



## Forgetting Dad

Directors: Matthew Sweetwood and Rick Minnich, Germany, 2008, 83 minutes

If your father no longer remembers you, does he stop being your father?

In 1990, one week after a seemingly harmless car accident, Richard Minnich, a California data processing executive and father of five, wakes up with total amnesia. He no longer recognizes his wife and children and has great difficulty with the simplest daily tasks. The doctors are baffled, as there is no evidence of brain damage or other physical causes. For the family, the event marks the beginning of a never-ending nightmare. Within a few seconds, the first forty-five years of this man's life are erased forever. From one day to the next, the man they knew as their husband and father had become a stranger.

During the eighteen years since the fateful accident, a new person has developed: from the "Old Richard," as the man calls his former self, emerges "New Richard." He leaves his family and, with a new girlfriend, embarks upon a completely new life far removed from his old existence. Filmmaker Rick Minnich is "Old Richard's" eldest son from his first marriage. Sixteen years after his father's "new start," Rick returns to California with a camera to investigate why his father's memory still hasn't returned.

He makes inquiries into his father's illness and examines the suspicions and rumours that soon arose after the amnesia began. With the help of family members, old Super 8 home movies and a former colleague of Richard's, Rick reconstructs, in detective-story fashion, the period of time before and the years following the accident. Along the way, Rick not only discovers many deep-rooted emotions that were never dealt with, but also uncovers startling

facts that shed a very different light on his father's memory loss. Was Richard really struck by a horrible affliction, or was he perhaps trying to escape from a life he could no longer lead?

*Winner of the IDFA Special Jury Award*

### DIRECTORS BIOGRAPHIES

Rick Minnich was born in Pomona, California in 1968 and grew up in Kansas, Arizona and California. After graduating from Columbia University in 1990, he moved to Berlin, where he studied directing at the Film and Television Academy "Konrad Wolf". His graduation film *Heaven On Earth* won the 2001 Babelsberg Media Prize for best documentary graduation film in Germany, and in 2002 it took the FIPA d'Or in Biarritz and numerous other prizes in the United States and Europe. Rick Minnich's films have been shown throughout Europe and *Forgetting Dad* is his third feature-length documentary. It follows *Homemade Hillbilly Jam* (2005) and *Good Guys & Bad Guys* (1997).

Matt Sweetwood (co-writer, co-director, editor) was born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1971 and currently lives in Potsdam, Germany. Sweetwood studied film at the California State University San Diego. He has broad experience as a script writer and director in both the United States and Germany. His scripts include *The Jewish Santa Claus* and *The Stroke*. He wrote the script and directed the documentaries *The Story Of Liberty* and *Liberty At War* (2004). He also edited the documentaries *Desert Dreamers* (2005) and *Homemade Hillbilly Jam* (2005, which he also co-wrote).