

Guardianship Story Inspires Todd J. Stein's The Final Fight, Tops \$20K on Seed&Spark

Todd J. Stein's personal film, inspired by his father's real-life guardianship experience, moves closer to festival submissions with an upcoming premiere.

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, July 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Todd J. Stein's *The Final Fight* transforms a deeply personal guardianship battle into a dramatic short film about elder exploitation, family fracture, and the fight to restore dignity. Inspired by Stein's father's true story and the New York Times cover story, [The Fight of This Old Boxer's Life Was With His Own Family](#), written by John Leland, the film blends personal history with urgent social relevance.



Stein with Cast Members of *The Final Fight*, Ryan Spahn, Josh Davis, Margaret Reed and Tom Hair

The *Final Fight*, an independent short film, has completed its second successful crowdfunding campaign on Seed&Spark, bringing its combined fundraising total to more than \$20,000 towards the production. The support from both campaigns has helped fund key stages of pre-production and post-production, including, editing, and color correction. These final stages are where the film's emotion, rhythm, tone, and visual identity fully come to life.

“

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Todd J. Stein, Writer / Director of The Final Fight

Described as a New York City-based thriller/drama, *The Final Fight* follows a struggling Hollywood producer who returns to New York to save his aging father, a former

boxer, from a corrupt guardianship system, only to discover that the real fight is not in the ring, but for dignity, family, and freedom. Stein's mission is to expose guardianship abuse through storytelling and reveal how a system meant to protect can instead fracture families and strip

away their loved one's autonomy. The Final Fight began as a passion project in 2018 after filmmaker Todd J. Stein's father, at age 87, was placed into guardianship while facing serious personal challenges. That painful chapter became the foundation for a deeply personal story about family, justice, vulnerability, and the urgent need for reform within the guardianship system.

Stein's father, Marvin Stein, was a Golden Gloves boxer and a trailblazer in the fitness world, building a career that began in the 1960s and spanned more than three decades. His chain of New York clubs, known as The Shelton Health Club, had a clientele that included celebrities, politicians, and known mob figures. Among those who frequented the clubs were Barbra Streisand, Liza Minnelli, Burt Reynolds, and George Hamilton. Other members of the downtown Brooklyn club included Bruce Cutler, known for representing John Gotti, and former FBI Director Louis J. Freeh, who was assigned to the club in the mid-1970s when he was just 27 years old. Freeh worked undercover there for five years, an experience that contributed to the takedown of Mafia member Michael Clemente and Operation UNIRAC. Freeh later wrote about his experiences in his book *My FBI*, while *Vanity Fair* chronicled that period in its 1990s article *The Freeh Agent*.

Younger Stein, a New York-based community advocate, has run for local District Leader and has served on Manhattan Community Board 8 for the past two years. His work on *The Final Fight* reflects both his personal connection to the story and his broader commitment to civic engagement, public awareness, and giving voice to families affected by broken systems.



Marvin Stein and Todd J. Stein



Josh Davis and Tom Hair portray Scott Cohen and Martin Cohen

“Indie filmmaking happens when people come together and get behind a project”, said Todd J. Stein, writer and director of *The Final Fight*. “We feel incredibly lucky to have connected with so many supporters who believe in the mission of this film. Every contribution, every share, every message, and every act of encouragement has helped move *The Final Fight* forward.” The Seed&Spark campaigns were examples of how his efforts have proven to be resonating with many that are supporting his mission.

“*The Final Fight* is personal, but it is not only my family’s story”, Stein said. “It is about what happens when a system meant to protect the vulnerable can be used to silence them. This film is my way of turning pain into purpose and giving families facing guardianship abuse a voice.” Across the two campaigns, Stein has received support from hundreds of people, many of whom were personally moved by his family’s story, and others who have experienced guardianship firsthand through their own loved ones. “I receive emails daily from people thanking me for my efforts to bring awareness,” Stein said. “Many have loved ones currently under guardianship, and even more have unfortunately lost their loved ones to the system.”

Stein believes that by sharing his family’s challenges through narrative storytelling, he can help spark urgently needed conversations around reform. “There have been many high-profile guardianship stories involving celebrities like Britney Spears, Wendy Williams, and Casey Kasem,” Stein said. “But it’s the countless everyday families whose stories we never hear that I hope to bring awareness to, people who often end up silenced by these court-appointed systems.”

Beyond crowdfunding, *The Final Fight* has built a growing community of supporters, including national organizations and advocates dedicated to the issue. Through the campaigns, the team



Ryan Spahn portrays Brad Kessler



Adrienne Stern, Casting Director of *The Final Fight*

has launched merchandise, shared behind-the-scenes updates, and offered special thank-you credits to contributors who want to support the film's larger mission. The growing number of people ordering The Final Fight T-shirts has become a visible sign that this important message needs to be shared. "They post their photos online and tag my social media," Stein said. "I'm moved by their desire to share these photos. It represents both solidarity with the cause and direct support for the film's production."

As the project enters its next stages of post-production, attention turns to finishing the edit process with color correction, sound design, mixing, and effects. "Then we move toward film festival submissions and a planned premiere in the coming months." The filmmakers believe The Final Fight is resonating across generations, with families who have faced elder care challenges, legal uncertainty, or the emotional burden of protecting loved ones within complicated systems.

The film features a talented cast and crew who helped bring Stein's story to life. Its central characters are inspired by members of his own family, adding an intimate and authentic layer to the production. Among the cast is Trini Alvarado (*The Staircase*, HBO), who attended New York's Professional Children's School with Stein, and Ryan Spahn (*Succession*, *Elsbeth*, *American Horror Story*), whom Stein has known for more than two decades having represented him early in his career. "Josh Davis, who plays my alter ego, comes from Broadway's *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* and *Les Miserables*," Stein said. Stein was struck by Davis' performance during an earlier reading of the feature-length screenplay and quickly realized he was the perfect actor to take on the role in the project.

In speaking about the project, Davis said "this is a real family, a real fight, and a real man who almost had his entire life taken from him. There's nothing more interesting and meaningful as an actor than helping to tell a story like this. Scott is a flawed character (most of the interesting ones are), but he shows up anyway. He's a guy trying to do the right thing despite all the challenges he faces. Getting to portray someone like that and bring to light how many people are trapped in guardianship with no one in their corner is not only powerful, it's necessary."

Additional cast members were brought in through Casting Director Adrienne Stern, another longtime professional connection of Stein's from his years representing actors. The cast was rounded out by Adriana DeMeo, James Ciccone, Margaret Reed and Tom Hair, who played the role of Martin Cohen, which was based on Stein's father Marvin Stein. "I am proud to have directed the actors who portrayed these characters, because each one represents someone deeply connected to my own life," Stein said. "This is not just a film about one family. It is about the many families who feel powerless when the system fails the people it is supposed to protect."

Stein added that taking on the role as a first-time director felt necessary after exploring the idea of having someone else tell the story and realizing the vision needed to come directly from him. "When something is this personal and visions don't align, you realize there is no other option but

to make sure the story is told from a point of view where the characters are true to the real people, and the dialogue reflects the actual words those people would use." With two successful Seed&Spark campaigns now complete and more than \$20,000 raised, The Final Fight continues its journey toward completion with the goal of raising awareness, creating conversation, and contributing to the growing call for guardianship reform. "Later this summer, we'll launch our third campaign on Seed&Spark to support further post production expenses."

About The Final Fight: The Final Fight is a short film inspired by a true story about a Hollywood producer whose personal life is unraveling and whose career is in crisis. When he returns home to rescue his ailing father from a corrupt guardianship, he discovers his power cannot save him from a system built to prey on the weak. The fight for justice becomes a reckoning with family, failure, and the limits of control.

For updates and more information, follow the film on Instagram: @thefinalfightfilm and check out the website: thefinalfightfilm.com

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