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# THE SEARCHERS

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as they come.”

—*The New York Times*



ALAN LE MAY

AUTHOR OF *THE UNFORGIVEN*

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY  
ORIGINAL MOVIE CAST MEMBER *HARRY CAREY, JR.*

**Alan Le May** was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, and attended Stetson University in DeLand, Florida in 1916. In 1918 he registered for the World War I draft in Aurora, and then enlisted and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. While attending the University of Chicago where he graduated in 1922 with a bachelor of philosophy degree, he joined the Illinois National Guard. He was promoted to First Lieutenant Field Artillery for the Illinois National Guard in 1923. He published his first novel, *Painted Ponies* (about the Cheyenne and the U.S. Cavalry horse soldiers), in 1927. Le May is also the author of *The Unforgiven*, which was turned into the classic 1960 western directed by John Huston and starred Burt Lancaster, Audrey Hepburn, and Audie Murphy.

Veteran character actor **Harry Carey, Jr.**, made his first movie in 1946. Since then, he has appeared in more than eighty motion pictures and hundreds of TV shows, including “Have Gun Will Travel,” “Gunsmoke,” “Laramie,” “Rawhide,” and countless others.

Of the movies he appeared in, many were for legendary western director John Ford, including *Wagon Master* (1950), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *3 Godfathers* (1948), *Rio Grande* (1950), *The Long Gray Line* (1955), *Two Rode Together* (1961), and *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964).

However, it is John Ford’s 1956 movie version of Alan Le May’s *The Searchers* for which Mr. Carey is most remembered, as the doomed Brad Jorgensen. Enraged at learning his sweetheart had been killed by a Comanche raiding party, he rides off, only to be ambushed a moment later.

In 1994, Mr. Carey published his autobiography, *Company of Heroes: My Life As an Actor in the John Ford Stock Company*.

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# THE SEARCHERS

ALAN LE MAY



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*To my grandfather, Oliver Le May,  
who died on the prairie;  
And my grandmother, Karen Jensen Le May,  
to whom he left three sons under seven.*

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## *The Searchers and John Wayne*

Andrew J. Fenady

“Don’t ask me! As long as you live—don’t ever ask me!”

Alan Le May wrote the words, but John Wayne as Ethan Edwards delivered them to Harry Carey Jr., after discovering the body of his niece Lucy after Comanche bucks had finished with her. And while he was saying them he plunged his knife into the earth again and again.

No actor ever spoke with more depth and despair, with a voice more choked with emotion, or eyes more laden with anguish.

“What do you want me to do? Draw you a picture?!”

But Duke had already drawn a picture, a searing picture of inhumanity and degradation.

No actor in any Western—or any drama—could have conveyed more passion, and yet, that was only one moment in a performance encompassing a panoply of emotion, humor and cruelty that John Wayne summoned for his unforgettable, towering characterization of complexity and contradiction.

Duke told me that Ethan Edwards was his favorite role. Not that it matters, but it also happens to be mine—with his Tom Dunson in *Red River* as a shining second.

He even named his last son Ethan after *The Searchers* character, who in the book is called Amos.

Duke is most often thought of as having portrayed unflawed, heroic characters. Quite the opposite true. Quite often he portrayed the other side of the coin.

Howard Hawks had made highly successful pictures with Gary Cooper, including *Ball of Fire* and the Academy Award-winning *Sergeant York*.

When Hawks was casting the role of Dunson in *Red River*, he sent the script to Gary Cooper. Cooper sent it back with a note, “Sorry, Howard. Too dark.”

Then Hawks went to Wayne, who leaped at it. Dark or damaged, Dunson was a challenge and a chance to dispel the notion that Duke was little more than a personality. Dunson evolved, in many ways than one, from a young, idealistic frontiersman to a mature, obsessed martinet. But there were other “dark or damaged” characters in Duke’s repertoire. Jack Martin in Cecil B. DeMille’s *Reap the Wild Wind*, Captain Ralls in *Wake of the Red Witch*, even “Pittsburg” Markham in *Pittsburg*. Each of whom was more sinner than saint.

So when Duke met Ethan Edwards from Le May’s novel and Frank Nugent and John Ford’s script, Duke made him his own—Ethan Edwards owed as much to John Wayne as Wayne owed to Edwards.

Ethan Edwards has been called many things; cold, cruel, racist. It’s true that his character was brushed with all those hues, but people forget that at the core he was noble—yes, noble—and loved.

Loved by his nieces, his neighbors, his brother and more telling, by Martha, his brother’s wife. And noble, because in spite of his love for her, he stood aside so she might marry his own brother because Ethan also knew that they all would be better off for his sacrifice.

Ethan’s love for Martha and her love for him remained concealed except for a look that passed between them and the way she caressed his Confederate coat when she thought no one was looking.

There was even a certain nobility in his determination to kill his niece, rather than have her live as the crazed chattel Ethan came across after their captivity and submission to the Comanche bucks—their “leavings” as Vera Miles put it to Martin Pauley.

But in the end, “leavings” or no—Ethan could not bring himself to pull the trigger and take the li

of the niece he had loved. "Let's go home, Debbie" summed it all up in four words.

Yes, noble.

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In the movie, Ethan lives on, mission completed, but still alone—an outsider framed in the doorway against nature's everlasting monuments. Then the door closes, leaving him with our thoughts—and his.

From first frame to fade-out, Duke never wavers in his riveting interpretation of Ethan Edwards—except once. During the scene when his real-life son Patrick as young Lt. Greenhill is more than holding his own with veteran Ward Bond, in Duke's eyes there is the look of a proud father, rather than that of Ethan Edwards.

Amazingly the picture was shot in fifty-six days—including only a half day at Bronson Canyon, the heart of Hollywood, where the "Let's go home, Debbie" scene was filmed—and in nowhere near chronological order—for 2.5 million dollars. It reaped a fortune for Jack Warner and his company. Wayne had, in the previous few years, reaped several fortunes for Mr. Warner. Duke and Warner both liked and respected each other. *Big Jim McLain*, *Island in the Sky*, *Hondo*, *The High and the Mighty* were just a few of the bull's-eyes Duke scored for Warner.

Duke called John Ford "Coach" or "Pappy"—but Jack Warner was the only man I ever heard Duke call "Boss."

I had nothing to do with *The Searchers*, but I'm proud to say I did have something to do with John Wayne.

I developed and produced *Hondo* for television, and wrote and produced *Chisum*. While we were preparing, shooting, and in post-production on *Chisum*, I spent a lot of time with the Duke on *Hellfighters*, *True Grit*, *The Undefeated*, on land and at sea aboard his yacht, *Wild Goose*.

No one who ever worked with him or even knew him for some time could help falling under his spell. It was amusing to see dozens of us on the set, on location or on his ship, standing, moving, canting and even talking like him without hardly even realizing it.

No man was more a part of the American landscape. John Wayne was the snow-painted Sierra where eagles circle high. He was the night wind wailing through Monument Valley. Pine tops tall and uncut. He was hoofbeats moving West. He was a man to match the mountains.

I was his pal and his partner—still am his partner, thanks to the percentage he gave me for writing and producing *Chisum*.

I've had the honor and pleasure of working with some of the greats—men and women—Robert Mitchum, Charles Bronson, Ernest Borgnine, Burt Reynolds, Angela Lansbury, Bob Hope, Gary Russell, Robert Taylor, Anne Francis, Helen Hayes, Ray Milland, Broderick Crawford, Ben Johnson, Christopher Reeve, and oh, so many more.

But those years with the Ringo Kid, Quirt Evans, Tom Dunson, Captain Brittles, Hondo Lane, Rooster Cogburn, John Simpson Chisum—and yes, Ethan Edwards—were the greatest, and so was he.

"There was a man. We shall never see his like again."



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## The Making of *The Searchers*

Harry Carey, Jr.

It was late spring 1955, and I was alone with John Ford in his office. He now had a big suite at Warners Bros. This was the same routine that I always went through prior to working on one of his films: I hear he was going to make a western, and I'd go out and visit him. Nine times out often, he'd tell me there was a part for me. I'd go home and tell my wife, Marilyn, and we'd leap all around from happiness. This time I got off to a very shaky start. I pulled one of those faux pas which nearly every member of the stock company had pulled at one time or another.

Everything was going along fine—a relaxed little chitchat. He leaned back in his chair, cigar clenched between his brown teeth, feet on the desk, and told me about my forthcoming role in *The Searchers*. This made me extremely happy, because I had read Alan Le May's great novel a couple of years before and though it was, perhaps, the best western I had read since *The Ox-Bow Incident*. I pulled out all the stops when expressing my gratitude and thanked him from the bottom of my heart. He nodded with a smile, recrossed his feet, took his chewed-up cigar out of his mouth, looked at me, decided it was good for another half-hour, jammed it back between his teeth, and then just sat there staring at me. It was one of those awful silences that used to happen in the inner sanctum. It was probably no longer than sixty seconds, but it seemed like hours to me.

Whatever the length of time, I could stand the pressure no longer and blurted out, "It's sure going to be good to see old Monument Valley again!"

His face took on a pained expression. Glaring at me, he said. "What?"

Of course there was nothing I could do but repeat that idiotic statement, so I said, "Ahem—ah—It's sure—ah—going to be—ah—good to see old Monument Valley again."

His reply was a terse, "Oh, for Christ's sake!"

I left there feeling like a horse's ass, but with a job.

My very good friend, British director and writer Lindsay Anderson, and I argue endlessly when he is here in the States about where *The Searchers* should be placed on Uncle Jack's long list of credits. Lindsay, who wrote an excellent book entitled *About John Ford*, has it way toward the bottom. I have it right at the top. In fact, I have it not just at the top, but separated from the rest in a special place with gold letters. I believe it's the finest film John Ford ever directed. The fact I am most proud of in my professional life is that I had the good fortune to be in it—if only for a short period. I worked on it for three weeks in *The Searchers*, and because of that, I have fewer stories to tell about the filming of it than I do about the other eight I worked on.

So I am going to seize this opportunity to shift into reverse for a bit. I wish right here to take the year 1955, the year *The Searchers* was made, and resurrect, if you will, that period in the entertainment industry when the western ruled television.

These days the United States is absolutely overrun with vans. Vans, vans, vans, all the hell over the place, and Japanese pickup trucks that don't ever "pick up" anything because that will scratch the paint. In the movies nowadays (unless you are the star), if you are transported anywhere by car, the car is a van! They have a door on the side that you have to be Arnold Schwarzenegger to open, and they are bloody uncomfortable. They used to use station wagons. Ford and Chrysler made the best ones. They had real wood on the sides, and were very comfortable, very classy, and did a monument

job in Monument Valley.

Getting to location was a lot different in the 50s and 60s, whether it was a location around the L.A. area or out of town. Everyone had to leave for location from the studio and be driven there, no matter how close it was. The Teamsters union controlled how it was to be done, and the studios had to abide by those rules. Now, it's all changed around. Everyone must drive their own car to the location, if it's in the L.A. area, and then the studio pays you in cash according to the miles driven from the studio. It's very confusing.

A great number of westerns were being made then, both feature and television, and most of the location sites were way out in the San Fernando Valley. We certainly don't think of any of these spots as way out now, but they were then, before the Ventura Freeway and others. Sometimes we had to get to the studio by 5:00 A.M. so there would be time to get out to the desert or the Red Rock area. Lots of overtime that way—and also lots of fatigue. God only knows when the wranglers and the horse trucks had to start out, because the horses were always saddled and ready by the time we got there. But God it was fun. I just loved it. I loved it because I knew all the wranglers, some even from my dad's time, and wranglers are great storytellers. They would tell some really "out West" tales about the old days and all the "wrecks" they had. An accident was called a "wreck," and a "jam." Getting into some trouble was called a "tight." "I goddamn sure got myself into a real tight," they would recall. Of course, they had polished and embellished these stories over the years, so that by the time they were telling them to me, I wondered how they were still alive and kicking. Well, they were a rough bunch of guys. They had bodies like iron. Their wrists and hands and forearms were like few other men. When you shook hands with them, all you could feel was callous. I often wondered what women thought of those hands. All those young guys are old guys now, like me. Boy, those stories must be something by this time.

There is an intersection in the San Fernando Valley where Ventura Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard cross. There is a huge shopping Galleria there now on the northwest corner. That's where the studio vehicles stopped to pick up the actors and stuntmen. The most common transportation car was either a Cadillac or a Lincoln "stretch-out." I mean to tell you, those "stretch-outs" were really long—God knows how many doors on each side. Every studio had a fleet of them. One "stretch-out" could carry 14 to 16 people.

So, with eyes half-open, you'd park your old hack second car in an adjacent empty lot next to the Standard station on the corner and wander over to where a group of guys were quietly standing talking, and smoking. Yes, they all smoked. You'd join the group. "Hi, Al, whatcha workin' on?" "Still doublin' Randy? I'll be damned!" That's the way it went—great camaraderie and mutual respect. Not too much laughter at that time in the morning—the laughter was during the ride back at night, when the prop man would have thoughtfully handed you a cold one prior to leaving the location, so you could wash the dust out of your throat. The young actors would only have a pack of cigarettes in their breast pocket and a comb on their hip, but the character men always had a small satchel or briefcase with them. I always wondered why. Now I know. You need a lot of stuff when you get old. Of course the stuntmen always had their bulky stuntbags with the pads and other equipment to help them survive the falls and fights.

There were so many westerns shooting in those days that the "stretch-outs" would start arriving at the Standard station by 6:00 in the morning. In the right-hand corner of the windshield would be a sign—"Wells Fargo," "Wagontrain," "Gunsmoke," and so on. You'd look at the name of the show and hop in. One morning a cowboy named Chick Hannen hopped into the wrong car and rode in two chases before he found out he was in the wrong show. It was a great time for us cowboys.

"Boots and Stetsons and sixguns and the lilies grow high. They grow for a man with a gun-slingin' hand who before his time must die. . . ."

Those words are from a song called “The Lilies Grow High,” written by my friend Stan Jones. I think those poetic words exemplify “prime time” of the 50s and early 60s. Stan was a dear friend and one of the many talented buddies I hung out with in those glory days. They were carefree, freewheeling days, and thinking back, selfish days on the part of us married guys with little kids. Maybe we were the cause of and inspiration for women’s lib. We picked at our guitars and sang and drank with complete abandon. Our wives were present at a lot of those hoedowns, but they never had the freedom we did. They were worried about the babysitter and the 50 cents an hour.

When I was in my thirties, I had a good many buddies, all very talented. Stan wrote beautiful songs and Ken Curtis and the Sons of the Pioneers sang them. I loved a guitar-playing composer-arranger named Jack Marshall; and Frank Miller, who cowrote “Memories Are Made of This,” the song Dean Martin made into such a big hit. Basically, I’m talking about the greatest western folksingers around at that time. I also had a really good buddy named Wendell Corey. I had to see Wendell separately, though. Occasionally, all of these crazies would be together at the same party. When all of the other guests would be screaming, “more, more, more,” Wendell would yell out, about every ten minutes, “All you guys do is tune your fuckin’ guitars!” He was using the “f” word long before it became the number-one word in the movies. He was my “spiritual advisor.” He made screwing up perfectly all right and normal. Drinking, to him, was a necessary part of life, on a par with eating, sleeping, and sex. Wendell had the power to give you a totally clear conscience. To him, no matter what you did, God forgave you. You were in the clear. But no *singing!* Wendell hated all that singing.

Then there was another group headed by Richard Boone, the star of “Have Gun Will Travel.” Dick was one of the great all-time leaders. He and Wendell were cut from the same cloth. It’s called volatile. I seemed to gravitate to those kinds of guys. “Have Gun” lasted many years, and I did well over a dozen of them. Andrew V. McLaglen was the principal director. He did well over a hundred of those shows, and sandwiched in between, the same number of “Gunsmoke.” Both of these series began in 1955. Andy stands on your feet and gets you bruised up some, all that good stuff, but I love him—all six-foot-seven, 230 pounds of him. He’s the best-natured man I know. He put a lot of bread on the Carey table. He is the son of the old-time Ford favorite Victor McLaglen and has had a first-rate career as a major motion picture director.

In the 50s and 60s, America was western crazy. Almost all of the shows on TV were westerns. Of course, the best and the granddaddy of them all was “Gunsmoke.” Then, along with “Have Gun,” there were “Bonanza,” “Wyatt Earp,” “The Virginian,” “Laramie,” “Wagon-train,” “Wells Fargo,” “Rawhide,” and “Rifleman,” just to mention a few. Marilyn’s father, Paul Fix, was Sheriff Mica Torrance in “Rifleman.” Warner Bros. had a bunch, too—“Maverick,” “Cheyenne,” and “Lawman.” I worked in most of these shows over the years. We supporting actors didn’t see much of the stars in the series socially, but it was like old home week when you were cast in one and arrived on the set. The going wage was always pretty much the same—\$750 for six days. They were usually shot within 30 to 40 miles of Los Angeles, if not right on the studio lot.

The majority of those westerns were made at Universal, and I worked there a lot. The usual call was to be in makeup at 6:30 in the morning. The makeup department was on a rise in the middle of the huge lot. We’d park our cars down below, and as other actors arrived, you’d hear, “Jesus Christ, they’re really scraping the bottom of the barrel these days! Look who’s coming. How many lines do you have? I’ve got eight!” It would be the voice of an actor-friend who I grew up with in the business, someone I had competed against in a screen test or had had some screwy adventure with on location. All the guys you knew and liked, who you were always going to “get together” with so our wives could meet, but never did.

Then, of course, there were the stunt guys standing around. I knew them all because I rode a horse better than most actors, and we had been over some rough country together. And we’d been drunk

together. The ride in the “stretch-out” to location in the hills of that big San Fernando Valley was full of talk of “broads,” and sports, and “fuck-ups.” “How’s so-and-so? Is he still a fuck-up?” Sometimes the lead in the show was a real pain in the ass. It’s amazing how those guys’ heads blew up so big after a couple of years of big money. I always wanted to say, “Cary Grant stood off-camera and said his lines for my close-up.” With these guys, you stood for their close-up, but they wouldn’t stand there for yours. The script girl was there for you. Money was in short supply in those days, but we sure had fun.

There are acres and acres of houses now where we shot all those westerns. One beautiful area called Thousand Oaks, and there were thousands of them before developers got to them. Out in the “West Valley,” where we did all the chases and gunfights, there are golf courses, and malls, and condos. Smog lays out there like a dirty brown blanket. We drive by there often on our way to San Barbara to see our daughters and grandchildren, and I hate to see what has happened to the “Gunsmoke” country I loved. Farther north, near a town called Canoga Park, are huge elephant-size outcroppings of rock. This was called Iverson’s Ranch. Many people tried hard to save it, but it’s just a memory now, too. All the low-budget westerns were made at Iverson’s. Even my dad worked there. If you rent an old John Wayne tape, you’ll see Iverson’s for sure. Many times, you’d be in the middle of a dialogue scene and gunshots would ruin the take. They’d be coming from another company just over the hill. Sometimes there would be three shows shooting there on the same day.

The western series that was the most fun to work on was “Have Gun Will Travel.” Dick Boone was a powerhouse physically, and he had extraordinary authority as to the casting and the scripts. It was a highly successful show. He even directed some of the episodes. I worked for him, and it was very easy. He probably had the best sense of humor of any star. He wanted the people he worked with to be happy, and after long, madhouse evenings with him, he made sure that there were pharmaceuticals available to get you through the day.

His favorite location away from Los Angeles was Lone Pine, California. It’s a small town at the foot of Mount Whitney. Lone Pine has a long history where films are concerned. Many famous stars have made films in those Sierra Nevada Mountains. In those days, there was only one place to stay in Lone Pine, and that was the Dow Hotel. By the time the “Have Gun” company started going up there, the old Dow had expanded and added a motel and a pool. Lone Pine had two saloons; Boone’s room made three. It was also headquarters. All the directives came from there. If he wanted your company, he rang your room and said, “Get your skinny ass down here!” He loved to take his followers out to a sort of ranch. They served terrific food and drink. He would take the whole place over for the night. He sat at the head of an enormously long table. If there was a guitar-picker in the cast, he was sure to be invited, and sometimes there were real professional actor-singers playing a role. There was always music at this restaurant in the sagebrush.

One night at dinner out there, I was sitting next to costumer Joe Dimmitt who, like all of us, was well smashed. I noticed he was looking far off with a reverent expression. He turned to me and said, “No wonder they come up here to make movies. Look at that beautiful goddamn view.” I followed his gaze and saw he was staring at the Hamm’s Beer poster with the waterfall. When Dick heard this, he was finished for the night. He laughed so hard I thought he would rupture himself.

My first “Have Gun” was with Charlie Bronson. He and I had the leading roles, and Andy McLagley was directing. Boone always dragged Andy on those merry chases. Andy had it whipped, though. He didn’t pass out from drink—he’d just go to sleep. The next day he would run our cowboy asses off. Every chase was an “over and under,” meaning as fast as you can ride.

I was in Milburn Stone’s living room when he closed the deal to appear as Doc on “Gunsmoke.” He didn’t seem too crazy about doing it. He had a short fuse, and I remember him wrangling over the phone about small details with Meyer Mishkin, his agent. He was simply taking it on as another western series, which he felt would be rather temporary. It was temporary, all right—it ran from 1957

to 1975 and became the longest-running show in TV history. Milburn was a marvelous character actor who was never out of work for long, which was why he didn't get too excited about this new show. I also heard that day that they had hired a great big guy named Jim Arness to play Matt Dillon. Jim and I had worked together six years before on *Wagonmaster*, where he played one of the bad Cleggs. Well, Milburn and Jim both became millionaires, but neither thought that would happen, at that time.

Jim Arness never changed. He was a really good guy and never got a big head. He was a very private person, though, and didn't hang around the set much. He was also a war hero, but you'd never find that out from him. His favorite gag during a scene was to let loose with an enormous fart. He loved that, and you sort of waited for it. Jim's brother is Peter Graves, and we had many adventures together on location.

Matt Dillon's sidekick when "Gunsmoke" first started was Chester, played by Dennis Weaver. When Dennis left the show, my good friend Ken Curtis was hired to play a character he created called Festus.

I'm not going to delve into all the TV shows running at that time, but "Rawhide" was an important one that had a lanky kid in it named Clint Eastwood. Clint was the sidekick to head man Eric Remington. Eric was a classmate of Marilyn's at Hollywood High School. She dated him when his name was William Edmont Heddy. Fate is strange, however. All TV series have a rest period called hiatus. It's a break in the shooting when the stars are free to do other projects. Most would love to do a feature picture, but it usually works out that the public won't pay to see someone they can see every week for free on the TV screen.

In Eric's case, he had no such delusions. He was a very private guy who liked to walk down Hollywood Boulevard barefoot. Eric and I had the same agent, Lew Sherrell. A producer in Rome called Lew, said his name was Sergio Leone, and that he was going to make an Italian western. He wanted Eric to star in it, and offered a goodly sum of money. Eric turned it down, so Leone asked about the other guy, that younger kid. "What's-his-name?" Lew answered that his name was Clint Eastwood, but that he didn't handle him. The rest is history. For some reason, Eric accepted a role in a film that took him to South America, and he was drowned while filming on the Amazon River. I didn't get to know either of them when I worked on "Rawhide." Today, of course, Clint has a wonderful reputation as a director. He knows what he is doing and doesn't waste money. However, if I ever get to work with him, I'm going to find out why he always wore his western hat tipped up in the back. He started that with "Rawhide" and continued it with Leone. It always drove me nuts. Clint's hat did.

The Walt Disney Studio was going great guns in 1955. It was also the year that Disneyland opened. One day, I got a phone call from my pal Freddie Hartsook. He had a very soft voice and was a great put-on artist, so I wasn't sure that he was serious when he said, "Listen, I'm in Pete Lyon's office (director Francis Lyon), and he's going to be doing a series here at Disney's called 'Spin and Marty' for the 'Mickey Mouse Club.' They're looking for a cowboy type to play the horse wrangler for the boys' camp. I told them you were good with horses but a lousy actor, but he wants to see you, anyway. Come over this afternoon about two."

I made a test and played the part of the counselor instead of the wrangler, with Tim Considine, who was to play Spin. That night Freddie called to tell me I got the part. We would start shooting on July 12. It is a date that was to be chiseled into my brain, a date I was to recite many times, and one of the things that kept me from working for Uncle Jack for five long years after *The Searchers*.

I asked Freddie how he knew I had the part, since they hadn't had time to develop the film, and he replied, "Don't worry about that. Disney himself was on the set." Walt (everyone called him Walt) had sneaked onto the set and stayed out of sight so I wouldn't be nervous. We shot it every summer for three years on the Disney Ranch in Placerita Canyon in Newhall, about seven miles from where I was born on the Carey Ranch. It was one of the biggest hits on the "Mickey Mouse Club." Ki

everywhere wanted to go to the Triple R Ranch for the summer.

~~Back to the end of May 1955. Uncle Jack had just cast me in *The Searchers*. Memorial Day was coming up, and as always it was a big day at Ford's Field Photo Home. The services were heartwarming, reverent, and movingly patriotic. The glee club was there to sing, and there was a company of bagpipers. The names of the fallen from the war and others who had passed on were intoned to the beat of a snare drum played by my son, Steven. Then there was coffee and donuts and camaraderie.~~

I was assigned that year to one of the "grave details." Wreaths were placed on graves all over the city by different members of the Farm. I went out to Forest Lawn with three other comrades in arms, and then we found our way to the home of one of them, Al Lecknes. We had a few drinks and listened to the last of the Indianapolis 500, run on the *real* Memorial Day, and on radio only. After it was over I said good-bye and headed home, except I felt so good and the afternoon was so young that I didn't want to go home. I thought, "Screw it!" and before you could say, "God Bless John Wayne!" I was at the gate of his home on Louise Avenue, Encino. I pushed the button, and from the speaker came a very familiar voice, "Yeah!"

I said, "It's Dobe," and the voice said, "get your ass up here!"

B-zzz went the gate, and in I went.

Duke was half in the bag, as was his pal, writer Jimmy Hennigen. The afternoon wore into the evening, and to give you some idea how drunk we got, Duke asked me to read Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. When I finished it, Duke announced with great sincerity that he was going to make a move about Lincoln, and I was to play him.

"I'll dye his hair or something," he shouted with glee, "But this asshole (a very big word in the Wayne vocabulary) is going to play Lincoln!"

At about 3:00 in the morning, Pilar and Duke began fighting over the intercom between the kitchen and the bedroom. I wisely decided it was time to get out of there, but when I got to the gate, I couldn't get it open, so I went to sleep in my station wagon and, at dawn, found the magic button and drove home. It probably saved my life, that gate.

I started *The Searchers* with a brand-new ulcer. That night at Duke's must have blown a hole in my gut, because within a few days, the doctor informed me that I had a duodenal ulcer and should spend a few days in the hospital. He also told me that I should have been a milkman—have a full-time job, and that I was not cut out, emotionally, to be an actor. Well, I told him a trip to the hospital was totally impossible; that I had not one, but two jobs coming up, and that if my ulcer was to be cured, it would have to be in Monument Valley. I had a family to feed.

C. V. Whitney was the "money man" and producer of *The Searchers*. One evening we were sitting on the porch at Goulding's, looking out over Monument Valley. I mentioned my ulcer in the course of the conversation. He asked, "How old are you, Dobe?"

I said, "Thirty-four, Mr. Whitney."

He said, "Well, Dobe, I'll tell you a story. One time when I was younger than even you are, I had one of those damned things. I was on vacation at a resort in upstate New York and was getting a massage from this big Swedish masseur. I told him I was on this very strict diet—you know, cottage cheese, milk, boiled eggs with dry toast—that sort of thing. He said, 'You want to get rid of your ulcer, Mr. Whitney?' and I said, 'God, yes!' Then he taught me a lesson I've never forgotten." I asked what that was, and with a slap on my butt, he said, "Forget it!"

With that, he got up and went to bed. I thought back to about a week before, when we were all in the club car on the train to Flagstaff. Uncle Jack had smiled benignly at me when I told him about the ulcer and promptly ordered me a Miller High Life beer. I hated Miller High Life (how did he know that?), but I drank it anyway, risking what I thought at the time was certain internal hemorrhaging.

Nothing happened. So I decided there on the porch that Sonny Whitney's masseur knew what he was talking about, and my ulcer went away.

Then there was the hairpiece. I wasn't bald yet on the crown of my head, but the front was receding rapidly. I wanted more hair on my forehead to make me look younger, so I had Charlie Wright make me a beautiful "frontpiece." I was afraid to take it with me to show to Uncle Jack. That was dumb. I was thirty-four, and still playing a kid of nineteen. I was always a kid in Uncle Jack's eyes.

After the first shot, he sidled up to me and asked, "Don't you own a hairpiece?" How the hell did he know that?

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Well, go get it and put it on. It'll make you look younger."

"Well, Uncle Jack," I said, "it's in California."

"Christ! What good is it in California? Why didn't you bring it with you?"

I told him the truth, "I was afraid to tell you about it. I thought you'd be annoyed if I did."

He smiled mischievously and said, "Now Ol' Dobe, have I ever been annoyed with you?"

He walked away very amused with himself and yelled back over his shoulder, "Send for it!"

When Duke saw me having it put on a few days later, he said, "Welcome to the club. I knew you were getting there, and now the day has arrived!"

Everything really eventful seemed to happen on the porch at Goulding's Lodge. It's where Uncle Jack decided Ken Curtis should play the role of Charlie MacCorry with a Colorado dryland accent. Jeff Hunter and Ken and I were sitting out there on the porch. The three of us hung out a lot together. Jeff and I both loved Kenny's singing, and he had taught us the harmony to "Tumblin' Tumbleweeds." We were doing a pretty good imitation of the Sons of the Pioneers, and Ford came out to listen. After he went back inside, Kenny started telling a hilarious story, using this "dryland" accent. Then Jeff took one with a "country hillbilly" accent, and back-and-forth it went.

All of a sudden, the Old Man emerged. "Do that again," he said to Kenny.

"What's that, Pop?" (Kenny, being his son-in-law, always called him Pop.)

"That routine you and Jeff were just doing. Do it again."

Kenny tried to explain, to no avail, that the accent only worked with certain words, etc.... etc., but Uncle Jack wouldn't take no for an answer. So Kenny told the story about a young hayseed explaining how he raised this gigantic squash from the "Eye-tal-yan squarsh side" (Italian squash seed) he'd ordered from a seed catalogue. Uncle Jack loved it. He had a way of showing great amusement without really laughing.

Kenny was embarrassed. Ford nodded his head and said, "Good. Good. I want you to use that accent in this picture. I want you to play Charlie MacCorry that way."

And back he went inside to play cards.

Kenny was upset. He muttered in low tones, "I don't want to do that in the picture. I'll make an accent of myself!"

Jeff and I had no answer for him. We knew he was stuck with it.

The following day we worked over at Mexican Hat, shooting at the Indians who were charging across the San Juan River. Neither of us had any lines, but he brought up the subject of the damned accent. He said he'd already worked in a couple of shots without it and was trying to think of a way to talk the Old Man out of it.

Barbara Curtis and Pilar Wayne arrived during the day from Hollywood, and that night Duke broke the rules and got plastered. I was rooming with Ward Bond, and Ken was there, shooting the breeze with us.

Suddenly, Duke burst in. His first words were addressed to Ken.

"What in the hell is this crap I hear about you not wanting to do the accent that Pappy asked you

do!”

Kenny went through his routine about it only working with certain words. Duke, subtle as always said, “Bullshit! Listen, you’re a nice-looking fella’, but ya’ ain’t as good lookin’ as this Jeff kid, and on top of that, yer playing the second lead and there’s nothin’ more thankless than a second fuckin’ lead! Dobe here can attest to that! Play it like the Old Man says, fer Christ’s sake, an’ you’ll be noticed in the goddamned picture!”

So that was the end of that and Duke was certainly right. The part was a standout, and it led to a tremendous future for Ken. It was because of the accent that he wound up getting the part of Festus.

My mom was to play my screen mom, Mrs. Jorgensen. Ollie Carey and Uncle Jack had known each other since she was eighteen he was nineteen, and they argued like hell when they were not on the set. Not mean arguing—funny. I think they were always sort of in love. Mom certainly was not in awe of Jack, and she was very respectful on the set. But off! She’d give him hell. He’d be expounding about some daring feat he had done some years before, and Mom would listen for a bit and say, “That’s a lot of bullshit, Jack. Why do you have to lie like that?”

And Jack would yell back to Mom, who liked to have a few drinks before dinner, “Goldie, you’re drunk. Shut up, for Christ’s sake!” Only my father and Jack called my mother Goldie. The rest of the cast would look on in shock when they heard her talk to him like that.

My relationship with Mom was different than at home. I was an actor and she was an actress, and we treated each other accordingly. Mom roomed with the beautiful Vera Miles, right next door to Ward and me. Ward was insane to molest Vera, and he’d parade around naked in front of the big picture window in the hope that Vera would look in and see him. Vera never looked in that window, so Ward, having failed at exposing himself, would try to catch Vera without her clothes on by rushing into her and Mom’s room without knocking. He struck out there, too. He reminded me of that silly coyote in the roadrunner cartoons.

My mom was dearly loved by so many people. She was absolutely honest and said exactly what she thought. Usually she tempered it with her great sense of humor. John Wayne adored her, as did Barry Goldwater—and she was a lifelong Democrat! Before the 1964 elections, Barry asked her if she was going to vote for him. “Hell, no. We need you in the Senate more than we do in the White House.” Mom died in her little pink house in the hills above Carpinteria, California, at the age of ninety-two.

On the Fourth of July, there was a big celebration down below Goulding’s Lodge on the little red dirt airstrip. Once a day, a Cessna took off to fly the film to Flagstaff, Arizona, from where it was sent on to the lab in Hollywood. Also, the little plane always was in readiness to fly out anyone who was sick or injured. The film crew put on a huge barbecue for the cast, crew, and all the Navajos. The special effects men put on a spectacular show of fireworks, but one of the “powder men,” nicknamed “Punky,” set off a skyrocket and a piece of the wooden stick came loose from its mooring and lodged in his neck. The doc assigned to the company was actually a psychiatrist. I don’t think he’d done any first-aid work in 20 years, but he knew enough to leave the piece of wood alone. He gave Punky a shot for pain and shock and sent him off in the plane. He recovered, but not in time to come back to *The Searchers*.

The Navajos organized the races. There was the regular horse race which Chuck Roberson won, and then there was the Old Man’s Horse Race—all Navajos. Then came the Old Man’s Foot Race. That was the race Uncle Jack entered. He won easily, but he cheated. He won by such a great distance that he would not have had to cheat, but he wanted to make sure.

“On your mark! Get Set!” Uncle Jack took off. “Go!” The other racers took off. By that time, Uncle Jack was halfway to the finish line. He always reminded me of the football coach, Vince Lombardi, who said, “Winning isn’t everything—it’s the *only* thing.”

That afternoon the Navajos made John Ford a member of the Navajo tribe and presented him with



sacred deerskin. They gave him the name Natani Nez, which means Tall Soldier, and on the deerskin was this message of goodwill:

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In your travels may there be  
Beauty behind you  
Beauty on both sides of you  
And beauty ahead of you.

In the years since Uncle Jack's death. I have been asked countless times, by students and writers, what John Ford's message was in the way he portrayed the Indians in his films. Did he really think the Indians were evil? Did he think them inferior to the white man? Was *Cheyenne Autumn* his apology to them? They are never happy with my somewhat vague and indecisive answers. The truth is, I don't know! All I can remember him saying are these words: "It's a hell of a good story." He loved to make good stories into films, like those of James Warner Bellah. He loved to assign the original writer of the story, along with a screenwriter like Dudley Nichols or Frank Nugent, to go to work on the screenplay. During the writing, Ford would hold story conferences. All of his writers accepted the fact that he took liberties with their work. It did not bother them. The stronger the screenplay, the fewer liberties he took: *The Grapes of Wrath*, for example. He did not make "message" movies, per se. He did not give any thought as to whether the Indians were "bad" or whether a black person was "smart" or "dumb." He portrayed them as they were in the story, in that particular period of history. He loved history, and he loved making movies about America's history. He loved to gather the people he enjoyed being with around him. Most of all, he loved going on location with them and making a picture he thought the American people would enjoy. He wanted them to feel better when they left the theater. The real world was overrun with greed, lust, and bloodshed, so why make movies about it?

Of all the John Ford pictures I worked on, the set of *The Searchers* was unlike any other. Uncle Jack was much more serious, and that was the tone that pervaded the cast and crew. The first scene I was with Duke was the one where I discover that my family's prize bull has been slaughtered. When I looked up at him in rehearsal, it was into the meanest, coldest eyes I had ever seen. I don't know how he molded that character. Perhaps he'd known someone like Ethan Edwards as a kid. Now I wish I asked him. He was even Ethan at dinnertime. He didn't kid around on *The Searchers* like he had done on other shows. Ethan was always in his eyes.

Hank Worden had the greatest role of his life, playing Old Mose Harper to the hilt. I had known Hank since *Red River*. He had been riding broncs at Madison Square Garden in the 30s and somehow he snagged a role in Lynn Riggs' *Green Grow the Lilacs* on Broadway. And thus began his acting career. That play later became the great musical hit, *Oklahoma*. Like Ethan says of *Old Mose*, Hank was "born old."

Every single day, he'd ask me the same question, "When do you have to be at Disney's?"

I always answered, "July twelfth, Uncle Jack." Technically, it was the right answer, but as far as my future with him was concerned, it was the wrong answer. Duke must have heard me. Why didn't he tell me off? The right answer was, "Whenever you're through with me, Uncle Jack."

One day we were shooting a scene in which Duke and a few of us were to come galloping over a sc

of “sway-back” in a ridge, which ran down from one of the monuments. The wind was howling. We were over 400 yards away and unable to see Jack or any of the camera equipment. We waited and waited, and waited some more—very un-Fordian.

Finally Duke exclaimed, “Jesus! When’s the old bastard goin’ to call ‘Action’?”

He may as well have been talking into a high-tech loudspeaker, because the wind carried his every word clearly down to Uncle Jack. Soon the word “Action” drifted up to us, but the wind was blowing in the wrong direction and we barely heard it.

We did the run in one take, but when we arrived back, Ford looked at him a long time and then said, “You didn’t have to call me ‘an old bastard,’ you know. You should have had the courtesy to say ‘old gentleman.’”

Duke put his hands to his head. “Oh, Christ—the wind—that damned wind.”

One of the best scenes I ever did for Uncle Jack was in this movie. Ford had motioned for Duke, Jeff, and me to sit on a mound of red sandstone. Then he said to me, “Kid, go back there about forty yards. When I yell, come running in here like hell, and sit down on Duke’s left, and pull your boots off. You’ll be pulling them on during the dialogue. You’ve taken them off so you could sneak up on the Indian camp and not be heard. Do you know your dialogue?”

I said, “Yessir.”

He was starting to get a wee bit cranky, “Well, then, get your ass back up there and come running in. Let’s hear the scene.”

I thought to myself, “Oh, God, I have to cry in this scene and he’s going to get all over me.” That was a rehearsal, I thought, but one was never sure.

“Dobe!”

Here I came, running like hell. I saw Duke looking at me—those eyes like an angry snake! I leaped into the sandy loam beside Duke and played the hell out of the scene. No chewing out from Uncle Jack.

“Good! Do it like that. That’s the idea!” he clapped his hands together with satisfaction. Then he looked at me sternly and said, “Take your neckerchief off and wrap it around your right hand.” Pause. “There’s a reason for that.” Period. Nothing for a minute. I looked at Duke. He just glared at me. Ford then said, “Yeah, just like that. Dobe!”

I jerked, “Yessir.”

“Dobe, please don’t leap into the shot. Just run in and sit down.”

“Yessir.”

We shot the scene, and Uncle Jack said those magic words, “Right! Print it!”

There was silence. Duke put his hand on my shoulder but didn’t say a word. He didn’t have to. Those are the great moments for an actor.

But wait a minute! There were murmurings and mumblings going on behind the camera. Ford was sitting in his chair, very satisfied, lighting his cigar for the tenth time. He became aware that something was afoot. He asked the camera operator, “What the hell’s all the mumbling about?”

“The camera stopped. Mister Ford,” said the operator, clearly in misery.

“What? The what?”

The poor operator repeated the report. “I don’t know sir. It just stopped running.”

Ford—typical of him not to lose his temper when you expect it—said mildly, “Well, Christ, fix it whatever it is. Sorry, kids. That was fine, but we’re going to have to do it again. When we’re ready, do it just the same way.”

Later on, I found out the reason the camera quit. Ward Bond had come onto the set with his electric razor. During the highest point of the scene, he unplugged the camera, plugged in the razor, and proceeded to shave. John Ford went to his grave never knowing that. He would have dug Ward up!

When Duke died, it was that scene the networks showed most often when they reviewed his career. It makes me very proud.

The last shot I worked in was of the posse rushing out of the Jorgenson house, mounting up, and riding off. Ford had the camera way up on the top of a hill. Anyone could have been in my clothes at that distance, but the fact that Uncle Jack had kept me on salary as long as he could never entered my mind. However, it was my last scene, and he had to give me a good send-off! Out we came, and just started to ride off, when I hear “Cut! Dobe, for Christ’s sake, can’t I you even get on the damned horse right! Let’s do it again. Dobe screwed it up.”

I had gotten my right foot hung up in Ward’s blanket roll behind the cantle of his saddle, but from that distance, no one but the Old Man would have spotted it. Take number two! We come out of the house, mount up, ride off for about 50 yards, then “Cut! Dobe, all you have to do is walk out and get on. Try not to get behind somebody. I can’t see you. Let’s do it again.”

Take number three. I tried my best to stay in the clear, but it was nearly impossible with so many people in the shot.

“Cut! Dobe screwed it up again, but I can’t waste any more film so we’ll have to use it. That’s the wrap!” I have never been so mad in my whole life! I wanted to kill him! I was literally boiling inside.

On all the other films I had done for him, on the last day, I would knock on his door where he was staying and thank him, or I’d leave him a note or give him a big hug and a lot of “thank yous” and “good lucks.” But *this!* I guessed he was sore that I was going to work for someone else, so I didn’t say thanks. I didn’t say good-bye. I didn’t even go up to my room at Goulding’s. I didn’t take my wardrobe off or take a shower. I got into a car with the stuntmen, Frankie McGrath and the two Chucks, and went with them to their tent. They had booze. The next morning at 6:00 A.M. I took the little plane to Flagstaff, and then the train home. It was 1960—five long years—before I worked for him again.

After Duke passed away in 1979, everyone who had worked with him or had been close to him was in the public’s eye. On the day of his passing, ironically enough, I was over visiting my father-in-law Paul Fix. When I returned home, I had to turn right around and go back, because NBC’s Jim Brown was on his way over to Paul’s with a camera crew to interview us. Hank Worden also joined us, and we reminisced about Duke. Many more interviews followed from many countries. Then there were the book writers. I told them all my stories and then decided it was time to write them down for myself.

At any rate, one of the questions they invariably asked was, “Did you feel, while you were working on *The Searchers*, that something special was happening? That it was a special movie?” My answer to that has always been yes. From day one, Duke was Ethan Edwards. That character seemed to be built into him, and no other actor, no matter how great his talent, could have played that part as well. It was not Duke’s favorite role, however; Nathan Brittles of *Yellow Ribbon* was. I think his Oscar for *True Grit* should have been his second, after *The Searchers*, and he should have had a third for *The Shootist*.

There are moments and a certain feeling, somewhere between your heart and your throat, that you rarely get on a movie set. It might be a moment while shooting a TV episode of little consequence except for that moment. This was a day possessed of one of those moments. It didn’t take Uncle Jack long to shoot it. One take, and boom, it was done. Had it been take five or ten, it would never have happened. It would not have been—well, one of the greatest endings of any picture ever made.

I wasn’t in the scene, but I was behind the camera, able to see all of it—able to feel all of it. Duke was the only actor in front of the camera now. He was standing alone in the doorway. He had a hangover from the night before (that same night he had burst into our room and blasted Kenny). He had never showed up for dinner that night, much to Ward’s delight, because he loved to see Duke’s ass in a sling instead of his. There should be a sign put on the room in Goulding’s Lodge, “In this room John Wayne got drunk before he shot one of the most famous scenes in motion picture history.”

There he was! The big man standing alone in the doorway, the red desert stretching out behind him. ~~The other players in the scene, which included my mother, had passed by the camera, a joyous moment.~~ Debbie was home at last, brought there in the arms of the man in the doorway.

He was to look and then walk away, but just before he turned, he saw Ollie Carey, the widow of his all-time hero, standing behind the camera. It was as natural as taking a breath. Duke raised his left hand, reached across his chest and grabbed his right arm at the elbow. Harry Carey did that a lot in the movies when Duke was a kid in Glendale, California. He'd spent many a dime just to see that.

He stared at my mother for a couple of beats, then turned, walking away into loneliness across red sand. The cabin door slowly closed. "What makes a man to wander—what makes a man to roam—what makes a man leave bed and board and turn his back on home."

“These people had a kind of courage that may be the finest gift of man: the courage of those who simply keep on and on, doing the next thing, far beyond all reasonable endurance, seldom thinking of themselves as martyred, and never thinking of themselves as brave.”

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## Chapter One

Supper was over by sundown, and Henry Edwards walked out from the house for a last look around. He carried his light shotgun, in hopes the rest of the family would think he meant to pick up a sage hen or two—a highly unlikely prospect anywhere near the house. He had left his gun belt on its peg beside the door, but he had sneaked the heavy six-gun itself into his waistband inside his shirt. Martha was washing dishes in the wooden sink close by, and both their daughters—Lucy, a grown-up seventeen and Debbie, just coming ten—were drying and putting away. He didn't want to get them all stirred up not until he could figure out for himself what had brought on his sharpened dread of the coming night.

"Take your pistol, Henry," Martha said clearly. Her hands were busy, but her eyes were on the holster where it hung empty in plain sight, and she was laughing at him. That was the wonderful thing about Martha. At thirty-eight she looked older than she was in some ways, especially her hands. But in other ways she was a lot younger. Her sense of humor did that. She could laugh hard at things other people thought only a little bit funny, or not funny at all; so that often Henry could see the prettiness and sparkle of the girl he had married twenty years back.

He grunted and went out. Their two sons were on the back gallery as he came out of the kitchen. Hunter Edwards, named after Martha's family, was nineteen, and as tall as his old man. He sat on the floor, his head lolled back against the adobe, and his mind so far away that his mouth hung open. Only when his eyes moved as he turned them to the shotgun. He said dutifully, "Help you, Pa?"

"Nope."

Ben, fourteen, was whittling out a butter paddle. He jumped up, brushing shavings off his blue jeans. His father made a Plains-Indian sign—a fist pulled downward from in front of his shoulder, meaning "sit-stay." Ben went back to his whittling.

"Don't you forget to sweep them shavings up," Henry said.

"I won't, Pa."

They watched their father walk off, his long, slow-looking steps quiet in his flat-heeled boots, until he circled the corrals and was out of sight.

"What's he up to?" Ben asked. "There ain't any game out there. Not short of the half mile."

Hunter hesitated. He knew the answer but, like his father, he didn't want to say anything yet. "I don't know," he said at last, letting his voice sound puzzled. Within the kitchen he heard a match strike. With so much clear light left outside, it was hard to believe how shadowy the kitchen was getting, within its thick walls. But he knew his mother was lighting a lamp. He called softly, "Ma. Not right now."

His mother came to the door and looked at him oddly, the blown-out match smoking in her hand. He met her eyes for a moment, but looked away again without explaining. Martha Edwards went back into the kitchen, moving thoughtfully; and no light came on. Hunter saw that his father was in sight again, very far away for the short time he had been gone. He was walking toward the top of a gentle hill northwest of the ranch buildings. Hunter watched him steadily as long as he was in sight. Henry never did go clear to the top. Instead he climbed just high enough to see over, then circled the contour to look all ways, so that he showed himself against the sky no more than he had to. He was at it a long time.

Ben was staring at Hunter. "Hey. I want to know what—"

"Shut up, will you?"

Ben looked astonished, and obeyed.

From just behind the crest of the little hill, Henry Edwards could see about a dozen miles, more ways. ~~The evening light was uncommonly clear, better to see by than the full glare of the sun.~~ But the faint roll of the prairie was deceptive. A whole squadron of cavalry could probably hide itself at a thousand yards, in a place that looked as flat as a parade ground. So he was looking for little things—layer of floating dust in the branches of the mesquite, a wild cow or an antelope disturbed. He didn't see anything that meant much. Not for a long time.

He looked back at his house. He had other things, the stuff he worked with—barn, corrals, stacks of wild hay, a shabby bunkhouse for sleeping extra hands. But it was the house he was proud of. Its adobe walls were three and four feet thick, so strong that the first room they had built had for a long time been called the Edwards Fort. They had added on to it since, and made it even more secure. The shallow roof looked burnable, but it wasn't, for the shakes were laid upon two feet of sod. The outside doors were massive, and the windows had heavy battle shutters swung inside.

And the house had luxuries. Wooden floors. Galleries—some called them porches, now—both front and back. Eight windows with glass. He had made his family fairly comfortable here, at long last, working patiently with his hands through the years when there was no money, and no market for cowboys and nothing to do about it but work and wait.

He could hardly believe there had been eighteen years of that kind of hanging on. But they had come out here that long ago—the same year Hunter had been born—drawn by these miles and miles of good grass, free to anyone who dared expose himself to the Kiowas and Comanches. It hadn't looked so dangerous when they first came, for the Texas Rangers had just punished the Wild Tribes back out of the way. But right after that the Rangers were virtually disbanded, on the thrifty theory that the Federal Government was about to take over the defense. The Federal troops did not come. Henry and Martha held on and prayed. One year more, they told each other again and again . . . just another month . . . only until spring . . . So the risky years slid by, while no military help appeared. The nearest neighbors, the Pauleys, were murdered off by a Comanche raid, without survivors except a little boy less than two years old; and they heard of many, many more.

Six years of that. Then, in 1857, Texas gave up waiting, and the Rangers bloomed again. A tough line of forts sprang up—McKavitt, Phantom Hill, Bell's Stockade. The little strongholds were first strung out, all the way from the Salt Fork to the Rio Grande, but they gave reassurance nonetheless. The dark years of danger were over; they had lashed out, won through to years of peace and plenty in which to grow old—or so they thought for a little while. Then the War Between the States drained the fighting men away, and the Kiowas and Comanches rose up singing once more, to take their harvest.

Whole counties were scoured out and set back to wilderness in those war years. But the Edwardses stayed, and the Mathisons, and a few more far-spread, dug-in families, holding the back door of Texas by driving great herds of longhorns to Matagordas for the supply of the Confederate troops. And they waited again, holding on just one year more, then another, and one more yet.

Henry would have given up. He saw no hope that he would ever get a foothold out here again, once he drew out, but he would gladly have sacrificed their hopes of a cattle empire to take Martha and their children to a safer place. It was Martha who would not quit, and she had a will that could jump and blaze like a grass fire. How do you take a woman back to the poverty of the cotton rows against her will? They stayed.

The war's end brought the turn of fortune in which they had placed their faith. Hiring cowboys on promise, borrowing to provision them, Henry got a few hundred head into the very first drive to end up off-track at Abilene. Now, with the war four years past, two more drives had paid off. And this year Henry and Aaron Mathison, pooling together, had sent north more than three thousand head. But where were the troops that peace should have released to their defense? Bolder, wilder, stronger every year, the Comanches and their Kiowa allies punished the range. Counties that had survived the war were barreling

now; the Comanches had struck the outskirts of San Antonio itself.

Once they could have quit and found safety in a milder land. They couldn't quit now, with fortune beyond belief coming into their hands. They were as good as rich—and living in the deadliest danger that had overhung them yet. Looking back over the years, Henry did not know how they had survived so long; their strong house and everlasting watchfulness could not explain it. It must have taken miracles of luck, Henry knew, and some mysterious quirks of Indian medicine as well, to preserve them here. If he could have seen, in any moment of the years they had lived here, the endless hazards that lay ahead, he would have quit that same minute and got Martha out of there if he had had to take her.

But you get used to unrelenting vigilance, and a perpetual danger becomes part of the everyday thing around you. After a long time you probably wouldn't know how to digest right, any more, if it altogether went away. All that was behind could not explain, exactly, the way Henry felt tonight. He didn't believe in hunches, either, or any kind of spirit warnings. He was sure he had heard, or seen, or maybe even smelled some sign so small he couldn't remember it. Sometimes a man's senses pick up dim warnings he didn't even recognize. Like sometimes he had known an Indian was around without knowing what told him, until a little later the breeze would bring the smell of the Indian a little stronger—a kind of old-buffalo-robe smell—which of course had been the warning before he knew he smelled anything. Or sometimes he knew horses were coming before he could hear the hoofs; he supposed this came by a tremor of the ground so weak you didn't know you felt it, but one knew what it meant.

He became aware that he was biting his mustache. It was a thin blond mustache, trailing downward at the corners of his mouth, so that it gave his face a dour look it didn't have underneath. But it wasn't a chewed mustache, because he didn't chew it. Patiently he studied the long sweep of the prairie, looking steadily at each quadrant for many minutes. He was sorry now that he had let Amos go last night to help the Mathisons chase cow thieves; Amos was Henry's brother and a rock of strength. It should have been enough that he let Martin Pauley go along. Mart was the little boy they had found in the brush, after the Pauley massacre, and raised as their own. He was eighteen now, and given up to be the best shot in the family. The Mathisons hadn't been satisfied anyway. Thought he should send Hunter, too, or else come himself. You can't ever please everybody.

A quarter mile off a bedded-down meadowlark sprang into the air, circled uncertainly, then drifted away. Henry became motionless, except for his eyes, which moved continually, casting the plain. Five hundred yards to the right of the spot where the meadowlark had jumped, a covey of quail went up.

Henry turned and ran for the house.



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