court case in Australia. Despite the overwhelming evidence they still refuse to pay any of the \$89 million compensation awarded only a few months ago to Australian victims.

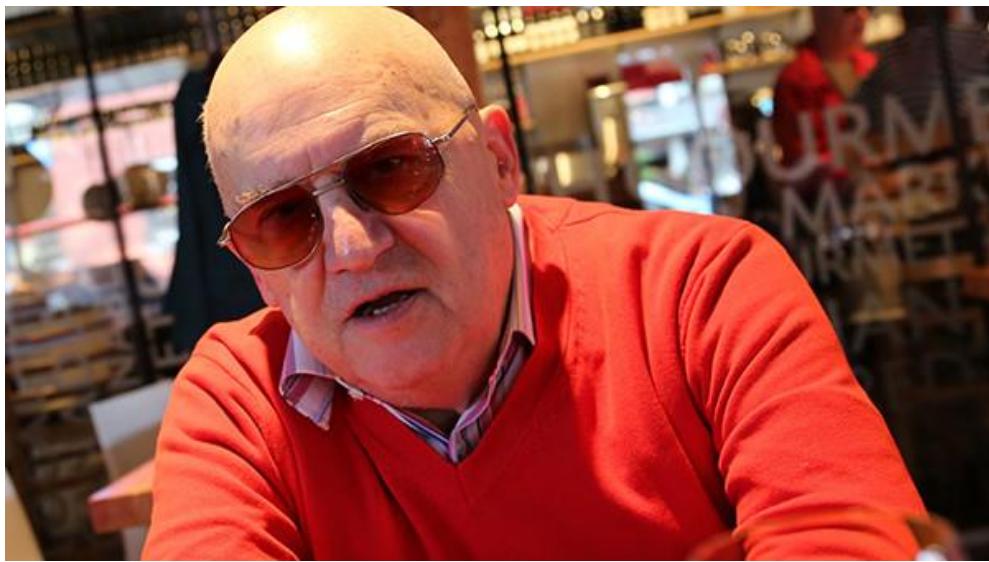
"I think this is the biggest and best story of my career...after more than 25 years of working on this subject, I finally have been able to learn the whole truth about the thalidomide tragedy, thanks to the documents uncovered by the Australian lawyers for Lynette Rowe."

Director, John Zaritsky has a track record of being able to delve in to the hearts and minds of people with disabilities. In his two previous films on the subject John introduced us to two Canadian Thalidomiders, Alvin Law and Paul Murphy, who were in their 20s and 30s and picking up the story with them now in their 50s and facing the realities of old age.

NO LIMITS features six other Thalidomiders, from the United States, Britain, Germany and Australia.

NO LIMITS will also serve as a cautionary tale of what happens to individuals when our society and our governments let their guard down pressured by international drug companies to quickly move and approve. In John's second film, *Extraordinary People*, he documented the return of Thalidomide by a small New Jersey biotech company in 1998. With the support of the Thalidomide Victims Association of Canada, the New Jersey company, Celgene, succeeded in gaining approval from the federal drug administration in Washington to bring Thalidomide back onto the market as a treatment for dying cancer patients suffering from multiple myeloma. Charging as much as \$10,000 a month to some patients, sales of Thalidomide have soared and Celgene's value has increased from 100 million dollars to 100 billion dollars. Tragically Thalidomide derivatives are also being manufactured by other drug companies operating and distributing in third world countries and consequently Thalidomide babies are still being born today.

John Zaritsky: Director's Statement



I suppose I could start by saying that I think this is the biggest and best story of my career but then my wife says I think that about all my films. Nevertheless, it's the best Thalidomide film ever made. Now everyone will know the whole truth about the continuing thalidomide tragedy.

The film takes audiences on an emotional roller coaster ride. It intercuts inspiring stories of eight Thalidomiders whose courage and determination has no limits with the marketing activities of big pharma companies who accepted no limits in their pursuit of profits.

As shocking and outrageous as the personal accounts of these characters are, they nonetheless are the real heroes, showing me in many ways that life is worth living. Their bravery in facing all that life has thrown at them enabled me to overcome a small disability a few years ago, when I lost one eye.

People often ask me what it's like to hang out with Thalidomiders and I tell them that over the years they have become very good friends and I enjoy their company especially their humour, they like to joke, and as people know, so do I.

i have lived with this story for over 25 years and hope this film will serve as a cautionary tale of what happens to individuals when our society and our governments let their guard down pressured by international drug companies to quickly approve or release a drug in order to make money fast. Those pressures existed 50 years ago, and still do today.

Thalidomiders have not received justice from the day they were born. I hope with this film we have significantly contributed to the ongoing campaign for the Thalidomiders to get retribution and the real financial assistance that they should have had from day one.

ALVIN LAW – inspirational, motivational speaker Alvin lives in Calgary.

"I'm not disabled, I'm just different."

Those six words have been Alvin Law's guiding principle for his entire life. And while those six words may sound strange coming from a 55 year old man born without arms, those few simple words have inspired



millions of school children and adults as Alvin demonstrates he can do everything with his feet that his audiences do with their hands.

But Alvin Law's story could just as easily been one of tragedy, rather than triumph, given the circumstances of his birth. He was born in rural Saskatchewan on a farm without electricity and running water and when his maternal grandmother saw him after his birth, she declared he was the Devil's child and demanded that his mother, Sophie, put up for adoption the armless newborn. Sophie's choice was not at all unusual for the times as hundreds of mothers around the world decided to give up their thalidomide babies.

But Alvin Law was lucky because a couple in their mid fifties who had already raised two sons of their own decided to take him into their Yorkton, Saskatchewan home and become foster parents.

"He was a child that nobody wanted so what are you going to do," explained Jack Law. What the mechanic decided to do was to train Alvin's feet to also serve as his hands and for hours and hours Alvin was taught to dress himself, feed himself, and even to screw nuts onto bolts.

When Alvin reached school age, his foster mother, Hilda Law, fought with school authorities to let him attend a regular school and be treated like any other student. The wisdom of her confidence that Alvin wasn't disabled was demonstrated when he discovered one of the passions of his life---music. He joined the school orchestra and learned to play trombone and soon learned how to play the piano and drums, all of course with his feet.

Nevertheless, Alvin still underwent the experience of nearly all thalidomide children when he was outfitted with artificial limbs and like most thalidomiders he fought against having to use what he regarded as unnecessary and cumbersome artificial arms all in an effort to make him look as normal as possible.

By the time Alvin reached high school, he was attracting attention for his amazing abilities and became his province's Timmy, the poster child for disabled children. And in that role he soon discovered his lifelong mission and occupation. He would become a motivational speaker full time. Despite his differences, he was accepted for who he was.

Now 53, Alvin continues to thrive, travelling around the North American on his own, speaking to ever larger and diverse audiences. He is happily married with a son. Thalidomide did not make him a victim but a survivor. He overcame his disability.

EILEEN CRONIN, Author, therapist living in LA

"I was almost four when it first occurred to me that no one else was missing legs"

When Eileen Cronin found out that she was expecting a baby, she started to panic. What if her child would have the same disabilities she has? Eileen was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1960, with both legs missing from the knees down and only four fingers on her left hand. She believed her deformities were

caused by Thalidomide but didn't know for sure since her mother for the longest time denied ever having taken the drug. But when Eileen got her first ultrasound, she remembers how the technician zoomed in on the baby, found one foot "blew it up, took a picture and wrote, 'foot'. And then 'other foot', 'hands, fingers'. And I was crying and all the interns started clapping. We knew that she would be okay." A few months later her daughter Anya was born perfectly healthy.



Eileen wasn't the only baby born with malformations in Cincinnati in the early 60s. That's where Richardson-Merrell, Grünenthal's licensee partner in the US, had their headquarters. The American drug company had ambitious plans for Thalidomide. They had seen the success of the sedative in Germany and hoped for the same result in the United States. Luckily Richardson-Merrell's plans were spoiled by Frances Kelsey, a young pharmacologist from Canada who was in charge of the approval process for Thalidomide at the FDA. Kelsey was extremely concerned about the drug's safety and blocked its introduction, undoubtedly sparing the US from thousands of malformed babies.

Still, Richardson-Merrell was allowed to hand out more than two and a half million Thalidomide pills to doctors all across North America. What was supposed to look like a clinical trial was in reality a huge advertising campaign that had nothing to do with testing the drug on patients, but served to familiarizing them with this alleged harmless new product... It is very likely that Eileen's mother received one of those sample pills from her Cincinnati GP around the time she was pregnant with her.

Eileen's remembers her childhood in Cincinnati very well. It wasn't always easy. She was born as the sixth of eleven children into a deeply religious Roman Catholic family. Her parents were shocked when they saw Eileen for the first time, but quickly accepted her birth as "God's will" and "her cross to bear".

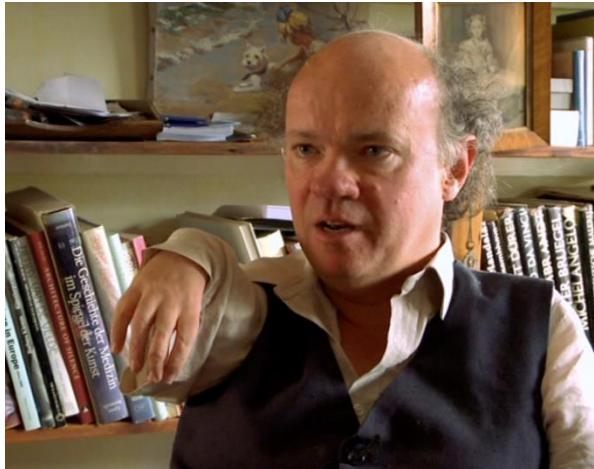
Unlike most other thalidomiders Eileen got used to wearing artificial prosthetic legs to get around. But she says she always felt most free when she could take the heavy legs off to go swimming or skinny-dipping, like an "an elusive mermaid, the Venus de Milo spit from the ruins."

"Mermaid. A Memoir of Resilience" is also the title of the autobiography Eileen published in 2014. The bestselling book chronicles her life, including stories of bullying at school and her quest for answers and love. She was able to turn her life around and today she is a successful writer, with a PhD in clinical psychology, is happily married and living with her family in Los Angeles.

NIKO VON GLASOW, film director/producer, thalidomider, lives in London, England, Cologne, Germany and Tuscany, Italy

"I'm rich. I'm a Buddhist, and I'm disabled. So now you're got the full picture."

Niko Von Glasow has always been a bundle of contradictions from the moment the outspoken film



director was conceived. His father was a Jewish concentration camp survivor, his mother the heir to a major Nazi publishing fortune when the two fell in love in Cologne, Germany. The couple soon had four healthy children. But a year before Niko was born, his nine-year-old sister died in a tragic accident and a few months later, his mother experiencing a bad night of grief took one Thalidomide pill, as a sedative, unaware that she was in early pregnancy.

The night before Niko was born, his mother had a dream about an angel without wings. Niko, born with deformed arms, won the immediate acceptance and

love of his parents and family but also with the small colony of artists who visited frequently because his father was an art dealer. When he was still a child, Niko was given his first camera and decided he would become a film director, a job he discovered he was suited for when he started to tell artists who were frequent visitors to their house, what he thought of their art and what they could do to 'improve it'.

Niko says that, even though he was born with two short arms, he didn't realize he was disabled until he was 13. He was overcome with normal teenage sexual desires but discovered that his short arms were a real disability when it came to getting 'stupid blonde girls to agree to a one-night stands'.

"I could only interest smart blonde girls," he says. As always, Niko jokingly insists he's serious and as always, it's difficult to tell but there's no question that he became so shy he stopped swimming or any activity that would expose his arms to public view. *"I hated being stared at and I didn't want to have anything to do with thalidomiders,"* he admits. *"If I saw a thalidomider approaching, I'd cross to the other side of the street to avoid him or her."*

Now an adult and a filmmaker, Niko came up with an idea that would turn the tables on those who believe disabled people should be treated differently, an idea that was personally challenging but one that would shock and outrage some members of the German public. He would do a documentary that chronicled his efforts to persuade 11 other thalidomide survivors to pose nude for a calendar in which he, reluctantly, would become the nude Mr. December.

The result was a feature documentary called NOBODY'S PERFECT, which would win a German version of the Oscar. In personal terms, Niko's life as a thalidomide survivor had changed profoundly. By forcing himself to pose nude, he had finally overcome years of shyness so that by the end of the film he could go to a public beach and go swimming with his 10-year-old son. The experience of being involved with other thalidomide survivors for really the first time in his life had also radicalized him.

Niko remains deeply committed to helping his fellow thalidomide survivors and the best way to do that is to thoroughly embarrass the drug company owners into finally providing adequate compensation and a sincere apology.

LOUISE MASON, Thalidomider, mother, campaigner

"I remember every Sunday how everyone else's parents would arrive one by one and I didn't have anyone. I felt lost."



In England the fight for proper compensation evolved for many years around the story of a young Thalidomide girl. Louise was born to a wealthy couple in Cheltenham in 1962, with both arms and legs missing. Her father, David Mason, was a successful London art dealer and didn't accept the low compensation offer Distillers made to survivors in the beginning. The drug company, that manufactured and sold Thalidomide under license from Grünenthal in Britain, said they needed everybody's signature on the deal before they would pay anything. David Mason and five other families refused and instead initiated a huge media campaign to secure appropriate payments. Their efforts paid off. In the end Distillers increased their offer by ten times.

During that time many articles were written about the Mason family and especially Louise, who was so extremely damaged by Thalidomide. Often the Masons were interviewed on television, where they appeared all together as a happy family. However, what the public didn't know was that Louise was not living with her parents and three siblings, but instead was growing up in an institution, away from her family. Louise's parents actually sent her there right after she was born. "I was left alone most of the time. My parents had other children. I went home three weeks a year, for a week, one week in the summer, one week at Christmas and one week at Easter."

And as a child Louise felt abandoned and suffered years of bullying and abuse, not only by institutional staff but also by other children living there.

When Louise was 17 she moved out and started living on her own, finally enjoying life, especially during her university years, where she went out partying and became vice-president of the student union. She got married and started her own family. She says she would use her teeth to undo the tape of her babies' diapers. Her first marriage fell apart but Louise found love again later in life with Darren, a fellow thalidomider born with shortened arms. Unfortunately her health is declining after a recent kidney transplant.

Louise has worked for many years in insurance and has become a disability rights campaigner. She wrote about her life story in the book "No Hand to Hold & No Legs to Dance on: A Thalidomide Survivor's Story" (2009).

DR. JAN SCHULTE-HILLEN, emergency doctor in Switzerland, skateboarder, Thalidomider

"I'm not a thalidomider in the first spot. In the first spot I am a man. I'm trying to be a good doctor. I'm trying to be a good husband, I'm a father, I'm a lover and I have short arms."

Jan Schulte-Hillen's doesn't want to be called "disabled". He was born in Hamburg, Germany, in April 1961, with two short arms, which he admits can be "very annoying from time to time."



But Jan doesn't feel that having shorter arms ever prevented him from doing the things he wanted to do. Not only did he become an emergency doctor in Switzerland, he also loves to ride his skateboard and motorcycle and regularly takes his two sons skiing in the Swiss Alps. He speaks five languages and additionally works as a consultant for the medical commission of the German Contergan Foundation.

When Jan was a baby, his parents were determined to find out what caused their son's damage. In fact, Linde and Karl-Hermann Schulte-Hillen played a crucial role in connecting Thalidomide to the epidemic of malformed babies all over Germany. His father, a young lawyer at the time teamed up with Widukind Lenz, the pediatrician from Hamburg and drove around the country, to find other affected families. Disabled children were often hidden away in those days. Many times it was only when his father showed people a photograph of Jan, saying, "this is my son, I myself have a child like this", that children were brought to the light of day.

Karl-Hermann Schulte-Hillen was also one of the lawyers who represented the so called Contergan children in the Thalidomide trial (1968-1970).

LYNETTE ROWE – thalidomider, her court case revealed the smoking gun Lives in Australia “We’ll just have to look after her very carefully then, won’t we?” Lynette’s mother said when confronted with her armless/legless baby.



Lynette Rowe, a legless, armless thalidomider, won a multi-million-dollar settlement in a groundbreaking class action suit against the Thalidomide distributor in Australia in July 2012. Her lawyers Peter Gordon and Michael Magazanik decided to sue for damages with Lynette as the test case precisely because her case was perhaps the most difficult as compared to other Aussie thalidomiders. Both lawyers had extensive class action experience with asbestos claims in Australia. Magazanik, a trained investigative journalist and lawyer, spent months in Germany digging into the archives and found that the limitation on long sealed German court documents from the '68 German trial could finally see the light of day. What he found was that Grünenthal didn't do proper testing of Thalidomide and that they ignored the evidence of baby malformations under their noses. Diageo (the parent company of Distillers, the original distributor in Australia) settled out of court after being presented with the evidence. Grünenthal the co-defendant as usual fought and won an application to have the trial moved to Germany and thus make it impossible for Lynette to proceed with them in a foreign land and in a foreign language.

Wendy Rowe doesn't remember much about Lynette's birth in March of 1962 but the silence she got from the nurses about the baby was deafening. Lyn was born without arms or legs. The parents rejected the doctor's advice to let the baby die and started a 52 years family journey (with their two other children) caring for a severely disabled new addition to the family. They lived in a working class neighbourhood where the neighbours made clothes for Lyn and their kids didn't notice her disabilities. But when Lyn was 11 months old she got a high fever as a result of teething that caused her brain damage because of her lack of arms and legs to dissipate the fever properly. But even with this set back the Rowes applied love and constant care and little Lyn survived. Lyn's grandfather even made a spinning-spoon wheeled contraption so Lyn could feed at her own pace from the dozen spoons of food laid out by her parents.

Lyn's mother cannot state conclusively that she took thalidomide (at the time the dangers of the drug not yet public) from her doctor down the street when he came around to treat her morning sickness. Distributor reps at the time gave samples of drugs to doctors out quite freely. Wendy's doctor did not keep records of his medications.

Because of the lack of documentation the Rowes didn't get any government support except for small disability stipend when Lyn reached 16 years but the stipend was not tied into thalidomide. Wendy had to quit her teaching job and Ian didn't make much working for an insurance firm. Getting up 3 or 4 times a night to roll Lyn over and the full-time mother's care Lyn needed made life very hard including financially. And as the parents reached their senior years, the house was in disrepair because of lack of money and the Rowes were barely able to cope. Their biggest concern was who was going to look after their Lyny when they were gone?



They had good fortune for a change when lawyer Peter Gordon proposed that Lyn be the test case in the class action suit. When Gordon visited the family at their old leaning and in need of repair house, he was shocked to see the ground below the floor's gaping boards. He knew the case would take years and he couldn't be sure of victory. He also knew it would take a huge emotional drain on the whole family so he got friends and contractors to tear down their old house and built and furnish a new wheel chair accessible house right on the same plot so the Rowes would still have their neighbours and friends around them. It didn't cost them a cent. Peter says even if he lost the case the Rowes would at least have the house.

Diageo settled with a multi-million-dollar settlement for Lyn and the other 100 or so thalidomiders in Australia and New Zealand. Now Lyn has a caregiver which takes the pressure off the parents and Wendy and Ian know that Lyn will be looked after once they are gone. The Rowes have made the term 'salt of the earth' take on new meaning for all who have come in contact with that wonderful family.

PAUL MURPHY – entrepreneur and businessman & Canadian activist, lives in Selkirk, Manitoba

"For every obstacle, there is a solution...over, under, around or through."



Those are the words that Paul Murphy has lived by all his life. Born with only short flippers for arms and legs, the thalidomide survivor has faced life's constant obstacles with a determination and cheery optimism that somehow, some way, he will get ahead. Along the way there have been many ups and downs, business and personal successes and failures that Paul willingly accepts knowing that he is lucky to be alive.

Paul Murphy should have been one of thousands of thalidomide babies who died at birth or were aborted. But Paul was lucky that his father, a general practitioner, was able to save his life. Dr. Claude Murphy had rushed to be with his wife who was in labour with Paul but was in a breech position. Doctor Murphy finding himself the only doctor around, picked up a pair of forceps and delivered his badly deformed son (no arm or legs) otherwise the baby would have died.

Paul's mother, Peggy, wanted to see her newborn but nurses had already spirited the baby to an intensive care unit. It wasn't until 24 hours later that his mother saw Paul for the first time, a scene she dramatically describes.

"Everybody was gathered around, trying to see how I would react but when I saw him, I forgot everybody else. It was love at first sight." "All they said was, Dad, you bring that baby home, now."

Years later as a teenager, Paul would learn from his mother how she had been prescribed thalidomide by her obstetrician but had only taken one pill which made her sick. It was hard to believe that one little pill had caused all that damage but it would later be discovered that the only damage that caused deformities to fetuses occurred during a 15 day period in a woman's pregnancy, a period between the 35th day of pregnancy and the 50th day of pregnancy. Taken before or after those days would prove to be safe but one pill taken on the wrong day could have terrible results. This anomaly undoubtedly explains the limited number of thalidomide babies that were born. The toll, given its widespread use, could have been catastrophically higher.

Paul's father recalls how Richardson-Merrell, the American drug company that was selling it in Canada, sent out thousands of free samples to doctors, especially obstetricians, with literature promoting the safety of the drug even as a sedative for pregnant women suffering from sleeplessness or morning sickness.

It wasn't until March 2, 1962 that Richardson-Merrell and a Montreal company, Frank W. Horner Limited, took the drug off the Canadian market. (Frank W. Horner was the other drug company that was allowed to sell thalidomide in Canada). In three years they had distributed more than five million tablets of thalidomide

across the country, resulting in the birth of at least 115 deformed babies]. The withdrawal came three months after the drug had been taken off the market in Germany, Britain, and Australia. But another country, the United States, had been by and large spared the thalidomide tragedy, thanks to a courageous Canadian scientist, Dr. Frances Kelsey, working at the U.S. Federal Drug Administration in Washington.

When Paul continued to impress his parents with his ability to move about, They decided against any form of surgery and Paul was spared the pain and suffering that many Thalidomide kids underwent with a series of operations and long hospital stays dominating their childhoods. Instead, Dr. Murphy worked away in his garage workshop designing and building a series of devices and contraptions from scooters to motorized cars that would help his handicapped son get around.



But when it came to education, school authorities insisted that even though Paul was intellectually a normal, if not advanced, child, he still would be placed in a classroom for disabled children, many of whom were disabled mentally. That meant that Paul got off to a slow start and for years was always trying to catch up.

After graduating from high school, Paul had two goals---get a job and move out of his parents' home and into a place of his own. He founded several businesses with a small compensation he won in the US against the distributor Richardson-Merrell.

Paul became the vice president of the Thalidomide Victims Association of Canada and in that capacity was forced to address a difficult moral dilemma. Another American drug company after clinical testing trying to bring thalidomide back on the market, only this time as a treatment for sufferers of Leprosy, Aids, and some forms of cancer. After wrestling with these issues, Paul finally decided to support the drug company's application for licensing in the United States.

Paul is married with a daughter and says, "*We knew when we got to 50 it was going to start getting rough. And guess what it, it's getting rough and it's only going to get worse for a lot of individuals.*"

MONIKA EISENBERG – child welfare worker, activist, thalidomide lives in Germany and Belgium

"I just wish the day would come when I didn't have to deal with thalidomide."

In one way or another, Monika Eisenberg's life, in Germany, has been shaped by thalidomide (contergan in Germany) and accounts for all the important people and events in her life.



Her birth created such terrible guilt for her mother that even today her mother still cannot hide her feelings. *"Like everybody else in Germany at the time, my mother was assured that it was completely safe. It was sold over the counter."* And the liquid form nicknamed "the babysitter" ("Kinosoft" ("cinema juice")), was even used to sedate babies when parents were going to the movies. Moni says her *"mother has always felt it was her fault for taking the morning sickness pill and still does,"*

Moni's early childhood was unhappy. She hated the stares and taunts she received in playgrounds but was grateful that a brother 18 months older stood up for her and would defend her if necessary with his fists. Monika also hated being placed in a special school for thalidomide children where they were subjected to hours and hours of repetitive exercises to overcome their limb deformities. *"We were treated like trained monkeys. Do this, again and again, so that you can amaze normal people, just like a trained monkey,"* recalls Monika.

"Prosecutors have been investigating the men behind the Thalidomide scandal since the story broke in November 1961. In 1968 a criminal trial started in Alsdorf near Aachen, in which the company owner and eight Grünenthal executives were charged with criminal negligence and manslaughter.

Incredibly the trial ended before the prosecution had finished and the charges were dramatically dropped in 1970. The official legal reason was that defendants were "of minor guilt" and consequently, there was "no good public reason" to continue the prosecution. Not only would the criminal charges be dropped but, furthermore, all nine Grünenthal defendants would receive immunity from further charges. The plea bargain was reached after Grünenthal agreed to settle and offered to pay 100m DM (about \$30m CAD at the time). The settlement sum was transferred into a trust fund established in 1972. A matching amount would come from the German government.

When Monika was nine, her father died in a mountaineering accident. It also came at a time when her mother had to make an agonizing decision that all parents of German thalidomide survivors had to make. She could accept a tiny one-time payment and collect a small monthly pension from the trust fund and in return would have to agree to never sue the drug company in the future. Like most parents of thalidomide children, Monika's mother needed whatever financial support she could find and so she grudgingly decided to accept the trust fund money for her daughter. But again, she felt guilty that she had agreed to what she viewed as a bargain with the devil.

When Monika was 16, she was asked by a British filmmaker to participate in a documentary on thalidomide. To prepare herself, she started to research the history behind the drug and what she learned about the company, its owners and staff, shocked and horrified the teenager. Thalidomide had been invented by a Nazi war criminal, Dr. Heinrich Mücketer, who received a bonus for every pill sold around the world. Mücketer was just one of several doctors who were Nazi war criminals that were hired by Grünenthal after the war.

"I really couldn't believe there were people like that," recalls Monika. *"It was a turning point in my life."* Monika was not surprised that the Nazis, who during the war had sent 300,000 mentally and physically disabled people to extermination camps, would 12 years after the war not be too bothered with deformities to babies as a result of a drug they manufactured. Monika got angry. So every time she learned of a thalidomider's death, she would place a wreath, card, and candle on the sidewalk outside the main entrance to the drug company. *"They didn't last long and were removed pretty quickly but I still wanted to let those bastards know their victims won't be forgotten."*



Monika's personal life has become increasingly intertwined with thalidomide. Professionally, Monika works as a social worker for families with children who are physically or mentally handicapped. But the apex of her activism came six years ago when she arrived outside the Berlin residence of German chancellor, Angela Merkel, with a Christmas tree festooned with cards and messages from German thalidomide survivors. The tree created a national media frenzy and she was charged and faced questioning by two police detectives back home in Cologne. And then, she received an official letter declaring that the charges would be dropped since the defendant was of "minor guilt" and there was "no public interest" in pursuing the prosecution. Monika richly enjoys the ironic fact that the legal decision in her case was exactly the same as the decision reached in the prosecution of Grünenthal's executives in 1970.

Like most thalidomiders around the world, Monika was outraged by the so called "apology" speech Harald Stock gave in September 2012 (Stock was Grünenthal's CEO at the time).

"Instead of really apologizing for the damage they've done to us and our families and accepting responsibility for thalidomide, the company after 50 years just said they were sorry they hadn't reached out to us sooner. Big deal. That wasn't an apology," explains Monika.

What made it worse was the "apology" came just weeks after Australian lawyers working for a thalidomide survivor in Melbourne, Lynette Rowe, were finally able to get a release of the German court documents from 1970 court case.



About John Zartisky

John Zaritsky has been making documentary films for almost 40 years. His films have been honoured with more than 30 major awards, been broadcast in 35 countries, and have screened at more than 40 film festivals around the world including Sundance, Toronto, Vancouver, IDFA, Hot Docs and SXSW.

Among his more notable awards and achievements are receiving the Academy Award for Best Documentary for *Just Another Missing Kid*, a Cable Ace Award for *Rapists: Can They Be Stopped*, an American Bar Association Golden Gavel Award for *My Husband Is Going To Kill Me*, a Robert F. Kennedy Foundation Award for *Born In Africa*, and an Alfred Dupont Award from Columbia University's School of Journalism for *Romeo and Juliet in Sarajevo*.

In addition, John has been nominated for three Emmy Awards and 15 Gemini Awards, and has won the latter seven times. His film, *Leave Them Laughing*, won a special jury prize as Best Canadian Documentary at Hot Docs, an audience award for Most Popular Canadian Documentary at the Vancouver International Film Festival, and the Audience Award for Most Popular Documentary at the Mill Valley Film Festival.