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Please! Only you can prevent forest fires

CLIFF ROBERTSON:

The Man Who Portrays JFK

This underrated actor got his first job at seven and once lived for three months in a car; but he and the President have one thing in common—they're both seafaring men **By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER**

PRESIDENT KENNEDY insisted on three conditions before he gave Warner Brothers the right to make a movie of "PT 109," the book about his naval exploits during World War II:

1. Any royalties accruing to him must go to the men of the original PT 109, or their families; 2. The actor who plays Kennedy must refrain from imitating him in any way; 3. The President must approve the actor who portrays him.

Among those considered for the prize role were some of Hollywood's most-in-demand actors, including Warren Beatty and Jeffrey Hunter. But the part finally went to Cliff Robertson—and it seems likely to bring him the recognition that has eluded him for so long.

"Even before the picture was released, there was great interest in me from all over the world," Cliff said. "Offers have been pouring in like mad."

The President's approval of Robertson obviously didn't hinge on any similarity in their childhoods. For all practical purposes, Cliff was an orphan. His mother died of a ruptured appendix when he was two. He is vague about his father's whereabouts thereafter, but apparently he rarely saw him.

Cliff was raised in La Jolla, Calif., by his grandmother. He went to work at seven, mowing lawns for 25¢ an hour. At nine, he got a job as door-to-door magazine salesman and within six months built up the largest circulation in the county.

At 12, Cliff switched to a still more profitable newspaper route, and a couple of years later he further increased his income by preserving appendixes at a clinic where his grandmother worked as a nurse.

But Cliff's next money-making scheme ended in disaster. He and a partner—both 16—invested their savings in a fishing skiff. They went out at 4 every morning to catch lobsters and got back just before school started. It proved profitable till they smashed their boat to bits on the rocky coast.

Nevertheless, Cliff's appetite for the sea was whetted, and he talked his buddy into driving to San Francisco the day after they graduated from high school to sign up as merchant seamen. He also talked his buddy's father out of his car, which wi to provide more than transportation.

"We had counted on waiting a couple of days to find a ship. It took us three months," Cliff remembers. They used the sedan as their hotel room, washed and shaved in a nearby gasoline station, and ate food wherever they could get it.

When Cliff's pal was signed up before him, the car was taken back to La Jolla, and Cliff was deprived of his sleeping accommodations. "I spent the nights on the docks, spread out between crates," he recalls. Fortunately he was able to sign up on the freighter *Admiral Cole* the following week.

ONE SUNNY Sunday morning a few weeks later, the ship was in Philippine waters and Cliff was standing watch. He observed with interest a huge four-engine seaplane lumbering closer and closer. Soon it was almost directly overhead. To Cliff's surprise, the bomb bays opened and bombs hurtled toward the ship.

The date was Dec. 7, 1941.

"We didn't know that Pearl Harbor was being attacked simultaneously," Cliff said. "Our radioman was still in bed. On a small steamer, you don't always have 24-hour radio watch.

"The ship was hit and listing heavily as the plane came back again and again