

A camera on New

Filmmaker Karyl Kreizinger Evans, who grew up in Newtown, works in a studio in her North Haven home. Connecticut Public Television has shown her documentary "Grove Street Cemetery: City of the Dead, City of the Living," three times since December.

Carol Kaliff/Staff photographer



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Karyl Evans loves cats, including Tyler, who lives with her and her son, Owen.

Newtown High grad wins Emmy Awards

By **Elise M. Tobin**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Filmmaker Karyl Kreizinger Evans, a Newtown High School graduate and North Haven resident, has built a sturdy niche for herself as a New England documentarian.

Evans, 51, has won five regional Emmy Awards since 1995 and had projects nominated for another three Emmys this year, among other honors.

Her recent 28-minute production, "Grove Street Cemetery: City of the Dead, City of the Living," was nominated in the instructional/informational film category. Eli Whitney and Noah Webster are among the notables interred in the historic New Haven burying ground.

Since December, Connecticut Public Television has shown "Grove Street Cemetery" three times.

Gerald Gaab, director of the Board of Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, video project manager for the film, and longtime supporter of the cemetery, said he is pleased the film "has provided a great deal of exposure."

Gaab said Evans went "above and beyond

the call of duty," throwing her love of scholarship and history into the project.

The origins of Evans' work ethic can be traced back to her youth in Newtown, when she was inspired by the achievements of her parents.

Her father, the late Dr. Harold F. Kreizinger, did research in agronomy, specifically soil sciences. Her mother, Jean D. Kreizinger, earned a Ph.D. in plant genetics from Cornell University, a degree that "was very unusual for her time. I'm very proud of her," Evans said.

Jean Kreizinger worked as a professor at Western Connecticut State University from 1965 to 1967 and 1970 to 1999, when she retired. Now 77, she still lives in Newtown, teaches a local flora class at WestConn and is co-chairman of its Science Building Committee.

During childhood, Karyl and her older sister, Dee (now Dee Norbutus), and younger sister, Tracy (now Tracy Johnson), spent hours on their schoolwork.

"We studied all the time," Evans remembers "It was just the level of expectation, and we all wanted to. There was no forcing."

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However, according Norbutus, Evans' life wasn't all work and no play.

"She always had friends galore and was always doing fun, creative projects," Norbutus said. "I was always sewing or making practical things, and she'd be making beautiful art."

After graduating from Newtown High in 1975, Evans earned a bachelor's degree in horticulture and landscape architecture from the University of Kentucky. Though working with shrubs and soils may seem like a far cry from the movie studios of Los Angeles, Evans found it useful to her film career.

"I was taking a lot of courses that made me very spatial," she explained.

After graduating from the university in 1979, however, Evans returned to Connecticut and decided the work of a landscape architect was too solitary. Her lifelong artistic streak and preference for a collaborative environment made her start thinking about a filmmaking career.

"[Filmmaking] just spoke to me as an art. It was my medium," Evans said. "I felt like I had to try and work in that field."

In the Kreizinger family, studies preceded career changes, so Evans packed her belongings and traveled across the country to earn a master's degree in telecommunications and film at San Diego State University.

"If you're going to be in TV and film, California was the place to go," she said.

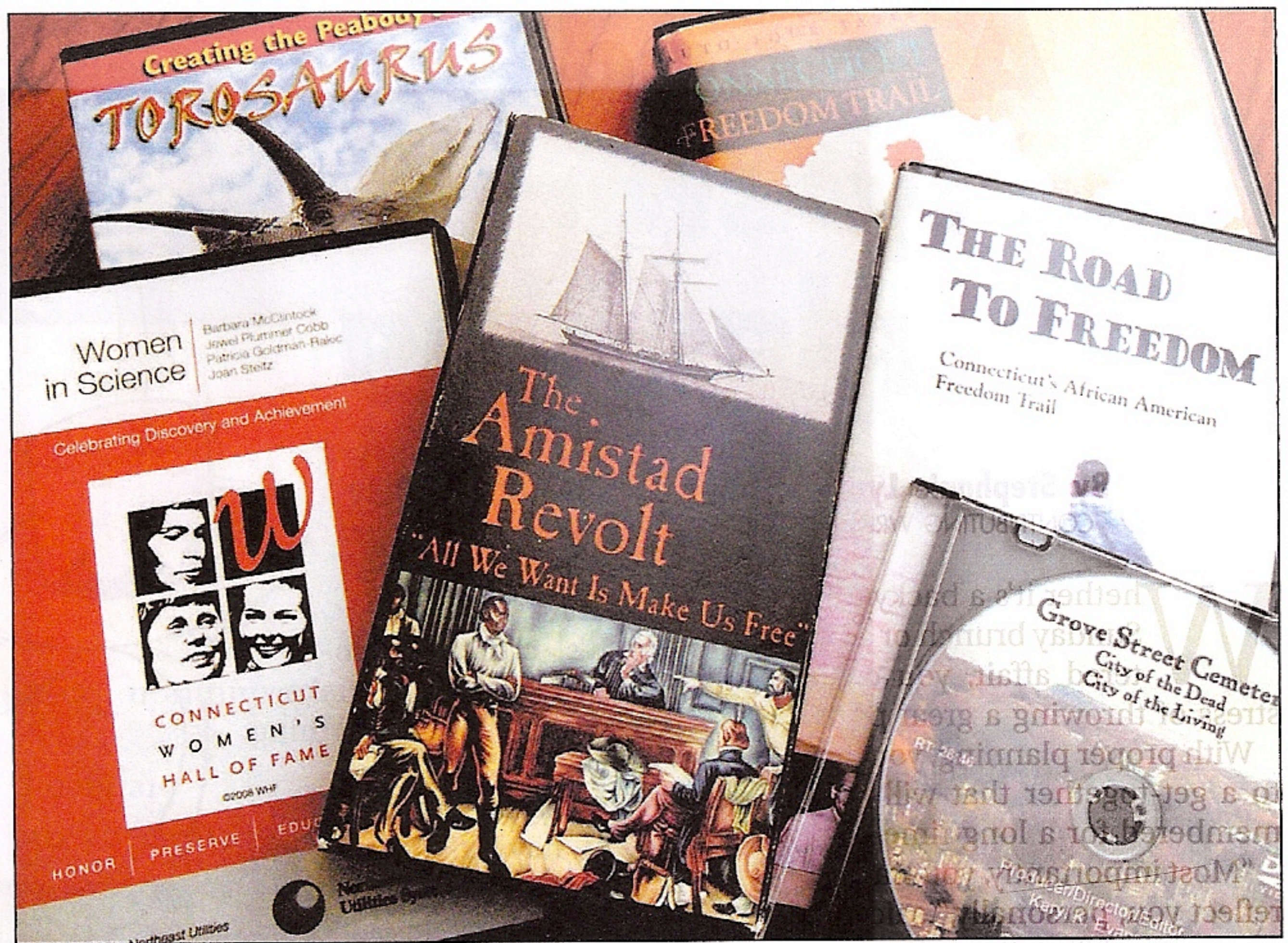
While studying there, she met Chris Evans, a rare book dealer. The couple married and had a son, Owen, now 15.

On graduating in 1984, Evans began an "exhilarating" career that allowed her to work with a variety of talented Hollywood actors and actresses.

"I was in the room with Dennis Quaid, Helen Mirren, Burt Lancaster," she said. "You just can't believe you're sitting there with these people."

Some of Karyl Evans' film projects

- "Grove Street Cemetery: City of the Dead, City of the Living," 2008.
- "Youth Orchestra Festival," for New Haven Symphony Orchestra, 2008.
- "Creating the Peabody's Torosaurus: Dinosaur Science, Dinosaur Art," for Yale University's Peabody Museum, 2007.
- "The History of African Americans in Connecticut: Civil War to Civil Rights," 2001.
- "The Road to Freedom: Connecticut's African American Freedom Trail," 1999.
- "Make a Joyful Noise," 1996.
- "The Amistad Revolt: 'All We Want Is Make Us Free,'" 1995.



Among Karyl Evans' film projects, "The Amistad Revolt: 'All We Want Is Make Us Free'" won the international award for best television show in the Educational Program for a Child Audience category at the Chicago International Film Festival. She has won five New England region Emmy Awards, four of which she shows below.

Lancaster, famous for his steamy beach smooch in "From Here to Eternity," worked with Evans on the 1987 PBS documentary "Legacy of the Hollywood Blacklist," which was nominated for a national Emmy Award in the outstanding informational special category.

For two of her 10 years in California, she worked for New Vision Pictures, including production work for the 1990 film "The Long Walk Home," featuring Whoopi Goldberg and Sissy Spacek.

Eventually Evans decided that it was time to head back to the East Coast and be closer to home and family. Although California is the epicenter of the film and TV world, she knew she'd be able to find fulfilling work in Connecticut.

"My favorite thing coming out of L.A. was documentary work," Evans said. "You try to communicate truth in an accessible and compelling way."

With her company, Karyl Evans Productions, she has since directed, edited and produced videos for everything from museum exhibits to CPTV. She's won Emmy Awards for writing, producing and directing.

Also since settling in her home state with Owen, Evans has been "quite the coordinator at family events," Norbutus said. "She's always making sure that everyone is as happy as possible."

Evans has also been able to pursue some of her hobbies — gardening, biking, hiking and tennis.

Living in North Haven also allows her to attend weekly lectures on various topics at nearby Yale University.



For the "Grove Street Cemetery" film, Evans paid wonderfully close attention to the artistic and historical aspects of the New Haven cemetery.

"The project extended beyond just research and interviews," Gaab said.

Though Evans and her crew only spent 10 days filming, the project required one year's time because of the breathtaking, four-season opening shot.

"I knew that it had to be an aerial shot," Evans said. "It was important to get a sense of the 18 cemetery acres."

To achieve the desired effect, Evans climbed on top of one of Yale's science building each season and compiled a beautiful pan across the New Haven skyline, capturing the cemetery during each New England season.

"I like bringing a fresh look at a subject, and I like doing it in as positive a way as I can," said Evans.