

Hollywood

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Likewise, Michael Douglas would have a long career as a leading man (including a Best Actor Oscar for “Wall Street”) but at the time was just beginning to step out from under the long shadow cast by his screen idol father, Kirk.

The cast also featured a number of veteran character actors, including Will Geer and Ellen Corby, who would later team up again as Grandpa and Grandma on the long-running television series “The Waltons.”

The movie’s other big star — and an object of fascination for local residents — was Major McTavish, the elderly, milk-loving lion that watches over Napoleon and Samantha on their wilderness adventure.

Extras and stand-ins

By all accounts, the filming of “Napoleon and Samantha” created quite a stir in Grant County in the summer of 1971, and quite a few people who lived here at the time have vivid recollections in connection with the movie.

Marvin Gibbs was 14 years old that summer and working as a paperboy, delivering The Oregonian and the Oregon Journal in John Day. One of his delivery stops was a bakery on Main Street, where members of the production crew would gather to start their day.

“One day a guy asked me if I wanted to be in one of the scenes and I said, ‘Sure, why not?’” recalled Gibbs, now 65 and living in Wallowa.

The filmmakers wanted to use him as an extra in a scene where Whitaker, as Napoleon, and Geer, who played his grandfather, are walking out of a movie theater (the Canyon City Fraternal Hall, made over as the Grantville Theatre in the film).

“They come out the door and as they’re coming out, I get on my bike and ride off,” Gibbs said. “It’s a pretty short clip, just two or three seconds.”

Gibbs was paid \$100 for his efforts. “I made more in one day than I did in two months delivering papers,” he said.

Bob Armstrong, the former owner of Solutions CPAs in John Day, had just moved to the area from California with his family. The 12-year-old Armstrong was one of the many local residents who lined up at the park in Canyon City to apply for work with the production. His red hair and freckles got him a job as Johnny Whitaker’s stand-in.

But don’t look for him in the movie — he never appears on camera.

“The biggest role for a stand-in was to be on the set while they got all the lighting and the camera angles and the camera movements set before they brought the actors out,” recalled Armstrong, who’s 63 now. “When everything was set, I would go in the background and they would film with Johnny.”

The Armstrong family’s horse, Sam, got more screen time than Bob did. Sam appears in one of the movie’s early scenes as Charlie, a horse that Napoleon bribes with jellybeans in exchange for a ride with Samantha.

Not long afterwards, Carol Rudishauser bought the horse for her two young daughters, Cindy and Lori.

“Both my children learned to ride on Sam,” said Rudishauser, 88.

The same qualities that made the big bay gelding a good fit for her girls made Sam a natural for the part in “Napoleon and Samantha,” she added.

“They needed a horse for those two kids to ride that was gentle and well broke, and he fit the bill perfectly.”

Outtakes

Random facts about “Napoleon and Samantha”

Jodie Foster was attacked by one of the lions used in the production and was carried briefly in its mouth. According to the World Entertainment News Network, she developed a lifelong case of ailurophobia (fear of cats) as a result.

The part of Samantha was Jodie Foster’s first movie role. Her previous credits included a number of TV commercials and a role on “Mayberry RFD.”

Co-stars Ellen Corby and Will Geer went on to play Grandma and Grandpa in the popular TV series “The Waltons.”

The film received one Oscar nod. Composer Buddy Baker was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Music, Original Dramatic Score. (The winners that year were Charlie Chaplin, Raymond Rasch and Larry Russell for “Limelight.”)

The film had at least two promotional taglines: “Two runaways and a guardian lion lost in the wilderness ... an incredible adventure!” and “As they steal away, they’ll steal your heart.”

Four paintings by Grant County artist Linda Deardorff were displayed on the walls of a cabin in the movie. She was paid \$40 a week for the use of the artworks.

Around the time “Napoleon and Samantha” was being made, there was a move to merge the towns of John Day and Canyon City. One local resident proposed that the conjoined communities be named Grantville, the name of the fictional town depicted in the film.

Sources: imdb.com, [WENN](http://WENN.com), [Blue Mountain Eagle](http://Blue Mountain Eagle.com), wikipedia.com

Movie mania

Even people who weren’t involved in the movie’s production got caught up in the excitement.

Grant County Emergency Management Coordinator Eric Bush was just 6 years old when “Napoleon and Samantha” came out. He remembers seeing it with his mother, brother and sister at the Grant County Drive-In in John Day. He also remembers how excited his mother got when she saw familiar locations up on the big screen.

“My mom grew up in Canyon City, and (part of) the movie was filmed up behind her house,” said Bush, now 56. “I remember my mom pointing out places and saying, ‘Hey, that was filmed right by our house!’”

“I remember as a kid everybody talking about that,” he added. “That was the buzz — everybody was excited about it being filmed around here.”

Michael Johnson, home from his freshman year at Oregon State University, got a job working for the production company in the summer of 1971. Then 19, he was assigned to assembling props and helping to stage scenes, mostly for interior shots.

He got to know several of the movie people, including Will Geer and his adult son Raleigh, who was traveling with him. One night, Johnson recalled, he borrowed his dad’s car and went to the Grant County Drive-In with the Geers and a friend of his.

“The drive-in was actually the only theater in town and was showing a movie Will Geer had starred in called ‘The Reivers,’” said Johnson, now 70 and living in Tualatin.

“Will wanted the fun of being noticed. So we went to the movie so he could create a stir by climbing out of the car and making his way to the concession stand for popcorn. And boy, did he ever!”

Some people got front-row seats to the production, such as the residents of two houses used in several key scenes in the movie.

The Tom and Jerry Mosgrove house on Hillcrest Road in John Day filled the role of Samantha’s house in the movie and was the site of intensive filming for two days. The Mosgroves’ son, David Liberty, recalls watching with his sisters Mary and Michelle as the production crew pulled up with two huge trailers and started unloading their gear.

“We watched in amazement as they got out all their equipment,” said Liberty, who was 14 in the summer of ‘71.

The house was used for exterior shots only, so the family could observe the proceedings from inside as long as they didn’t get into the shot. One of the more exciting scenes in the movie happens when Danny (Michael Douglas), who is trying to help Napoleon and Samantha, knocks on the door and Samantha’s suspicious grandmother, played by Ellen Corby, calls the police.

“Michael Douglas got arrested on my front porch while I watched from my upstairs bedroom,” said Liberty, now 65 and living in Hood River.

The filmmakers wanted a number of different camera angles to record the seemingly simple scene and even set up rails for the camera to run on as it tracked the running policemen, and the directors required multiple takes for each camera shot.

“The cops had to run in many times and arrest him at the door,” Liberty recalled. “They’d do it over and over again until they got it perfect.”

Liberty said his mother took the money the family received for the use of their house and threw a party for the cast and crew. Over the course of production, Liberty added, he sometimes hung out with Johnny Whitaker and Jodie Foster at the nearby Mac’s Motel (now the John Day Motel) where they were staying. One night, he said, precocious 8-year-old Jodie borrowed his guitar and played a protest song she had written.

“That was fun, to be a part of it,” Liberty said. “Even though you weren’t on the screen, you were right there.”

Gerald and Jessie Lewis’ house on Rebel Hill in Canyon City was used to represent the home where Napoleon lived with his grandfather (Will Geer). Like the Mosgrove house, it was used for exterior shots only. For interior scenes, the production crew erected sets in the gymnasium at Grant Union High School, which they used as a soundstage.

“If you listen to the movie, you can hear an echo when they’re talking,” said Tracy Bird, the Lewises’ daughter.

Bird is 66 now, but she was a freshman in high school when the movie was being filmed, and she can remember all the girls mooning over Michael Douglas.

“Of course, we all thought he was very good-looking because he looked just like his dad,” she said.

Bird can still recall how excited people were about the movie being filmed in their midst, and how the production seemed to give the whole community a lift.

“It was a wonderful time in Grant County,” she said. “It was good for people’s attitude, it brought money into the county — which we didn’t have a lot of at that time — and it brought notoriety to our county.”

She also recalls meeting a lot of the stars of the movie and thinking what nice, down-to-earth people they were, and then following their careers with interest as they all moved on to other roles after “Napoleon and Samantha.”

“It’s always neat when you get to see someone you’ve only seen on TV or movies,” she said, “because then you feel like you’re part of their world — and not only that, but they’re part of your world, too.”



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle
Canyon City resident Randy Gillam, left, during the Thadd’s Place benefit dinner Saturday, June 25, 2022.

Golf

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The biggest addition to Thadd’s Place over the last year, Gibson said, has been cancer support groups. She said the support groups are available for the patients as well as their family members.

The groups, Gibson said, are led by trained volunteers who have some connection to grief on a personal level, which allows them to better relate to those in the group.

Gibson pointed out that grief is not limited to death.

For instance, she said when someone is diagnosed with cancer, they grieve many losses to their health and physical ability.

“It is a lot of loss, and you lose the life you’ve had before,” Gibson said.

That is just one example of a different form of grieving, she said. Another can be the grief felt by a family member of a drug addict or alcoholic.

“They are still alive,” she said, “but there’s no relationship because they’ve made some of those choices.”

Bob Cowan Thomas, the owner of Chester’s Thriftway in John Day, said his reasons for opening Thadd’s Place were twofold. Not only did he, as a grieving parent, want to honor his son’s memory, but he also, as a grandfather, wanted his grandson to have a supportive outlet and a place to grieve.

“(A place to grieve) was something I needed really bad,” he said. “and it was something my grandson needed. I just wanted to make it a less sterile environment and wanted people to feel comfortable in a different environment.”

For more information about the services offered by Thadd’s Place, call 541-620-2572.

TOURNAMENT RESULTS

The Thadd’s Place Golf Tournament ended in a three-way tie for first place with a score of 56.

Teams:

Ken Ellison, Boe Ellison, Andy Ellison and Andy Radinovich.

Brad Armstrong, Mitch Saul, Alex Finlayson and Colt Carpenter.

Sheldon Lenz, Garrett Lenz, Austin Ranft and Dylan Porter.

All three teams donated their prize money back to Thadd’s Place.



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9				
10												
12	13		14									
16		17			18		19	20	21			
22				23								
24				25		26		27				
			28		29			30				
31	32	33		34				35	36			
			38		39							
40				41		42		43	44	45	46	47
48			49					50				
51								52				
			53					54				55
								57				
			59					60				

- CLUES DOWN**
- St. Francis of ___
 - Supported
 - United in working
 - It cools your home
 - Predicting
 - Irritated
 - Popular talk show host
 - Fabric edge
 - A resource for employees
 - Broadway’s Jackman
 - Small water buffalo
 - City of Angels: ___ Angeles
 - Asteroids
 - Tailless amphibians
 - Hotel chain
 - A team’s best pitcher
 - Extracts from various sources
 - Indefinite period of time
 - German expressionist painter
 - What drives you
 - N. Vietnamese ethnic group
 - Gold coin used in British India
 - Have deep affection for
 - Ponds
 - Breaks between words
 - Hairstyle
 - Print errors
 - Family of iron alloys
 - Sideline in bed
 - Many couples say it
 - Brazilian hoopster
 - Allman Brothers late frontman
 - German city
 - One hundred grams (abbr.)
 - One billionth of a second (abbr.)

- CLUES ACROSS**
- Basics
 - In a new way
 - ___ Paulo, city
 - Jailhouse
 - Expresses surprise
 - Trigraph
 - A small stream
 - Dissimilar
 - Promote
 - Gives a boost
 - Lawmaker
 - Orthodox Jews
 - Actor Harris
 - Wild cherry
 - Participate in democracy
 - Opposite of begins
 - A Brit’s mother
 - Set of moral principles
 - Very fast airplane
 - Czech river
 - Private school in New York
 - Israeli dance
 - Electron volt
 - Adjusting
 - Duct by the bladder
 - Small burger
 - Begin again
 - Unstuck
 - Jai ___ sport
 - Get free of
 - For instance

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to roller coasters.

TKRCA

SUDOKU

2	1						3	
4			8	6				2
			8					
	2	7	1	9				
5						4		
6	7	9	2					5
								8
			3				9	

Fun By The Numbers
Like puzzles? Then you’ll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Advanced

Guess Who?

I am a reality star and entrepreneur born in California on June 27, 1984. Together with my sisters, I am part of a famous family. My father was a prominent attorney, and my mother was once married to a legendary Olympic athlete.

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to roller coasters. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 12 = D)

A. 12 6 1 16
Clue: Fall vertically

B. 9 16 14 14 12
Clue: Velocity

C. 17 10 6 25 19 19 9
Clue: Exciting experiences

D. 6 25 12 14
Clue: Amusement structure

ROLLER COASTER WORD SEARCH

I	A	G	T	U	D	G	M	K	F	N	U	R	E	K	A	R	B	T	D	
B	K	R	C	B	S	H	T	E	I	O	S	N	D	I	L	T	T	H	L	
I	S	S	E	N	T	H	U	S	I	A	S	T	M	G	E	R	A	I	L	
C	D	N	E	C	S	A	W	B	A	R	R	E	L	R	E	R	F	H	E	
U	E	E	P	D	L	P	B	N	S	I	U	E	R	A	T	T	D	B	D	
T	A	M	H	A	R	A	V	N	M	H	F	T	C	M	S	D	S	N	O	
B	C	L	I	C	A	R	P	W	E	G	W	I	M	D	A	A	R	P		
A	M	E	V	T	O	C	E	B	R	D	N	T	I	U	C	R	I	C	V	
C	L	C	I	P	R	C	S	A	M	O	A	C	H	A	I	N	R	H		
K	D	P	P	I	A	I	K	E	T	R	F	O	R	V	A	G	I	K	D	
T	M	D	G	N	N	P	A	S	C	L	R	I	E	W	E	F	R	C	M	V
S	R	R	V	D	T	V	K	C	E	A	T	P	F	M	A	N	O	U		
E	O	S	C	B	S	P	E	V	F	R	R	I	I	V	R	O	W	W	H	
R	F	R	K	P	P	O	B	R	V	W	E	A	N	T	L	G	O	L	H	
D	T	A	H	V	E	D	U	A	S	M	F	W	L	T	I	H	V	B	V	
A	A	C	B	S	L	O	P	O	P	I	V	L	O	I	P	D	I	M	G	
E	L	P	R	S	T	N	E	B	H	C	O	L	O	P	O	H	T	I	O	
H	L	P	R	E	S	E	O	I	M	R	G	N	F	C	H	N	L	C	B	
L	S	R	E	P	V	D	E	S	O	L	C	N	E	C	T	E	H	O	H	
H	M	S	C	M	D	G	T	E	K	K	E	N	S	F	G	O	T	D	I	

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS ACCELERATION
AIRTIME
ASCEND
BARRREL
BENTS
BOOMERANG
BRAKE RUN
CHAIN
CIRCUIT
CORKSCREW
CUTBACK
ENCLOSED
ENTHUSIAST
HEADREST
INVERSION
LAPBAR
LIFT
LOOP
PLATFORM
RESTRAINT
STEEL
TRACK
WOODEN

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