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| Pennebaker, Donn Alan (D.A.) (1925–) |
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| A passionate observer of America’s most significant cultural icons and political personalities, documentary filmmaker Donn Alan (D.A.) Pennebaker was born in Evanston, Illinois in 1925. He studied mechanical engineering at Yale University and served in the Naval Air Corps during the Second World War before joining Drew Associates, the New York-based documentary workshop. While collaborating with colleagues Robert Drew, Albert Maysles, and Richard Leacock on films about John F. Kennedy’s administration and an array of extraordinary citizens, Pennebaker became a pioneer of the incipient ‘direct cinema’ style. A mode of filmmaking involving the synchronous recording of sound and image along with fluid cinematography, direct cinema aims to immerse the viewer in the unfolding action. Leaving Drew Associates in 1963 in search of more artistic freedom, Pennebaker became increasingly interested in capturing counter-cultural figures (*Bob Dylan in Don’t Look Back* [1967]) and music festivals and concerts (*Monterey Pop* [1968]). During the mid-1970s, he formed a lasting personal and professional partnership with the filmmaker Chris Hegedus. In addition to continuing to track charismatic musicians and politicians, Pennebaker experimented with documenting inventors, artists, and entrepreneurs in the later part of his career. In 2012 he was honoured with a Governor’s Award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. |
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| Further reading:  (Pennebaker Hegedus Films )  (Beattie)  (Saunders) |