

WACO

THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



FIFTH ESTATE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS A WILLIAM GAZECKI FILM "WACO: THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT"
MUSIC BY DAVID HAMILTON CO-PRODUCER MICHAEL McNULTY CINEMATOGRAPHY WILLIAM GAZECKI AND RICK NYBURG EDITED BY WILLIAM GAZECKI
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAN GIFFORD AND AMY SOMMER GIFFORD WRITTEN BY WILLIAM GAZECKI AND DAN GIFFORD PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY WILLIAM GAZECKI
CONTACT: FIFTH ESTATE PRODUCTIONS 310.289.3900



**ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE:
BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE**

WACO:

THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Directed by: William Gazecki
Produced by: Dan Gifford & Amy Sommer Gifford

**"ONE OF THE MOST DISTURBING
FILMS YOU'LL EVER SEE!"**
-MIKE LASALLE,
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

1332 Second Street
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Laemmle's
Monica 4 Plex

Saturday,
Sunday & Monday:
11:00 am

Directed by	William Gazecki
Produced by	William Gazecki
Written by	William Gazecki
	Dan Gifford
Executive Producers	Dan Gifford
	Amy Sommer Gifford
Co-Producer	Michael McNulty
Music by	David Hamilton
Cinematography by	William Gazecki
	Rick Nyburg
Edited by	William Gazecki

WACO: The Rules of Engagement

A WILLIAM GAZECKI FILM

Produced, Directed, Written, Photographed and Edited
by
William Gazecki

Nominated

for
Best Feature Length Documentary Film
1997 Academy Awards

Winner

International Documentary Association
Distinguished Documentary Achievement Award

Winner

Audience Award
Atlanta Film Festival

Winner

Gold Medal
Charleston International Film Festival

Winner

Special Jury Award
WorldFest Houston

LA WEEKLY

FREE

A Year in the Dark

The critics rate 1997

Paul Malcolm's Top 10:

1. *Nénette et Boni* (Claire Denis, France)
2. *Happy Together* (Wong Kar-Wai, Hong Kong)
3. *Irma Vep* (Olivier Assayas, France)
4. *Fast, Cheap & Out of Control* (Errol Morris, USA)
5. *Gabbeh* (Mohsen Mahkmalbaf, Iran)
6. *L.A. Confidential* (Curtis Hanson, USA)
7. *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* (William Gazecki, USA)
8. *Underground* (Emir Kusturica, Bosnia-Herzegovina/France)



A Branch Davidian sign during the siege.

9. *Chasing Amy* (Kevin Smith, USA)
10. *The Sweet Hereafter* (Atom Egoyan, Canada)

Los Angeles Times

MOVIES

KEVIN THOMAS' TOP 10 LIST

1. "L.A. Confidential"
2. "The River"
3. "Hamsun"
4. "The Sweet Hereafter"
5. "Underground"
6. "La Promesse"
7. "Capitaine Conan"
8. "Up / Down / Fragile"
9. "Waco: The Rules of Engagement"
10. "Bang" and "Family Name" (tie)

Honorable Mentions: "Eve's Bayou" and "Ma Vie en Rose"



MERRICK MORTON

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL: Danny DeVito, Kevin Spacey in '90s noir.

Chicago Sun-Times

Roger Ebert

WACO: THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT / *** 1/2 (Not rated)

September 19, 1997

A documentary directed and edited by William Gazecki. Running time: 135 minutes. No MPAA rating (scenes of violence and corpses; unsuitable for younger viewers).

BY ROGER EBERT

Like many news-drenched Americans, I paid only casual attention to the standoff at Waco, Texas, between the Branch Davidians and two agencies of the federal government. I came away with the vague impression that the "cult," as it was always styled, was a group of gun-toting crackpots, that they killed several U.S. agents, refused to negotiate and finally shot themselves and burned down their "compound" after the feds tried to end the siege peacefully with tear gas.

Watching William Gazecki's remarkable documentary "Waco: The Rules of Engagement," I am more inclined to use the words "religion" than "cult," and "church center" than "compound." Yes, the Branch Davidians had some strange beliefs, but no weirder than those held by many other religions. And it is pretty clear, on the basis of this film, that the original raid was staged as a publicity stunt, and the final raid was a government riot--a tragedy caused by uniformed boys with toys.

Of course I am aware that "Waco" argues its point of view, and that there is no doubt another case to be made. What is remarkable, watching the film, is to realize that the federal case has not been made. Evidence has been "lost," files and reports have "disappeared," tapes have been returned blank, participants have not testified and the "crime scene," as a Texas Ranger indignantly testifies, was not preserved for investigation, but razed to the ground by the FBI--presumably to destroy evidence.

The film is persuasive because:

1. It presents testimony from both sides, and shies away from cheap shots. We feel we are seeing a fair attempt to deal with facts.
2. Those who attack the government are not simply lawyers for the Branch Davidians or muckraking authors (although they are represented) but also solid middle-American types like the county sheriff, the

district Texas Rangers, the FBI photographer on the scene, and the man who developed and patented some of the equipment used by the FBI itself to film devastating footage that appears to show its agents firing into the buildings--even though the FBI insists it did not fire a single shot.

3. The eyes of the witnesses. We all have built-in truth detectors, and although it is certainly possible for us to be deceived, there is a human instinct that is hard to fool. Those who argue against the government in this film seem to be telling the truth, and their eyes seem to reflect inner visions of what they believe happened, or saw happen. Most of the government defenders, including an FBI spokesman and Attorney General Janet Reno, seem to be following rehearsed scripts and repeating cant phrases. Reno comes across particularly badly: Either she was misled by the FBI and her aides, or she was completely out of touch with what was happening.

If the film is to be believed, the Branch Davidians were a harmless if controversial group of religious zealots, their beliefs stretching back many decades, who were singled out for attention by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms for offenses, real or contrived, involving the possession of firearms--which is far from illegal in Texas. The ATF hoped by raiding the group to repair its tarnished image. And when four of its agents, and several Davidians, were killed in a misguided raid, they played cover-up and turned the case over to the FBI, which mishandled it even more spectacularly.

What is clear, no matter which side you believe, is that during the final deadly FBI raid on the buildings, a toxic and flammable gas was pumped into the compound even though women and children were inside. "Tear gas" sounds innocent, but this type of gas could undergo a chemical transformation into cyanide, and there is a pitiful shot of an 8-year-old child's body bent double, backward, by the muscular contractions caused by cyanide.

What comes through strongly is the sense that the attackers were "boys with toys." The film says many of the troops were thrilled to get their hands on real tanks. Some of the law-enforcement types were itching to "stop standing around." One SWAT team member boasts he is "honed to kill." Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made for Walking" was blasted over loudspeakers to deprive those inside of sleep (the memory of that harebrained operation must still fill the agents with shame).

When the time came, on April 19, 1993, the agents were apparently ready to rock 'n' roll. Heat-sensitive films taken by the FBI and interpreted by experts seem to show FBI agents firing into the compound, firing on an escape route after the fires were started, and deliberately operating on the side of the compound hidden from the view of the press. No evidence is presented that those inside started fires or shot themselves. Although many dead Davidians were indeed found with gunshot wounds, all of the bullets and other evidence has been impounded by the FBI.

Whatever happened at Waco, these facts remain: It is not against the law to hold irregular religious beliefs. It is not illegal to hold and trade firearms. It is legal to defend your own home against armed assault, if that assault is illegal. It is impossible to see this film without reflecting that the federal government, from the top down, treated the Branch Davidians as if those rights did not apply.

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INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY

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THE 13TH ANNUAL IDA DISTINGUISHED DOCUMENTARY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

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IDA DISTINGUISHED DOCUMENTARY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS, 1997

WACO: THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Produced by Dan Gifford and Amy Sommer Gifford

Directed by William Gazecki

Written by Dan Gifford, William Gazecki and
Michael McNulty

Photography by William Gazecki and Rick Nyburg

Distributed by SomFord Entertainment

136 min.



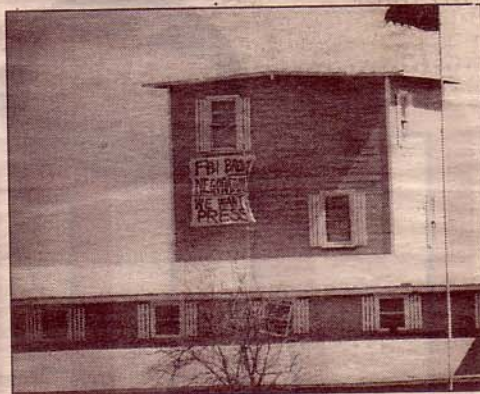
In the tradition of the 1960s exposés of government lying about the VietNam War and Watergate, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* exposes massive government deception in causing the fiery deaths of Branch Davidian men, women and children, in Waco, Texas, on April 19, 1995. Contrary to repeated federal law enforcement and Congressional claims that the Davidians set the fires and committed mass suicide, the film documents the government's firing incendiary devices into the volatile mix of deadly chemicals already injected into the building. The story is told by technical experts, distinguished academic scholars and the participants themselves, including a home video made by the people under siege.

The film raises disturbing questions about the abuse of human and civil rights by the authorities and the complicity of the media.



WILLIAM GAZECKI won an Emmy® for post-production sound mixing on *St. Elsewhere* along with nominations for his work on *Hill Street Blues* and other programs. He studied at UCLA, USC and the American Film Institute, and has wide experience as a video editor.

7:30pm
Movies



A Branch Davidian sign during the siege.

William Gazecki's **"Waco: The Rules of Engagement,"** a prize-winning documentary that challenges the FBI's version of the siege on the Branch Davidian sect, will screen at the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance tonight at 7:30. (See Screening Room.)

■ **"Waco: The Rules of Engagement,"** Museum of Tolerance, 9786 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, (310) 553-9036. Adults, \$4; museum members, \$4; children, \$3.

WACO: The Rules of Engagement

has screened at:

The Sundance Film Festival

Park City, Utah

The Santa Barbara Film Festival

Santa Barbara, California

The USA Film Festival

Dallas, Texas

The Atlanta Film Festival

Atlanta, Georgia

The Human Rights Watch Film Festival

New York, New York

The Florida Film Festival

Orlando, Florida

"WACO is a disturbing account of how those in power and the media misinform the American public."

- Lianne Skyler

Waco: The Rules of Engagement

U.S.A., 1996, 165 min., color

Director/Editor: William Gazecki

Producers: William Gazecki and Michael McNulty

Executive Producers: Dan Gifford, Amy Sommer Gifford

Cinematographers: William Gazecki and Rick Nyburg

Music: David Hamilton

Waco: *The Rules of Engagement* is an incredibly powerful examination of the events that led up to the fire at the Davidian Branch compound that took the lives of seventy men, women and children. Through meticulous research and interviews with both survivors and government authorities, the film reveals how the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the FBI, and the Department of Justice waged an unjustified war against Koresh and his sect and intentionally misled the public about what happened.

The media turned the Branch Davidian sect into dangerous and subversive fanatics, but the survivors who testify in *Waco* reveal a different story. Through these testimonies and analyses from academics and government authorities, the film examines how sect members perceived this sudden persecution and how the FBI fumbled attempts to negotiate with them. Ironically the tactics the agents used to force the Davidians to surrender played into the sect members' apocalyptic vision of their own fate.

Waco is a disturbing account of how those in power and the media misinform the American public. It also shows how people perceived as "different" are vulnerable in present-day America.

—Lianne Skyler



Saturday Jan 18 6:00 pm

Yarrow II

Sunday Jan 19 4:30 pm

Sundance Screening Room, Sundance

Wednesday Jan 22 12:30 pm

Yarrow II

Saturday Jan 25 2:00 pm

Prospector Square Theatre

\$7.00 (WACOT)

sundance film festival 1997

park city, utah

january 16-26



"The envelope wasn't just pushed,
it was exploded by the most powerful film
to be shown yet at Sundance."

"The audience.... remained riveted
up until its final disturbing shot-
an almost unheard of phenomenon
at a Sundance screening..."

- Austin American-Statesman

Austin American-Statesman

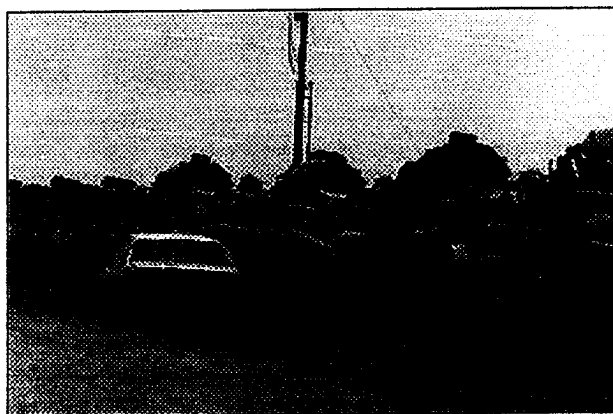
January 27, 1997

Where Dreamers Come to Win

by Ann Hornaday

"Waco" Had Crowds Riveted

As usual, many of the stand-outs of the festival have been in the non-fiction categories. Friday morning was brightened considerably by the premiere of "Riding the Rails", a film about the generation of teen-agers who took to riding box-cars during the depression. And the envelope wasn't just pushed, it was exploded by the



most powerful film to be shown yet at Sundance. Director William Gazecki presented "Waco: The Rules of Engagement" to a packed screening room on Saturday when it made its world premiere as part of the non-competitive American Spectrum side bar.

This harrowing tale of the siege at the Branch Davidian compound and its tragic end unearths shattering evidence of hidden agendas, dishonesty, religious persecution and fatal culpability on the part of the U.S. government. With tapes of never-before-heard negotiations between David Koresh and agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the FBI, video shot by the FBI at the compound and infrared photography, as well as interviews and congressional testimony, Gazecki leads the audience to the chilling conclusion that, as one former FBI special agent puts it, the Davidians who died in the fire on April 19, 1993 "were victims of a homicide" at the hands of their own government. The audience, most of whom stayed for the three-hour entirety of "Waco," remained riveted up until its disturbing final shot - an almost unheard of phenomenon at a Sundance screening, let alone one where everyone knows the ending.

WACO: THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (At



the Roxie) One of the most disturbing films you'll ever see, this low-key documentary methodically and convincingly makes the case that the government — not David Koresh — set the fatal fire at the Branch Davidian compound in April 1993. A powerful indictment of bureaucrats' ineptitude, disregard for human life, disrespect for the constitution and flagrant dishonesty, this long, gripping film may be necessary viewing for any free person in a free society. Not rated. 165 minutes.

— M. LaSalle

San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1997

FBI's Story Shot Full Of Holes In 'Waco'

BY MICK LaSALLE

Chronicle Staff Critic

Waco: The Rules of Engagement" is a grim, disturbing documentary, but a necessary and important one. It makes a strong case that the government's involvement in the Waco incident was a Bill of Rights nightmare.

The documentary, which opens today at the Roxie, tells the story of the 51-day standoff between the FBI and David Koresh's Branch Davidian sect in 1993 — but the version it tells is not the one most Americans heard on the 6 o'clock news.

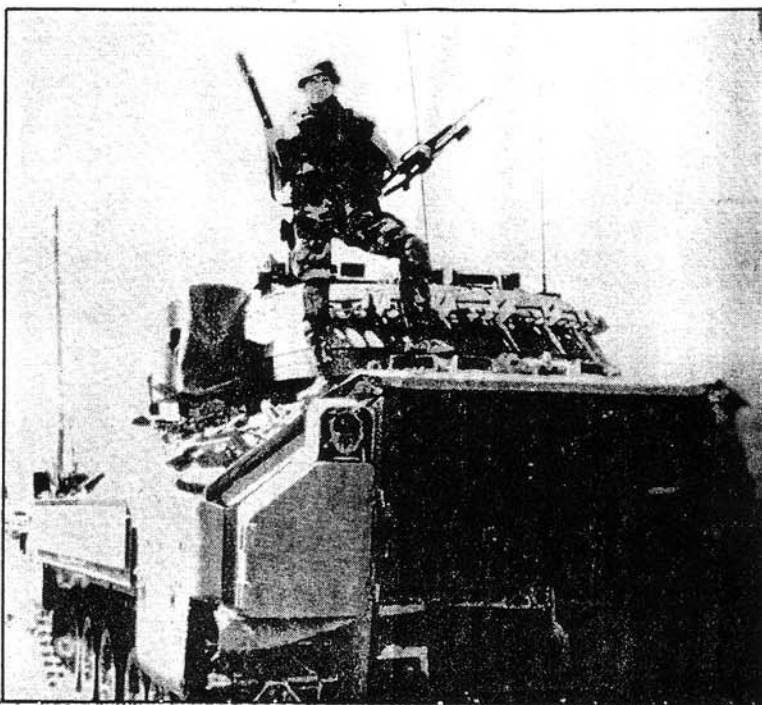
The tone is calm. The strategy is methodical. But the film's gravity only underscores the startling nature of its allegations. Over the course of 165 minutes, this painstaking documentary guides its audience to an understanding of the tragedy that's far different from the impression left by the congressional investigative committee.

According to the film, the Branch Davidians did not commit suicide by setting themselves on fire; rather, the FBI accidentally started the fire by penetrating the compound with CS mist, a highly combustible form of teargas.

Even more chilling, the film contradicts the FBI's assertion that it did not fire a single shot on the compound. It shows heat-sensitive infrared tapes that suggest, at least to two independent analysts, that the Branch Davidians were shot at with automatic weapons as they were trying to escape the burning building.

The documentary brings together TV news footage and uses liberal excerpts from the congressional hearings on Waco, parts of which aired on CNN.

More revealing are audio excerpts of the FBI's negotiations with the Branch Davidians; home video footage of the FBI agents clowning around on tanks; home videos of the Branch Davidians, recorded within the compound during the standoff; and the heat-sensitive tapes, originally recorded by government surveillance planes.



A federal agent poses atop a tank in 'Waco: The Rules of Engagement'



WACO: The Rules of Engagement: Documentary. Directed by William Gazecki. (Not rated, 165 minutes. At the Roxie.)

According to the film's executive producer, Dan Gifford, the filmmakers were given these tapes by the defense attorneys for the surviving Branch Davidians. Gifford and co-executive producer Amy Sommer Gifford have worked in television news, while director William Gazecki has had a long feature film career as a sound mixer ("The Rose," "Who Framed Roger Rabbit").

"Waco" takes the viewer through the tragedy from start to finish. The film makes the case that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents' initial assault on the compound was made with an eye toward publicity. The Branch Davidians were apparently tipped off to the assault when TV news vans arrived a full 30 minutes ahead of the ATF.

The standoff began four years ago today — Feb. 28, 1993 — when the ATF raid turned into a shootout. Each side claimed that the other started firing first. The film leaves that question open, except to note that a metal door, through which the first shots may have been fired — and which would show the direction of the bullets — has disappeared.

The film criticizes the FBI's handling of the negotiations and offers evidence that suggests that a break in the standoff had already occurred when Attorney General Janet Reno gave the go-ahead to launch the April 19 assault on the compound. "Waco" shows federal tanks knocking down entire sections of the compound and presents autopsy photos of mangled corpses.

Most damaging of all to the government's suicide theory are the heat-sensitive tapes. In two places a tank is shown depositing the combustible gas — and in less than a minute, that section bursts into flames.

"Waco: The Rules of Engagement" leaves it to the audience whether to believe Democratic Representative Charles Schumer of Brooklyn, for example, who postulates that the 27 Branch Davidians who died from gunshot wounds either killed themselves or were shot by one another.

It also doesn't say whether one should be more moved by the government's charges of alleged child abuse, or by an autopsy photo showing the charred, distorted body of an 8-year-girl.

Viewers may not come away from "Waco" thinking that they've heard the last word. But they will come away with questions, and they might just come away demanding answers.

"An atmosphere of stomach-clenching
dread suffuses William Gazecki's
grim documentary film..."

- *New York Times*

The New York Times

FILM REVIEW

Indicting The Feds For the Siege At Waco

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

An atmosphere of stomach-clenching dread suffuses William Gazecki's grim documentary film, "Waco: The Rules of Engagement." This methodical indictment of the United States Government's siege of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Tex., four years ago has awful lessons to teach about governmental hubris and how a deliberate failure to communicate can have catastrophic consequences.

That siege left 4 Federal agents and 76 members of the Branch Davidian sect dead. Most of those who perished were incinerated in a fire that destroyed the Mount Carmel compound on April 19, 1993. Among the film's most unsettling images are lingering close-ups of the charred bodies of women and children who died in the inferno.

In the official version of what happened, disseminated through the media, the Branch Davidians were a dangerous trigger-happy cult and their leader, David Koresh, was a Jim Jones-like madman who at the last minute incited his flock to commit mass suicide. But the film tells a different story. Taped interviews with the survivors and a replaying of the Government's tape of the negotiations between the F.B.I. and Koresh make a strong case for seeing the killing of the Federal agents as an act of self-defense against an armed Government assault. Once Federal blood had been shed, the movie says, the Government decided to move in for the kill.

The most damning evidence against the F.B.I., which took over the case from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, is found on heat-sensitive infrared videos shot by the F.B.I. from an aircraft flying over the compound. In the film, technological experts testify that strange flashes on the videos almost certainly came from automatic gunfire directed at the compound from Government tanks. This contradicts the F.B.I.'s insistence that during the entire 51-day siege, Federal forces never fired a shot.

The visual evidence also suggests that a tank ran over the body of one or more sect members and that gunfire from Federal troops ignited (perhaps deliberately) the highly flammable tear gas that had been pumped into the building.

How persuasive is the evidence? It depends on how much you trust technological expertise. Infrared photography measures only heat. It doesn't show clearly defined images of people, places and things. Reconstructing events from such pictures is a matter of educated inference and guesswork.

Given the scope of the tragedy being investigated, "Waco," which opens today at Cinema Village, is remarkable for its lack of overt passion. The surviving Branch Davidians who lost loved ones in the siege have heartbreaking stories to tell, but the film doesn't dwell on them. Instead of appealing directly to the emotions, the film maintains the detached, scholarly tone of a courtroom inquiry. Excerpts from Congressional testimony are woven together with interviews and extensive television coverage of the siege into a plodding (sometimes exhausting) narrative that has the feel of a siege. But the images of the final fire are as horrifying as newsreels of war-torn Beirut.

These Branch Davidians were not the insane cult that the Government painted. A religious sect spun off from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it took its eschatology from the Book of Revelation. And its leader did not present himself as a messiah but as a prophet. Allegations of child abuse against Koresh, the film insists, need to be evaluated in the context of the church's doctrine that its leader should beget 24 children who would one day become church elders.

Although the history of the Branch Davidians includes some incidents of violent internal strife, the sect's attitude toward the outside world appeared to be defensive rather than belligerent. The film puts the group's stockpiling of weapons in the context of the local gun culture and notes that the buying and selling of guns is a profitable business.

The movie suggests that the confrontation was conceived as a scheme by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to improve its tarnished image as a rogue agency: a tragedy that left 80 people dead began as a publicity stunt.

Waco: The Rules of Engagement (Monica 4-Plex, Sat.-Sun., 11 a.m.). William Gazecki's monumental documentary is a terrifyingly persuasive all-out attack on government agencies for their handling of the siege of the Branch Davidian sect. (Thomas, Sept. 11) (2:16) Unrated: too intense and brutal for children.

Los Angeles Times

Sifting Through Waco's Ashes

Documentary on tragic siege takes a harsh view of the government.

■ SCREENING ROOM

BY KEVIN THOMAS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

William Gazecki's "Waco: The Rules of Engagement," which screens tonight at 7:30 p.m. at the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance, is a major documentary, a meticulously detailed, step-by-step and terrifyingly persuasive all-out attack on government agencies and officials for their handling of the siege of the Branch Davidian sect outside Waco, Texas, in early 1993, which resulted in more than 80 deaths.

What emerges here is an acute sense of the ongoing struggle in American society between protecting the constitutional freedom of religion and protecting the public from the lunatic fringe.

Gazecki and his colleagues make clear the need for law enforcement agencies—and the public at large—to understand the thinking of religious sects to communicate better with them and, when standoffs occur, to designate highly skilled, highly trained individuals as negotiators.

Drawing from an amazing array of footage from various sources and from many interviews, plus chunks of testimony from the Joint Congressional Committee on Waco held in 1995, Gazecki contends that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms raided the Branch Davidian compound in February 1993 as an easy way to garner good publicity—only to have four of its men shot to death and six Davidians killed as well. He then argues that the FBI then moved in and, fueled by feelings of revenge, covered up its actions.

Gazecki challenges the FBI claim that its men never fired a single shot in its 51-day siege by showing footage from an infrared video shot by the FBI itself from a helicopter. Dr. Edward Allard, a former supervisor of the U.S. Army's Night Vision Lab, in examining the footage, concludes that certain flashes could be caused only by FBI gunfire. However, the

Please see Screening, Page 18

Screening

Continued from Page 17

layman is being asked to take his word for it, because the footage is so blurry.

Gazecki has an easier time in making his case that the FBI, using a strong, highly combustible tear gas combined with a systematic ramming of large holes in the compound walls, through which a prairie wind could flow, caused the complex to catch fire. (Apparently, a large supply of kerosene was also caused to leak because of the attacks.) He does not believe the Branch Davidians set their compound on fire as an act of mass suicide, and he does not flinch in showing just how horrible death was for its victims.

Gazecki maintains a calm, detached tone throughout, which allows us to judge Branch Davidian leader David Koresh for ourselves. Frankly, as a man with a ninth-grade education who not only believed in following a literal interpretation of the Bible, but also an ability to attract followers, he is scary. Even one of his lawyers, an eloquent attacker of the FBI, admits he believes Koresh was guilty of statutory rape. Dick Reavis, who wrote the first book on the standoff, contends that the Branch Davidians' large collection of weaponry, some of it illegal, was an inventory—the sect apparently made money in gun dealing—rather than an arsenal. But this view is scarcely comforting. It is an understatement to say that "Waco: The Rules of Engagement" is provocative in every sense of the word. (213) 553-9036.

LA WEEKLY

FREE

Born in Flames

Waco, Texas, revisited

BY MANOHLA DARGIS

Waco: *The Rules of Engagement* is a documentary with politics as fierce as they are brave, a rare combination in today's bland-out, ready-for-PBS marketplace. Directed by former sound editor William Gazecki, the documentary is a flawed if fully convincing inquiry into the government raid that left close to 80 members of a tiny Texas congregation dead in the spring of 1993. Watching it is unsettling, not only for what it says about the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Clinton administration and certain members of the House, but for what it never quite articulates about the creation of murderous lunatics like Timothy McVeigh.

WACO:
The Rules
of Engagement
Directed by
WILLIAM GAZECKI
Produced by
GAZECKI
MICHAEL McNULTY
DAN GIFFORD
and AMY SOMMER
GIFFORD

Released by Fifth
Estate Productions
At the Simon
Wiesenthal Center's
Museum of
Tolerance

Thursday, August 7
For more
information, call
(310) 553-8403

The history of the Branch Davidians reaches back to 1782 and the birth of William Miller, a preacher whose legacy of apocalyptic Christianity includes the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1934, Seventh-day Adventist Victor T. Houtell broke with the church and moved outside of Waco, Texas, where he and a handful of followers founded the first Mount Carmel community. The splinter church later incorporated as the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists and through the years underwent various transformations, some violent. David Koresh, a Seventh-day Adventist born Vernon Wayne Howell, joined the Davidians in 1981. By the time the ATF descended on Mount Carmel in February 1993, about 100 Branch Davidians were living together at what they called "Ranch Apocalypse," a multicultural, multi-racial collective of true believers who didn't eat

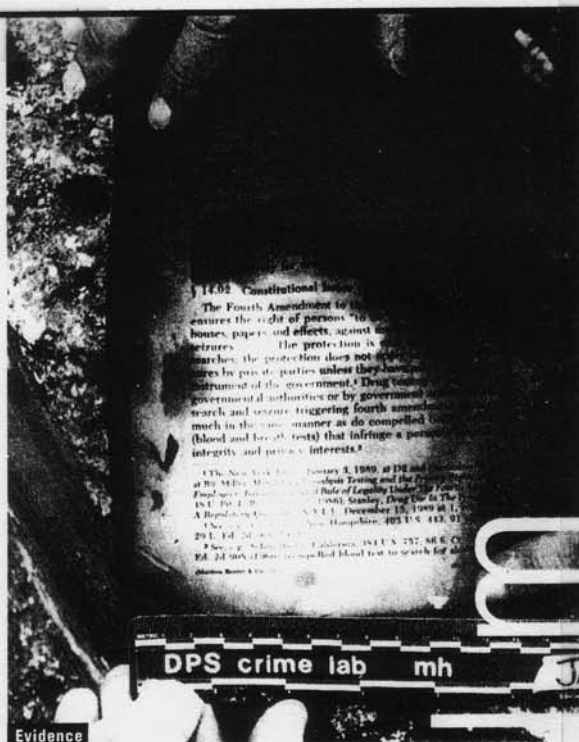
pork, grew their own food, lived off the profits of an auto-repair shop and a firearms business, and believed themselves Students of the Seven Seals, an arcane eschatology that put Koresh at its center.

A fast, at times breathless patchwork of original and archival footage, *The Rules of Engagement* is nothing if not completist. In addition to a persuasive round of expert testimony — from Bible

scholars and lawyers to a Harvard law professor and a night-vision specialist — there are on-camera testimonials taken from the '95 Judiciary Hearing Committee investigating the Mount Carmel raid, along with video footage shot by the Davidians themselves with a camera supplied by the FBI.

The conclusions are devastating. A former ATF deputy director states to the Judiciary Committee that the agency's "planning for Waco and the manner in which it was done was done for the purpose of publicity." A member of the committee complains that key evidence has disappeared, including the ATF's own video of the February assault and the compound's bullet-ridden front doors. An incredulous Texas Ranger testifies that after the final April conflagration, the FBI, which was called in after the ATF razed what was left of the compound, in effect destroying the crime scene. As Mount Carmel and its inhabitants burned, the ATF ran its colors up the Branch Davidian flagpole.

Since its premiere last January at Sundance, *The Rules of Engagement* has been trimmed by almost a half-hour. Now 136 minutes, the documentary feels a bit rushed, as if Gazecki couldn't bear to let a shred of evidence go, yet couldn't quite fit it all in, either. Throughout, however, his tone remains controlled; he lets the sheer weight of the evidence make its own angry argument. Conspicuously missing is any mention of McVeigh, whose own rage over Waco tripled the casualties when he bombed a federal building two years to the day after the April 19 assault. Still, what Gazecki and his producers do manage is not just laudable, it's heroic. The depressing sight of the Judiciary Committee falling along partisan lines — with almost all of the Democrats eager to demonize Koresh even as they forgive the ATF and the FBI each one of their mistakes — is in itself a small masterpiece of documentary truth telling. **B**



14.02 Constitutional Law
The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ensures the right of persons "to be secure in their houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures." The protection is not absolute; it does not require that the government obtain a warrant before it searches a person's home or effects, unless they are in a "sensitive area" of the government. The government's search and seizure power is limited by the Fourth Amendment, which states that the government must not search in a manner that is "unreasonable" (blood and breath tests) that infringe a person's integrity and privacy interests.

DPS crime lab mh

Music: National Symphony
weathers the storm

2

The Reliable Source: Carville and
Matalin, at odds over UFOs

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'Waco': Slow Burn

WACO, From C1

real scoops. It gets away from its central—and excellent—examination of the events that led to the cremation to push a theory of massacre by the FBI that seems far more an issue of subjective interpretation than actual evidence.

More fundamentally, the film seems not to know what it is, and from that stems its principal problem—it doesn't know who its audience is. Is it an example of preaching to the converted, a *cri de coeur* to the hard gun right, which sees the Davidians as martyrs to the trashed Second Amendment? Is it a journalistically valid examination of difficult materials that few mainstream news organizations have been willing to look at rigorously? It tries to be both; consequently one must view it with caution.

But first, there's an issue of style. The movie, directed by William Gazecki, feels somehow too slick and professionally persuasive, like an episode of "Ancient Mysteries of the Bible" or some other over-produced cable schlock. It shows—for the first time on the big screen—home video shot by the Davidians themselves within the compound during the siege. We see the faces and hear the voices of the ultimately burned. Far from robots under the spell of a charismatic sociopath, they seem like reasonable, earnest people. And their children, the true victims in this tragedy, will break your heart. They are, after all, not Davidians, they are just kids.

Yet so powerful is that imagery—giving faces to those who were so routinely demonized—that one wonders at the extent to which it is overplayed. Are the strains of tragic violin really necessary? Don't the faces of the dead speak eloquently enough without the musical amplification? And the frequent dissolves to the conflagration make a point literally that should be left to the audience to make metaphorically.

There's also some attempt to revise the image of David Koresh, to legitimize the theological underpinnings that led him to sexual activity with girls in their very early teens. This is hard to swallow; more important, it misses the larger point, which is that this isn't an either/or situation. It's not necessary for Koresh to be good for the government's actions to be bad. This isn't melodrama, it's complex reality, and therefore it's quite possible that Koresh was a child molester by legitimate legal standards and the government acted unwisely through the two agencies—the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the FBI—involved in the situation.

'Waco': Breaking The Rules Of Disengagement

By Stephen Hunter
Washington Post Staff Writer

At least metaphorically, the shroud of choking smoke still hangs over the ruins of the Branch Davidian compound at Waco, Tex., where on April 19, 1993, 76 people, including 25 children, were cremated in a botched FBI attempt to bring the 51-day standoff to an end.

Now, "Waco: The Rules of Engagement," an ambitious if agenda-driven documentary, seeks to penetrate that smoke. But by the end you're still coughing.

No event in recent history has called out more loudly for sound, clear, fair professional journalism than the events on that windy prairie over those 51 long days. It still does; this isn't it. In "Waco: The Rules of Engagement," the filmmakers' anger clouds their news judgment and obscures some

See WACO, C7, Col. 4

Finally, there's the issue of muzzle flashes. Using tape from an FBI FLIR (Forward-Looking Infrared) camera in a circling aircraft, the producers bring in infrared expert Edward Allard, a specialist with impeccable credentials, who claims that flashes in the eerie tape can only be muzzle blasts, suggesting that FBI shooters accompanied the tanks and were offering suppressive fire for the armored vehicles, which effectively kept the Davidians trapped amid the flames. That amounted to murder.

Even though other analysts disagree with that conclusion (see sidebar), the material is questionable without reference to other sources. Clearly the tape contains not merely thermal information, but also visual information—that is, we can see the tanks moving on the buildings, we can see clouds, we can see shadows. Thus there's no guarantee that the odd cracks of incandescence are registrations of the heat of muzzle blasts; they could be reflections of shiny debris or puddles, odd optical phenomena.

Part of the problem here is epistemological. It proceeds from the assumption that somehow everything can be known. Everything can be decoded. But even if we share God's viewpoint, only He can know all: We are looking into an unbelievably volatile situation, with tanks grinding into buildings, dust floating, mirage and smoke filling the air, mud, fuel and water saturating the

ground. It's impossible to account for the variables, and the attempt to find answers from what cannot be anything but interpretations is doomed to be unconvincing.

"Waco: The Rules of Engagement" does good work in challenging several components on the original record. It offers what appears to be film of ATF helicopters firing on a Davidian during the initial raid, when ATF has maintained its choppers were unarmed. It uncovers an ATF negotiator acknowledging that men in the choppers fired, while sticking to the feeble explanation that there were no mounted guns on the helicopters. It pokes nasty fun at some of ATF's and the FBI's congressional apologists during the House hearings, including one pitifully deluded representative who thinks that "flashbang" grenades—classified as destructive devices by federal law—are harmless.

But where it breaks new ground is its examination of the cowboy mentality of the besiegers. We expect and deserve more from professional, highly trained law enforcement officers on the firing line. My God, if these guys can't control their middle fingers—one credible survivor reports much "bird flipping" at the Davidians—how can they be counted on to control their trigger fingers? There's a chilling bit of home video in which an FBI sniper, lounging in a vehicle under a pair of expensive shades, proclaims gleefully to his buddy behind the Camcorder, "I'm honed to a fine edge. I'm honed to kill."

As Harvard professor Alan Stone, who investigated the events for the Justice Department, says, "I began to see that the key to the situation wasn't the psychology of the people inside; it was the psychology of the people outside." And thus one sees the crucial miscalculation that made the events of April 19 almost preordained: The SWAT people are trained to action. They have refined shooting skills, extraordinary courage, tactical finesse on a world-class level. They are exactly the kind of guys who should not be parked in the rain on a perimeter for 51 days, because they grow restless, edgy and embittered and their judgment falters, as it clearly did, until they're willing to pump massive amounts of noxious, potentially poisonous CS gas into a ramshackle wooden structure filled with kids who could not even wear gas masks, creating a tinderbox that any odd spark could ignite. Combine their reckless will toward resolution with a White House inexperienced in applications of force, and the tragedy was almost unstoppable.

The bitter truth is, it didn't have to happen. As a wise friend says, "Nothing happened down there that a mile of concertina wire and a few deputy sheriffs wouldn't have solved eventually." Yes, the Davidians might still be down there, but at least the children would be alive.

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Apocalypse Now

By coincidence, on the day that Timothy McVeigh was sentenced to death, I saw a documentary called *Waco: The Rules of Engagement* (SomFord). It would be obscene to suggest that this film affords an iota of a fragment of justification for what happened in Oklahoma City, but *Waco* vivifies some matters that might easily drive a canted mind further askew. It shows that, despite immense media coverage, despite several books, many of us remain underinformed about the Waco horror. The word "proof" has a forlorn sound in relation to this story; but as this 165-minute film demonstrates, somber questions still hang in the air about it.

The director of *Waco* was William Gazecki; the executive producers were Dan Gifford and Amy Sommer-Gifford. First-class work by all of them and their colleagues. The editing develops rhythmic and thematic shape without distorting the film's reportorial intent. Interviews and portions of testimony on both sides of the story are handled without "tennis" effect. (One side's shots, then the other's.) But of course we know from the start—before the start—that the film would not have been made if the makers had agreed with the government's findings.

The first raid on the Branch Davidian compound outside Waco, on February 28, 1993, was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and followed months of planning by that agency. Reason: the religious sect had allegedly been stockpiling weapons, some of them illegal. In fact, the Davidians were conducting a legal gun busi-

ness to support themselves, though—certainly—their faith was apocalyptic, leaning heavily on the Book of Revelation, and they were prepared for an apocalyptic end. That first raid was unsuccessful for the ATF (and their publicity person had summoned the press!). Six Davidians and four agents were killed. Then the FBI was called in. The second raid was on April 19, 1993. (Two years later, to the day, the government building in Oklahoma City was bombed.) That second raid ended in the burning of the compound. Seventy-four Davidians, including twenty-one children under the age of 14, were immolated. Some of the charred corpses had gunshot wounds.

We see: footage of the first attack; of the second attack, the metal pipes of a combat emergency vehicle that poured inflammable tear gas into the compound; footage shot earlier by Davidians of themselves (with a camcorder provided by the FBI), all of them happy. We

are given a sketch of the history of the sect and of the troubled life of their leader, David Koresh, who was adored. We see interviews done specifically for this film and also large sections of testimony, before the Joint Congressional Committee investigating Waco in 1995. We hear excerpts from phone conversations between Koresh and FBI negotiators in the weeks before the second raid; we hear the 911 call from the compound on February 28 after fire had started and the response of the 911 operator, who was either incredibly slow-witted or lackadaisical. Outstanding for me was some of the congressional testimony; the film's interview with Edward Allard, an expert on FLIR (Forward-Looking Infrared), the aerial photography used in combat that was used on April 19; and the statements of Janet Reno.

At the Washington hearing, the testimony of a young teenage girl who says she was molested by Koresh is truncated by the film editors. (Why? It's relevant that we know about Koresh's sex life, including his many marriages, including some to 14-year-olds. We ought to have the chance to weigh whether his disturbing behavior figured in decisions that led to a mass immolation.) We get pungent replies from two seasoned Texas lawyers who had been retained by the Davidians and who refute government accounts of some matters—and who are questioned aggressively by Representative Charles Schumer (a Democrat, just conceivably interested in defending the Clinton administration). Two FBI officials testify forcefully that no FBI agent fired a shot in the April 19 raid. Then Allard shows us through FLIR footage that, after the Davidian women and children had been put into a concrete storage space to protect them during the FBI assault, flashes that might have been two firing machine-guns were directed into that concrete haven.

Janet Reno appears before the congressional committee and testifies that

"It shows that, despite immense media coverage, despite several books, many of us remain underinformed about the Waco horror."

-The New Republic

"The editing develops rhythmic and thematic shape without distorting the film's reportorial intent."

-The New Republic

she is "very satisfied" with the FBI reports that she has seen. When she is asked why, on the morning of April 19, she didn't cancel a speaking engagement in Baltimore so that she could stay in her office and monitor what was about to happen, she replies that, if she had canceled, it might have created a public impression of a great emergency—though the whole country already thought it was an emergency.

One point about Reno is omitted from the film and from most discussions of the episode that I have read. Reno assumed the office of attorney general on March 12, 1993—after the ATF raid, which had been under the Treasury Department, and before the FBI raid, which was under her command. She had been catapulted from obscurity into an intense national spotlight, into the middle of a ghastly confrontation—a newcomer surrounded by experienced officials who already had certain views on the Davidian matter. Certainly the FBI was attempting to settle the difficulty by negotiations; almost equally certainly, the April attack on the compound might have been delayed or altered by a more experienced attorney general. It's said that Reno agreed to go ahead with the attack because of the reports of child abuse. Later that week the Department of Justice itself stated that it had no evidence of child abuse during the fifty-one-day siege.

In my view, the basis of the government's actions against the Davidians is best understood historically. Indispensable here is Richard Hofstadter's book *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*. In a chapter called "The Evangelical Spirit" Hofstadter says: "The American mind was shaped in the mold of early modern Protestantism ... the subordination of men of ideas to men of emotional power or manipulative skill." Examples abound before the Davidians, and since then we have seen Heaven's Gate. What Hofstadter calls "revivalist or enthusiastic movements" have been a continuing worry to American propriety, to rationalism. Fundamentally, far beneath the Waco arguments and testimony, that old and deep conflict is the root of the horror.

In the film world, *Waco* joins the honorably long list of American documentaries that examine governmental actions—the De Antonio-Talbot *Point of Order*, about Joe McCarthy; Eugene S.ones's *A Face of War*, about Vietnam; and many more. Of course, one can treat those films merely as consolations because people were free to make them in this country. But it's possibly not too delusory to think that they contribute to the vitalizing of American conscience.



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