



NEUGEBOREN FAMILY PHOTO

Imagining madness

A brothers' bond, tinged by mental illness, is the heart of Larry Hott's latest film

By GABBY TEMPLET

WHILE making 16 movies over two decades, Larry Hott had always hired someone else to do the filming. For his latest work, though, Hott looked through a digital video camera viewfinder and quickly realized the new technology would bring him closer than ever to his newest subject: a portrait of the relationship between two brothers, one of whom is mentally ill.

Given the intimacy of his project with Jay and Robert Neugeboren, the closeness counted.

"When I'm taping Jay and Robert they relate directly to me without anyone else being involved," says Hott.

"Imagining Robert: My Brother, Madness and Survival," the latest documentary for Hott's Florentine Films/Hott Productions, Inc., is inspired by former University of Massachusetts professor Jay Neugeboren's acclaimed book of the same name, published by William Morrow and Company Inc. in 1997.

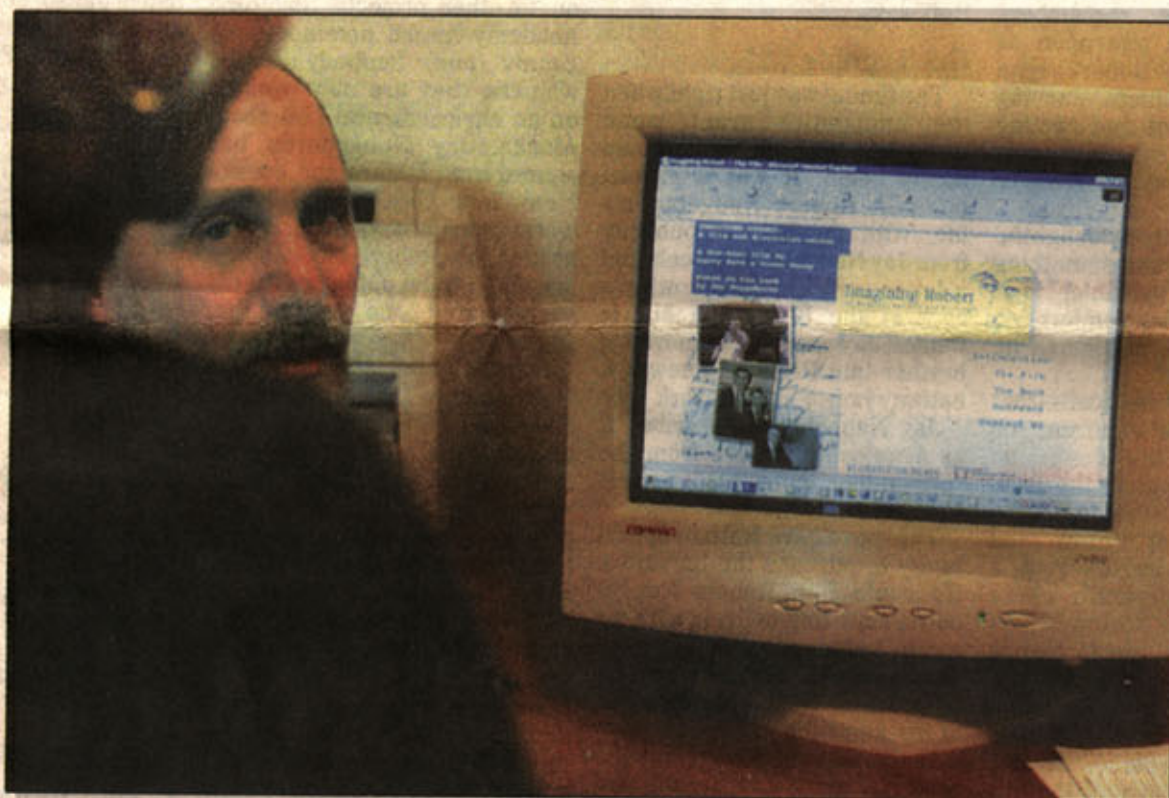
Using the book as a guide, Hott set out in 1997 to capture the story of Neugeboren's younger brother, Robert, and his four-decade battle with mental illness. Robert Neugeboren suffers from schizophrenia and manic depression.

The one-hour film will premier in a free showing in Northampton on April 28. It tells the story of a family's struggle to come to terms with a member's devastating and dislocat-

ing mental illness. Both Neugeborens will attend the 7:30 p.m. screening and join a discussion later in Wright Hall at Smith College.

The film, Jay Neugeboren says, captures what such an illness means inside a family. It's a portrait, he says, "of two brothers that personifies and exemplifies the pain and joy a family goes through."

He has said that his brother is a kind of walking archaeological dig of mental health treatment in the 20th century. Since his first episode with mental



KEVIN GUTTING

Top photo: Jay Neugeboren, left, wrote a memoir about his relationship with his brother, Robert, who has long suffered from schizophrenia and manic depression. The book, "Imagining Robert: My Brother, Madness and Survival," was published in 1997.

Larry Hott, above, of Florentine Films/Hott Productions, Inc. has made a film based on Jay Neugeboren's book which will premiere at Wright Hall at Smith College in Northampton on April 28.

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