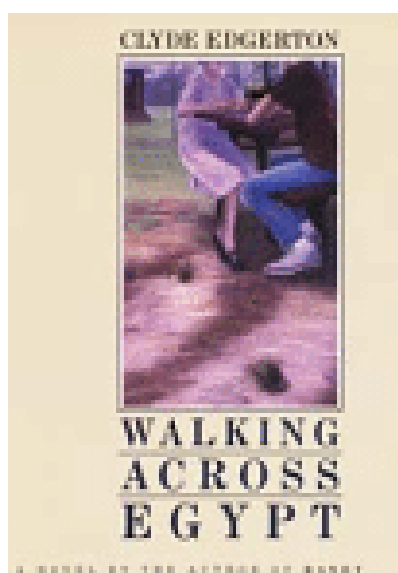


# A Mark of Excellence

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## ‘Walking Across Egypt’ Jeannine



In October, I had the privilege of seeing Mark's new film, "Walking Across Egypt," at the Heartland Film Festival in Indianapolis, and I can't begin to say enough about what a wonderful film this is! "Walking Across Egypt" is a screen adaptation of Clyde Edgerton's book of the same title, and the film delightfully captures all the humor, drama and southern charm that is found in Mr. Edgerton's writing. This heartwarming and uplifting movie centers around

a kindhearted, feisty elderly lady named Mattie (played by Ellen Burstyn) who befriends, and then gives a home to, a troubled youth named Wesley (played by Jonathan Taylor Thomas), despite her own reservations about how she's "slowing down" too much to take care of "strays."

Mark appears in the film as Wesley's uncle, Lamar (the town dogcatcher), and he did a superb job with this role! Mark played the comedic elements of the role to perfection, and had the audience roaring with laughter during quite a few of his scenes. In fact, that was something that struck me very strongly throughout the entire screening – how wonderfully the audience responded to Mark! That warm, "fuzzy" feeling towards Mark started during the opening credits, when the appearance of his name earned an audible gasp from the crowd and murmurs of happy surprise, and that feeling built during his first (absolutely hilarious!) scene when he was awarded huge laughs by the audience, and it

continued on throughout the entire film until he had the audience totally captivated! After the closing credits rolled, one of the film's producers came on-stage for the Question and Answer session, and almost the very first thing he said was, "So -- how did you like seeing Mark Hamill -- were you surprised?" and the audience erupted into wild applause and cheering. (It brought a tear to my eye, it did! <G>) That applause really was well-deserved, because Mark truly gave an outstanding performance in this film. He handled both the dramatic as well as the comedic scenes with ease, and brought a lot of charm and humour to the movie, not to mention a wonderful southern drawl. (And let me tell you -- "scruffy looking dogcatchers" never looked better!!)

**\*CAUTION\* The following contains spoilers!!**

Lamar/Mark was introduced quite early in the

film, through a very humorous set of events. Mattie found a stray dog and, even though she obviously felt some affection for the dog, decided to call the dog-catcher to come by to pick up the mutt because she felt "too worn out" to take care of it. As Mattie waited for the dogcatcher to arrive, she attempted to sit down in her rocking chair to watch her "soaps," only she had forgotten that she had removed the seat from the rocker and she got her rear-end stuck (realllly stuck!) through the hole in the seat of the rocker. The ensuing scene, where Lamar arrived at Mattie's house and discovered her uncomfortable situation, is hilarious! Mark did a great job with this scene -- both with the physical comedy as well as the verbal -- and the audience laughed uproariously as Lamar struggled to free Mattie from her very embarrassing predicament.

Mark had several other great scenes in the film, but there was one in particular that was a crowd favorite (and was definitely one of mine, too!). Quite a few of the film's characters were gathered around Mattie's table for dinner, and Mattie asked Lamar to say "Grace" over the food. Lamar was flabbergasted at the request -- he obviously hadn't said a prayer in years, but with good humour (and after a "look" from Mattie) he agreed to do it. He clasped his hands, bowed his head, and (oh - this was SO sweet and funny!) proceeded to recite a prayer from his childhood. He prayed hesitantly at first, stumbling along as he tried to dredge his memory for the words, then gained steam and

got progressively more confident (and touchingly pleased with himself) with each line, until he built up to a triumphant "Amen!" at the end, accompanied by a hilariously childlike "Woohoo - I did it!" expression on his face that the crowd just LOVED!! That scene got lots and lots of laughs!

Ellen Burstyn did a wonderful job with her role as Mattie, and portrayed her with just the right touches of humor, feistiness, and kindness. She also brought to Mattie a hilariously unflappable attitude that Mattie developed to cope with all the chaos that Wesley brought into her life. In addition, Ms. Burstyn was called upon in this role to portray a woman who is motivated by deep and sincere religious convictions, and Ms. Burstyn admirably did this without even the slightest hint of self-righteousness or pretentiousness. As Mattie unflinchingly stuck to her principles and tried to help Wesley -- despite mounting opposition and criticism from her son and daughter, her neighbors, and even her own clergyman -- we saw a portrait of a person who gave more than mere lip-service to "helping her fellow man." Mattie's faith and unquenchable spirit (and generous doses of her excellent home-cooking) conquered in the end, and she quite literally saved the life of one of society's throw-away children.

Jonathan Taylor Thomas also handed in a very fine performance in this film. I had reservations prior to the screening about how believable JTT would be in the role of a juvenile delinquent (who is in a Youth Deten-

tion Center/RC when Mattie first meets him), but I was pleasantly surprised at how well JTT handled the challenge of acting convincingly tough and aggressive within the menacing environment of the RC. Jonathan's performance was outstanding throughout the film as he handled Wesley's gradual transition from toughened delinquent into charming rascal, and finally, in the very moving and heartrending climax of the film, into a young man who had internalized Mattie's lessons about gratitude, honesty and courage, and who chose to act in accordance with these newfound values even in dire circumstances.

Harve Presnell and Gwen Verdon were also particularly wonderful as Mattie's neighbors: kind-hearted, nosy, funny characters who tried to "watch over" Mattie and protect her from the "riff-raff" that Mattie had taken into her home.

The \*only\* thing that disappoints about this film is its lack of a distributor. It saddens me to think of all the people (and especially Markfans!) that may be deprived of seeing this movie if it does not receive widespread distribution. The movie was extremely well-received at the screening I attended, and the audience thoroughly enjoyed the moments of humor as well as the drama contained in the film; I firmly believe "Walking Across Egypt" would also receive this same warm reception with a more widespread audience. This movie is positive, life-affirming, has an unabashedly good message to it, and deserves to be distributed—it will truly be a shame if it is not.

## Blast From the Past

The FBI

A young man (Robert Ryders) spots a young woman next to the street having trouble with her bike. He invites her to come with him. After some hesitation, she agrees. He talks about planning a bank robbery and other criminal acts, but she thinks he's just joking. She soon learns about his true character. A highway patrol officer stops the car because he was driving too fast. Checking the car, the officer finds the car isn't stolen. Back in his car he is told that the car is stolen – so he goes back. Before he can talk with the driver, the driver shoots the officer..

Louis Erskin (Efram Zimbalist Jr), from the FBI, works with the local police. The wounded officer describes the young man, before falling into coma. A short while later they find the young woman. She tells them he took her hostage but then he let her go. He never mentioned his name but she saw him take painkillers, and she helps them make a sketch. Inspecting the car, they find a package of aspirin. Then they hear another truck has been stolen.

In a restaurant, the young man overhears the conversation of a teenage boy looking for a job with the owner. No openings – so the boy leaves his address – his name is George Arbot (Rick Culman). The young man invites him to lunch. Taking his revolver, the young man forces them to give

him all the money from the cash register. Shocked, one of the other guests – a trucker - tries to attack him. George gives him a warning and the young man shoots his attacker in the shoulder. He tells George to grab the money and the key of the car from another guest. After they left the police were called.

Stopping in a forest, George doesn't feel too well though he gets his part of the robbery money. After being warned he's too young and that the young man has a 'mission' to fulfill and is willing to take every risk, George still wants to be a partner. The young man eventually agrees and gives George his weapon as a gift – one of the many he has in his small travel case. Then they meet 2 other boys George had met 2 weeks ago – Roy Sheen and Michael Nabot. (One of them is played by Mark.) The boys are happy that George came back. They are looking for some thrills, too. Fascinated, they want to know how many jobs he has already pulled. They want to become partners – want to get their 'chance'. They'll have to pass a 'test' – they agree and get their own weapons.

Another young woman tells Erskin a bit more about George. He was hitchhiking and she picked him up. George fell in love with her – wanted more, but she wasn't willing. He called her repeatedly, and gave her his address. Erskin asks her to contact him again if George calls her again.

Worried about the toothaches his partner has, George wants to take him to a dentist but he refuses, telling him his father almost died from one. And he starts talking about his plans, how he wants to get his younger brother out of jail because he feels responsible for him – no matter what. His brother killed a police officer and now awaits trial.

Erskin learns that George left his family weeks ago to have some 'adventures' – that he was never in trouble before. They found more evidence in the truck – a cloth that drenched with clove oil used when you have toothaches. He decides to give flyers to every drugstore owner and dentist in the area. George calls the young woman again but what he tells her doesn't make much sense to her: he has now a partner – a business man. He wants to call her again and then meet her at the 'Grovenor'. They find out it's a cinema. Once there, they wait. One of Erskin's team is near the entry, cleaning windows. Then 2 young men arrive – looking a bit nervous. It's the 'test' they have to pass: a robbery. But Erskin and his team arrest the boys who try to get away. Both boys are 18 years old. They only can tell Erskin that the young man is called Dall and that he plans something big.

Finally, George takes his partner to a dentist. The dental hygienist recognizes George and shows the doctor a small note asking him to call

the police. He nods. When he tries to give Dall an anaesthetic, George interferes, beating up the doc and leaving with Dall. He still thinks he's Dall's partner but Dall pushes him out of the car. He has to fulfill his mission now alone. Frustrated, he does his first own robbery. During his escape he crashes with a motorbike and hurts his knee.

The owner of the store tells the FBI about that crash – so they know where to look for him. A short while later they find George in Whiteside Emergency Hospital waiting for the doctor. They arrest him. George is worried that his parents will find him in jail to he is willing to help Erskin. He tells them that Dall plans to free his brother. Now they

know how he is: D. Victor Foster.

Looking at the newspaper Dall learns that the trial has been delayed. Frustrated he takes hostages to free his brother, Grant. He wants to talk with his brother – but he didn't like what he tells him – that he has already ruined his live and that he doesn't want that his brother frees him. Erskin confronts Foster that has a grenade in his hand. He knows that he has much more in his bag. During a short fight he managed to get hold of the grenade and it detonates outside in the hall.

D. Victor Foster is arrested for murder and the 3 young men, for robbery.

Here are some more episodes of old series Mark was

in:

### **Marcus Welby MD**

**Insight:** When You See Arcturus 1974

**Manhunter:** The Lodestar Ambush 1974 aired 12/74)

**The Texas Wheelers** 1974

**Lucas Tanner:** A Touch Of Bribery 1975

### **Medical Center**

You Can't Annul My Baby 1976 (aired 01/76)

And maybe even more. Unfortunately, we don't have these episodes on tape – so we aren't able to review them. So keep your eyes open – with a little luck you're able to catch one of these episodes – then let us know and write a review.



## **Catching Up and Keep A Lookout For**

'Laserhawk' aired in October on the Sci-Fi channel. It



still has not been released to video for US distribution. Mark played the character of Bob quite believably.

No, your ears were not deceiving you, that was Mark doing the voice-over as Luke in the *Star Wars: Vector Prime* spots. Airing for a

one-week period, it was part of the launch campaign for the New Jedi Order novels.



Did you catch 'Christmas Lamb', airing on PAX? Mark



was the mountain lion– nice chilling voice!

Keep checking TLC to see if one of a number of new shows Mark did narration for is airing. I've 'discovered' a couple airing at 8 or 9 pm ET, with repeats at 11 pm or midnight. Sorry, I don't have a list of which ones they are.

New episodes of .com are airing, now on Saturdays at 9 am ET on CNBC. They are repeated during the week on BRAVO. Older episodes have been spotted on TLC during the early morning infomercial times.

Latest information on the

computer game version of 'The Black Pearl' is that it should hit the software shelves sometime late fall of 2000 or early 2001. Microsoft's acquisition of Access Software has changed the scheduled release of a number of software titles.

And yes, what was mentioned in the review is true: 'Walking Across Egypt' does not have a US distributor at this time. Jeannine was fortunate enough to get to the

Heartland Film Festival, held in Indianapolis 20-28 October. Along with a number of other films, 'Walking Across Egypt' was given a Crystal Heart Award.

**At the request of my source, the following may NOT be put up on any site, homepage or message board until the information is posted in the general area on the website:**

According to the producer I talked with, 'Walking Across Egypt' will open in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on 28 January 2000, at the Mayfair Theatre. An exclusive matinee screening for children will be held on the 29th to benefit the 'Make A Wish' foundation. As we went to print, the list of other selected cities 'WAE' will have a limited run in had not been confirmed. Updates will be posted on the web-

## Notes From the Editors

As mentioned in the last issue, in honour of Mark's birthday, a donation was made to one of the charities he and his family have been involved with for quite some time now. We received the following letter, thanking the fan club for our generous donation:

Mark has done a number of charity events to help raise money for CHPHP. One of the more recent was a miniature golf tournament.

If you would like to help contribute to CHPHP and show support for Mark, we are offering 'I'm Stuck on Mark Hamill' badges for sale. Cost is \$1.35 US per badge, including postage. All profits will be collected and donated in honour of Mark's birthday. PO Box 287, Grand Blanc MI 48439 USA



	<p><b>Nos Amis/Our Friends, Inc. Children Helping Poor and Homeless People (CHPHP)</b></p>	<p>2554 Lincoln Boulevard Suite #522 Venice, California 90291 (310) 840-4777</p>
<b>RECEIPT FOR DONATION</b>		
September 21, 1999		
<p>Sue Depping, Co-Director/Webmaster International Mark Hamill Fan Club P.O. Box 287 Grand Blanc, MI 48439</p>		
Dear Sue,		
<p>Thank you for your generous donation of twenty (\$20.00) Dollars that you sent on behalf of your Mark Hamill Fan Club Members to honor Mark on his Birthday! How lovely of you to honor Mark by helping people in need who Mark cares so much about. Along with a copy of this letter, we will be sending Mark a Gift Acknowledgment Card notifying him of your generous gift in his honor.</p>		
<p>Mark and his family truly epitomize what CHPHP stands for - helping hungry poor and homeless men, women and children. As you know, they have been working with CHPHP for a number of years giving generously of their time, efforts and resources. In fact, Mark has graciously been our guest star and his family participants at all of our CHPHP major events including the CHPHP Miniature Golf Tournament about which we have enclosed copies of newspaper articles.</p>		
<p>Because Mark and his family are such an intrigal part of GHPHP, we are delighted to make your acquaintance! We will visit your official web page and correspond with you via email, too. Again, thank you for your support! We look forward to continuing our work together in the future.</p>		
<p><b>DONATION</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>\$20.00</b></span> You have received no goods or services for your donation.</p>		
<p> Christine Schanes, J.D., Ph.D.</p>		
Cc: M. Hamill		

A word of caution before you buy! We have been contacted by a number of people questioning Mark's signature on photos up for auction or sale. Although there are a number that actually are Mark's autograph, there are quite a few that are fakes, despite having a 'COA'. When in doubt, check with us or don't buy.

As some of you know by now, the fan club area on the website is live! It has taken a bit longer than anticipated. It's been a very interesting 3 months. And when your mother tells you not to run in the house, trust me, it's a good idea not to run in the house. Before he'd let me out of hospital, I had to promise my doctor I'll wear wrist and elbow pads when rollerblading, too. If you wish access to the fan club area, e-mail femem-ber@markhamill.com, with your first and surname, e-mail address, and username (max of 10 alpha/numeric characters).





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## The Last Word...

*A Mark of Excellence* is the quarterly newsletter of the **International Mark Hamill Fan Club**. Yearly dues are \$15 US, and include 4 consecutive issues of the newsletter, a membership card, access to the fan club area on the website, and special mailings as appropriate. For more information, please send a SASE to:

**International Mark Hamill  
Fan Club**

**PO Box 416  
E Amherst NY 14051**

Submissions, including photos or original artwork, are welcomed; final editing is the discretion of the editors. If you wish your photo or artwork returned, please enclose a sase, and attach your name/address on the back of your submission.

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