

Dallas Morning News

December 13, 1958 - Page 9

THE PASSING SHOW: Audie Murphy And 13 Days

By JOHN ROSENFELD

Certain Texans, including some hardly disinterested key men of the film theaters, are horrified that John Wayne's plans to produce a picture on the fall of the Alamo does not cast Audie Murphy in some capacity.

"Audie", said one to us, "is the outstanding hero of World War II and certainly belongs in a picture of Texas heroism."

We can add to this logic the more reasonable fact that Audie, despite his medals, has turned out to be one of the best outdoor actors in motion pictures. He has retained a high box office value even with the competition of "Maverick" and the doings around Tombstone, Dodge City and other television locales – often on the same studio street.

Wayne, who plans production around September, 1959, can still play Davy Crockett and pursue his plans to add the characterful face of Bill Holden to the role of Col. Travis. While Audie Murphy might play Travis in justice to years, he might fail to qualify for the Hollywood stereotype of a besieged commander.

* * *

BUT THERE ARE two parts he might play, says Lon Tinkle of the Dallas News and SMU, whose "13 Days to Glory", a 1958 publication of McGraw-Hill, is the unchallenged factual record of the battle that meant Texas militarily and Texas independence in morale and subsequent deed.

Since the bright dawn of victory was rising over the holocaust of March 6, 1836, the Wayne picture should end on the "upbeat". While every man within the Alamo perished on

the day of massacre, there were many from the first days who went on to enjoy their glory as scouts, sentries and surviving veterans of San Jacinto (Texans lost all the battles but the last one to Santa Anna).

Tinkle's pet candidate as an Audie Murphy role is Daniel William Cloud, a 21 year old Kentuckian, adventurous, intrepid, gay and ready with his rifle. Moreover, his outcome, says tinkle, "is lost to history" so Cloud is subject to whatever script-writing liberties elected by the least-inhibited of functionaries.

"His letter (to his mother) makes his personality stand out so clear", says Tinkle. "One can see him in the imagination as the very man Travis and Bowie would pick out at the last public dance and fandango in San Antonio on Feb. 22, to stand guard in the church bell tower the next morning to check the report, delivered by a loyal Mexican-Texan to Bowie that Santa Anna had reached the banks of the Medina River, 18 miles away".

* * *

TINKLE, SOMEWHAT infected by romantic "sturm and drang" sees Cloud dead after the Alamo. His body is sought by his beautiful Mexican sweetheart who cleans his face, places a cross on his chest and closes his dead eyes.

Having invented that idea with the slickness of somebody working for DeMille, tinkle accepts an alternative. Cloud may never have got back to the Alamo for the siege and lived happily every after to enjoy Texas and his gorgeous senorita.

Or, says Tinkle, if Wayne wants a more factual part for Audie Murphy he might try the character of young John W. Smith who Tinkle describes, was “the greatest and most courageous of all the scouts and couriers from the Alamo”.

Smith checks on Cloud in the bell tower. He dashed to Gonzales, Goliad and San Felipe asking for help. He leads in the “32 men from Gonzales” as Travis’ pitiful reinforcements. He rides to Washington-on-the-Brazos to carry Travis’ impassioned plea for relief. He returned to the Alamo late on the fatal Sunday and could do nothing more than ride to Gonzales, 70 miles east, to join Sam Houston’s forces.

* * *

JOHN W. SMITH (what a name for a movie character!) participated in the victory of San Jacinto, writes Tinkle, and returned to join his “beautiful Castilian- born wife in San Antonio”, later to serve twice as mayor of the city. His many descendants include families known as Tobin, Gillespie, and Rote, the last named being a football warrior.

Tinkle adds, “Smith was a great horseman, loved adventure, loved land and had a genius for friendship – for him the fall of the Alamo was a symbol that such courage was not only a legacy but an obligation and a philosophy.”

Tinkle has volunteered these suggestions out of material he dug laboriously for his splendid and now indispensable volume. But he also shows an acute theatrical sense (he was one of the founders of Theater ’58) and he has mentioned two roles that are not entirely cliché inventions.

Audie Murphy might do for either, for he personifies young man good looks, an extraordinary personal rectitude, owns a decent skill at dialogue and has all the talents Wayne needs for gun and saddle.

Audie is the one homeboy who is a box office hero in his own bailiwick. He is also a positive factor elsewhere. He and his supporters feel that his inclusion in Wayne’s “Alamo” cast along the lines charted by Tinkle will substantially increase the virtues of his picture.

* * *

AUDIE WAS really sent to Hollywood by Texas theatrical interests. They were cynically charged at the time with exploiting his World War II fame. But what actually appealed to them was Audie’s personality and the thought that screen acting probably would be the thing an untrained farm boy might learn to do best.

In this they were correct, because Audie, war record forgotten, captured a public following that might challenge Wayne’s itself.

* * *

WE URGE that the “Duke” consider him and the wishes of the theaters that will launch his high-budget “Alamo” picture.

We also bang the table and ask that he study Tinkle’s “13 Days to Glory” if his “Alamo” is to be any sort of contribution to moviedom’s “history-theater”.

Blood and thunder of the routine kind will not be sufficient. Besides, as Wayne surely must know, this has been done before. Almost five times a year since the movies started.

Write O’Donnell

The considerable sentiment for Audie Murphy to appear in John Wayne’s forthcoming picture about the Alamo and the constructive suggestions of Lon Tinkle, author of “13 Days to Glory” might properly be the subject of letters to R. J. O’Donnell, vice-president and general manager of the Interstate Circuit, Majestic Theater Building, Dallas. O’Donnell, who is pushing the thought both as a friend of Murphy and an important exhibitor, says he will welcome correspondence.