One of the awesome advantages of watching independent film is it's ability to showcase world issues - that I may never had heard of before. That's not saying some big budget feature or documentary doesn't come along sometimes, doing just that. I just find that I see it first watching indie movies. And of course, that makes total sense. Indie movie makers are always looking for interesting content. They need it in order to compete. Even in the world of today, where the internet connects everyone and anything can be found. Especially in the world of today. "Betty Williams Contagious Courage" from writer, director Dawn Engle is definitely no exception.

Within this film is a history that many people, especially in my little corner of the world, may never have known - or known very little about. Like many important events in history, with time they begin to fade. Time tends to erase world events slowly, but in a curious way. I have long known of the showcased tensions involving Protestant and Catholic folk - and by no means is it a laughing matter. Yet today it has been white-washed to the point of parody. By that I mean the levels, tension, violence and even the story itself. My limited knowledge comes from fun being poked at the subject. Shows like the ever insulting yet funny "Family Guy" have, on numerous occasions, brought the subject to life. In a ridiculous way obviously. Even Stephen King has used this long standing difference in his works. "Needful Things" is a perfect example. So when I write that the true horrors of these issues are fading, it's with a heavy heart I know, that before history gobbles up certain world events, what it does is parody them. And that ladies and gents is a sad thought. It's perhaps even why we, human kind, are bound to make the same mistakes over and over. If not religion... politics. If not politics maybe both, as is the case in this film. Maybe we can all argue about letters Vs numbers. It really doesn't matter what the cause... because we always seem to forget... fight... repeat. All these thoughts went through my head during, and after watching this film. You definitely can't fault a movie that makes you think. This one does just that.

As I'm sure you've guessed by the title, this film focuses on a long running war,
commonly referred to as "The Troubles" by locals and semi-locals, and by no means was this a tame skirmish. This is all shown through news clips and of course, through Betty Williams herself. Who not only lived through this war, but was an active participant, rallying for it to end. You may notice I keep calling it a war. That's because it was. No matter the parody you may come across now days, don't kid yourself. The loss of live, injuries and overall life changing events that have taken place is massive. Definitely not something to call small or insignificant.

Taking place in Northern Ireland, this was started in the late 1960s and ended in the late 90s. Finally. Although not totally religion related, one might as well say it was - as Protestants and Catholics were the dividing line on opinion. This enduring conflict was long, bloody and downright dirty at times. This film showcases how the woman finally took action to end this conflict. I won't ruin the film, because odds are if you're like me, you really don't know all the details - and it's the details that hold your attention. Let me just say that a lot will surprise you. Maybe even make you wonder how the hell you knew so little. It's all here - wrapped in a package slightly over an hour in length.

I really don't have much to say technically. "Betty Williams: Contagious Courage" is a well done production. The flow from point A, to B and C is handled nicely - and the news footage is expertly crafted into the story. The interview pieces are just what you'd expect from a higher brow documentary, and Betty Williams definitely has a knack for keeping things true and real.

I also found the length and pacing to be spot on and loved how the wrap-up of the film featured a little post-"The Troubles" information to finish things off.

In the end, this was an excellent movie that was as fascinating as it was sad. As I opened this write-up talking about how little I knew about history, that is not local, let me close with the same thing. I love indie film for this reason. Knowledge. With that said, "Betty Williams Contagious Courage" has no problem earning it's stripes. Excellent film. Period and that's all.