

VIDEO LIBRARIAN

November/December 2005 (Volume 20, Issue 6)

The Thursday Club ★★★

(2005) 60 min. VHS or DVD: \$39: individuals, \$199: institutions. Zala Films. PPR. Color cover. ISBN: 0-9724588-3-2 (vhs), 0-9724588-2-4 (dvd).

In October 1967, a news photograph of a demonstration by anti-war protesters at an army induction center in Oakland, California, featured a long-haired young man who looked as if he was about to be clubbed by a police officer. That youth, George Paul Csicsery, escaped from the melee and went on to become a respected filmmaker (*Hungry for Monsters, N Is a Number*). In *The Thursday Club*, Csicsery returns to that turbulent era, albeit through a unique route: interviewing the Oakland police officers who tried (and in some cases, failed) to maintain law and order during the late '60s. The title refers to an informal weekly lunch gathering of retired cops who were part of the Oakland force during the Vietnam War era—officers who now look back at the period and acknowledge they were living in the worst of all worlds: personally not supportive of the war, but viewed as enemies not only by the demonstrators but also by a highly critical media that they felt drummed up anti-police sentiment. Worse, the officers not only had the anti-war movement to deal with, but also the Black Panthers (who were generally not known for being fans of peaceful civil disobedience). It was the ultimate lose-lose situation, and the lingering bitterness experienced by the now-retired officers is barely disguised. While the editing could be a little tighter here and there, and the historical perspective could have been a little wider (the history of brutality complaints brought by civilians against the Oakland police is not explored), Csicsery deserves credit for making a fine film overall that revisits a much-told story from a fresh perspective. DVD extras include 20 minutes of bonus footage. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)