

# SALEM FILM SCREENED AT CAMP MEETING

Sawdust and electronics are not supposed to cross paths. When you are screening a documentary film in a nineteenth-century tabernacle, concessions are bound to be made. So as the pews began to fill for Salem Campground's 176th "Big Sunday" presentation, Bradd Shore and his MARIAL team used the sawdust covering the floor to their advantage.

"Cover the speaker cables with sawdust to keep people from tripping," Shore instructed. It was a useful idea considering that more than 200 people would turn out for this night of doctrine and documentary. Big Sunday, as it is known among the Salem tenters, is the highlight of the weeklong Salem Camp Meeting. Guest orators, musicians, and clergy are invited from across the country to address the Salem community. And for a second consecutive year, Shore presented the MARIAL documentary *Family Revival: Salem Camp Meeting*.

The screening would not simply be a repeat of the previous year. The film had undergone major audio postproduction work as well as some editing revisions in the hope of having it eventually aired on public television. In fact, a week prior to Big Sunday, Sam Ramsey—the mayor of Covington, Georgia—broadcast the film on the local public-access channel.

Beyond the technical differences in the film, this year's screening served as a memorial as well. Mary Ramsey, the beloved matriarch of Salem, had passed away since the last time the campground was alive with the fellowship she so dearly loved. So it was in her honor that

Shore presented the film to the Salem community that had made it possible.

The tabernacle's industrial hanging lights were powered down and the place became pitch black as the film began. From the history of U.S. camp meetings all the way to Mary Ramsey's moving monologue, the attendees seemed captivated by seeing their own experience at Salem in a novel and stirring light. And how wonderfully odd that a group of academic outsiders could not only provide the Salem community with a lens on their coveted camp meeting but that the same lens could be used by non-tenters as a means of learning how to bind family, religion, and the passage of time together seamlessly.

*Family Revival: Salem Camp Meeting* can be viewed online at <http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/MARIAL/>. It also is available in DVD and VHS format. For information, contact [marial@learnlink.emory.edu](mailto:marial@learnlink.emory.edu).

John Kerry is MARIAL's multimedia specialist.

