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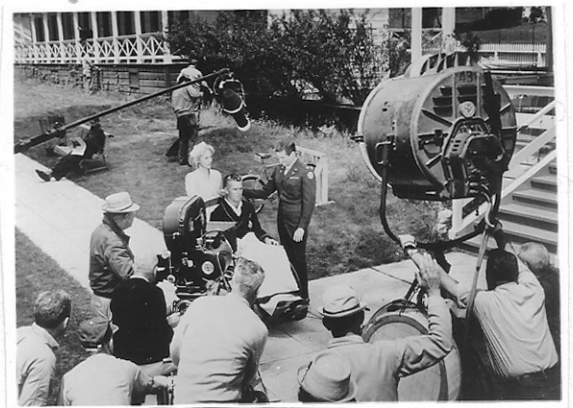


By Liz Ploger

Seeing the inside of a motion picture studio is an exciting experience and viewing a picture being made on a sound stage is the utmost thrill for a devoted movie fan but this really doesn't compare to being ON LOCATION with a cast and crew of a picture, for on location the proximity of everyone concerned with the production is heightened. Add to this the marvelous setting of fantastically beautiful Yosemite National Park in late May when the waterfalls are at their fullest and the mountains on the horizon are still snow-capped, and the cast of the film includes ROD TAYLOR, Jim Garner and Eva Marie Saint, and you can almost imagine what an exciting, memorable Memorial Day weekend I spent!

MGM had taken over the entire Wawona Hotel and grounds as their setting for the background of 36 HOURS, a war drama taking place just prior to D-Day in Europe. Because Yosemite Park resembles the Black Forest of Germany so closely, it was decided to location there instead of the real locale and was I ever happy to hear it! Yosemite is just a four and one-half hour drive from Los Angeles, through the San Joaquin Valley (Bakersfield, and Fresno are the towns en route). Leaving Los Angeles at 8:00am Friday morning, May 29th, I arrived at Wawona at 12:30 just in time for the company's lunch break (hate to admit it, but yours truly was so anxious to arrive early that the strong arm of the law cited me en route but I felt better about the \$20. fine when I found out JIM GARNER also received a citation on HIS way up!). ROD and Mary escaped our fate by flying up from Los Angeles...and the very first person I spotted upon entering the grounds WAS ROD TAYLOR, all decked out in his Army uniform (which looked very warm in the 80 plus degree heat). We greeted each other and no sooner had said 'hello' when ROD's bride, Mary, in a lovely green silk slack outfit, came down the steps of the hotel, so right off I felt at home! Soon after, JIM GARNER came strolling out of the woods where we had gone to view the rushing stream and I greeted him! His wife Lois couldn't make the trip because of one of their children's illness.

The Wawona Hotel was converted into a U.S. Army Hospital and in the background of the scene shot after lunch between



Jim and Eva Marie Saint on the "hospital" balcony, you will witness the extra's strolling the grounds and pool area as if they were patients convalescing. This whole elaborate deception is to make Jim Garner believe he is in an American Army Hospital (in reality German territory) recuperating from Amnesia. It must have looked to the visitors as if Yosemite had lost its mind because the reknowned Wawona Hotel had huge signs saying it was an Army Hospital! MGM trucks and buses with their 36 HOURS banners were parked all over and since Wawona was at the South entrance to the Park, anyone entering would become aware immediately that a movie was being shot there. The huge kleig lights and reflector boards and cables were in evidence. Things you notice while set-siding never are obvious on film (which is what makes locationing so exciting to the visitors such as one extra while watering the lawn had a "cocktail" placed in his shirt pocket which he sipped with cool delight between takes; and on the back of a bicycle being pedalled around by another extra was the name D. Roberts which just happened to be the Assistant Director's name working on the film! Of course this scene which took about two hours to shoot will only be on the screen a few minutes!

Between set-ups, ROD and Jim and the director George Seaton sharpened their short game of golf on the near-by putting green (even got in a few putts myself). During the late afternoon filming scenes had to be spasmodically halted because of an advancing "black cloud" heading our way and the thunder rolls just wasn't supposed to be in the script and these retakes were beginning to wear on the actors nerves. However, after the days shooting, everyone broke for games of volleyball and a dip in the hotel's outdoor pool, etc.

MGM rented comfortable cozy cabins for their stars and the head of departments, and ROD's and Mary's cabin, for example, was equippe with stereo, a huge stone fireplace, bar, and pool table that dropped from the ceiling! Everything was knotty pine and the cabin could sleep ten easily!

Animals roamed freely all over Yosemite and ROD and Mary fed deer right at their back door. Even a bear came down to the shootin site one afternoon. Seems it was his feeding place and when he noticed the "actors", he sort of looked around and casually sauntere back into the trees! At night, whole family of deer would feed on the lawn of the hotel and would freeze in the beam of your head-lights!

Since Saturday was a non-shooting day, I opportuned myself of some sightseeing. Lookin down and across the vast Yosemite Valley from Glacier Point was just breath-taking. It made one feel so infinitesimal in this Giant-Land. With the waterfalls and snow-capped peaks and shining face of Half Dome in front of you, it certainly made one feel that you stood in Bavaria, Germany or the Swiss Alps or some other fantastically beautiful European locale. To me, this Valley was much more impressive and memorable than our Grand Canyon!

ON LOCATION WITH 36 HOURS -(Continued...)

Because I am a secretary at MGM and through ROD's thoughtfulness was able to eat dinner with the crew at the Wawona Hotel Friday evening (which is usually open to the public for dining). After a delicious meal and a short cat-nap, it was back to the Wawona Lounge where the crew had an impromptu gathering going and while one played the piano, two dancers did some great routines for us and it was fun dancing with everyone from Don Roberts (the Assitant Director) to the transportation boys.

Saturday evening, my friends and I had dinner at the elegant Ahwahnee Hotel on the floor of Yosemite Valley and after a delicious steak dinner, we viewed the famous fire-falls. Hot, gleaming coals are tossed over the top of the mountain and as they fall, they create the illusion of a fire-fall! A fascinating three-minute sight, indeed! Sunday was another days shooting and visiting the set was Army Archerd, the Hollywood columnist and his family and Eva Marie Saint's husband and boys (I helped Eva Marie catch a lizard for her boy, too). ROD was not working that day but visited the set with Mary and afterwards took a romantic stroll through the woods with his bride. The afternoon proved to be quite warm (the 90 degrees surprised me at this 4500 ft. altitude). It was the Swiss border scene where Jim and Eva Marie are trying to escape and Werner Peters catches them and holds them at gunpoint but his attempts to capture them are thwarted by a shot in his back. A plaster-of-paris cave was erected in a clearing and you will see Jim and Eva Marie hiding in it. They kept this a bit cooler by placing a tarpaulin over the site and between scenes Jim and Eva Marie stayed inside which gave a clever crewman the idea to paint a sign saying PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE ACTORS and hung it over the entrance. A lot of visitors quickly captured this "laugh scene" on their cameras.

The lunch break was wonderful and the hotel supplied sandwiches picnic-style for all, and we were kidded into passing our lollypops and licorice (which we brought for the trip up) to the entire crew and everyone from Mr. Seaton to the stand-ins had Lollypops in their mouths! There was so much going on...and things to do, it is just impossible to tell you all. Was lucky enough to pre-celebrate ROD and Mary's first wedding anniversary with them in their cabin Sunday. ROD wanted to surprize Mary and since there wasn't any opportunity for any gift shopping at Yosemite, he filled the cabins refrigerator with bottles of Champagne and carved a wooden plaque dedication to Mary. She, too, wanted to surprize ROD and brought along the top of their wedding cake which she had saved for a year.

I certainly hope you have been able to get some flavor of this location for it was exciting and am certain 36 HOURS which will be released nationally in January, 1965, cannot miss as a thrilling motion picture, if they captured just a quarter of the excitement on location on their film!

