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## 'Medicine' filmmaker seeks enlightenment

By Lynn Elber

**LOS ANGELES, California (AP)** -- If Hillary Rodham Clinton ever decides to make a run for the presidency, Jeffrey Tuchman might be the one calling the shots.

The ones in her campaign films and ads, that is. Tuchman directed "The Man From Hope," which introduced Bill Clinton to America at the 1992 Democratic convention, and ads for Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign.

A documentary filmmaker with more than 20 years of experience, Tuchman, 48, looks back on "The Man From Hope" as a career milestone and a film that became "something of a pop culture touchstone."

Politics and public policy have long been a focus -- but not an exclusive one -- of Tuchman's filmmaking.

His latest project, "Mavericks, Miracles & Medicine," which he wrote and directed, focuses on those who helped advance medicine and sometimes paid a price for their innovation. The four-part series airs Tuesday through Friday, September 16-19, at 8 p.m. EDT on the History Channel.



Using contemporary patients and medical care as context, the film shows how our understanding of the body, its maladies and how to treat them evolved over the centuries.

The advent of anesthesia, the first chemical treatment for a disease (Paul Ehrlich's anti-syphilis "magic bullet," derived from arsenic), the development of the heart-lung machine and more are detailed.

So are the tragic outcomes for the pioneering doctors, researchers and others who staked their reputations and lost.

In one example, a 19th-century Hungarian physician deduced that colleagues were spreading death as they moved from conducting autopsies to delivering babies, without any effort at washing.

He was derided and left a broken man. The understanding of germs and infection would have to wait.

"In many cases it was arrogance, in many cases adherence to scientific dogma," said Tuchman. "And in some cases, one was playing into the often-antagonistic relationship between science and church."

He suspects that viewers might be inclined to think, "Oh, my God, I can't believe they were so close-minded. I can't believe they were so ignorant," he said.

### **Past and present not so different**

But modern attitudes toward scientific breakthroughs aren't so different, Tuchman said, pointing to the hostile reaction toward early research on the diminishing ozone layer.

"There is a pattern of invention and discovery that in many ways, although more sophisticated, in many ways remain the same and seem to be part of our nature," he said.

For Tuchman, filmmaking provides a way to help him overcome his own blind spots and, ideally, help others see the light.

"My joy comes as much as anything from delving into an area I'm relatively unfamiliar with, that I presume the audience is as well, and disabusing them of a lot of their preconceptions as I have become disabused."

The son of Holocaust survivors, Tuchman planned to follow his father, a doctor, into a medical career.

But a chance opportunity to work on a film about a social welfare program (the catchy title: "Unions for Youth") proved a lifelong detour.

Filmmaking embodied "all the things that interested me," he said. "It was exploring higher truths and telling stories. It had pictures, and I was a photographer, it had words and I was a writer, it had music and I was a musician. All these things seemed to come together in this one form."

In 1981, Tuchman joined Public Agenda, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public opinion research and education organization based in New York and founded by social scientist Daniel Yankelovich and former secretary of state Cyrus Vance.

Tuchman's limited experience was enough to get him designated resident filmmaker, and he spent a decade ("It was graduate school for me") making "white paper" movies examining a variety of subjects including schools, health care, AIDS and the environment.

He struck out on his own to pursue a less formal, more story-oriented style. His more than 30 films for A&E, Court TV, HBO and others include projects on a Utah polygamist, teenage gamblers and a marine mammal rescue team in California.

### **New company**

"Mavericks, Miracles & Medicine," from Tuchman's new company, New York-based Documania Films, is narrated by Edward Herrmann ("Gilmore Girls"), features "ER" star Noah Wyle as host and was produced by Megan Cogswell.

There's a companion book by Julie Fenster from Carroll & Graf.

As for his next project, might it be working with Hillary Clinton? One of Tuchman's spots for her Senate campaign was voted the best political ad of the 2000 season by Campaigns & Elections magazine.

Tuchman co-wrote "The Man From Hope," which broke new ground with its intimate and relatively candid portrait. The 12-minute film, produced by Clinton friend and Hollywood TV producer Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, traced the candidate's roots from Hope, Ark., and touched on topics including his alcoholic stepfather and marital infidelity.

The latter foreshadowed the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal that tarnished President Clinton's second term. Tuchman terms it "tragic."

"Seeing an administration that in many reflected what I would hope for the leadership of the United States ... weakened that way was very painful," he said. "I felt as though much of what was happening in no way reflected what I knew of them (the Clintons) as people and public servants."

Tuchman claims ignorance about whether Sen. Clinton will try to follow her husband into the Oval Office. She has said she doesn't intend to run in 2004.

"If called, I would serve," Tuchman said.