

A Mark of Excellence

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Walking Across Egypt

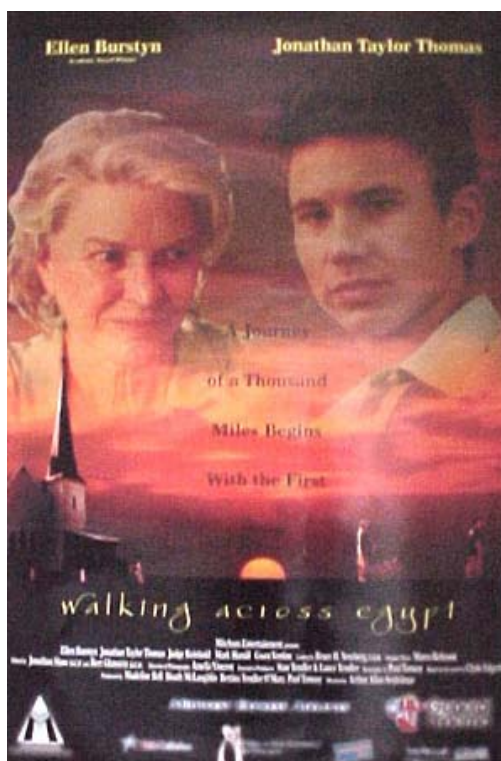
Penny:

Friday January 28th the adventure began with my arrival at Milwaukee Airport. I deplaned in anticipation of being joined by two friends and attending two screenings of 'Walking Across Egypt' that evening. Also there was the possibility of actually meeting a 'certain' actor we all know and admire.

Soon 'old friends who'd just met' were talking a mile a minute as we trod the airport's 'Skywalk' (heh, heh) to the parking lot. After piling into a nice looking van I found myself in the 'co-pilot's' seat, atlas in hand as we tooted along the interstate, diligently looking for the next connecting route in a state I'd never seen before. Truly an adventure and one I greatly enjoy!

Not too many 'side-trips' later we located (and secured) our lodgings and, MOST importantly, the mall containing THE THEATRE for the evening's main event! Then it was back to the airport (sorry, I think we just passed 45 at the last light. 'scuse us folks, we're tourists') to pick up more friends.

O.K. fast forward to the evening. I am standing with my



friends in the outer area of the theatre. There is a bit of a crowd. Kids are playing in the video Arcade area, people are eating in the food court. Some are just milling around, some even buying tickets to other (there's something else playing?) films. Some are aware of the impending event, some are not.

Myself, I am mentally practicing my best 'Pleased to meet you, Mr Hamill' (though I am, ahem, two years older than 'himself' I was raised that it's 'Mr.', 'Mrs.', 'Miss.', or now 'Ms.' until or

unless the person gives you permission to address them otherwise) hoping I wouldn't do something stupid or clumsy. My 'adult' side is trying to 'psych' myself out; 'you've met and known celebrities before. They are just people (whether or not they choose to believe it) who happen to be actors. Just pretend it is a younger relative's school play you're supporting.' Of course the ploy is not working and the 'child' side (OK I confess I'm an escapee from 'Muppet Labs') isn't convinced and is becoming more excited. This is actually happening!

There is a slight buzz of activity floating up from the floor level of the mall. There is the distinct sound of many camera flashes; murmuring of surprise and delight as a VERY familiar looking man dressed in leather jacket, mauve shirt and dark slacks steps off of the escalator. He is accompanied by his family, security and more fans. Next thing I know I'm actually being introduced to this handsome gentleman! Dutifully I recite my most heartfelt greeting to hear "I'm Mark" in reply. We walk together briefly the few steps to the room

where a press conference is to be held. I was then introduced to Marilou, a lovely, gracious and most patient lady; as well as two of the delightful Hamill children, Griffin and Chelsea. I greatly enjoyed our all too brief conversation.

During the course of the evening I had the unique opportunity to observe Mark, both with his wonderful family and fans old and young.

Tirelessly he signed autographs, posed for pictures and conversed with those who came.

There was one young boy, obviously recovering from chemotherapy; his hair just beginning to reappear in blond stubble, who's face lit up when he got to talk to Mark. At one point the man passed a hand over the boy's head and they both laughed.

Yet Mark's smile is never so radiant as when he is with his wife and children; a truly beautiful, loving family. All of which proved to me Mark is in reality the genuinely decent gentleman I've always suspected him to be; simply the best.

'Icing on the cake' came in actually seeing "Walking Across Egypt". I'd read the book and was most eager to see what such a top-notch cast and crew had done with it. It

was sheer delight and I couldn't be more pleased with the result. It is destined to become a classic; one of those keeper films you add to your library to view again and again. It was like re-visiting an old friend, a time and



place fondly remembered. Privileged I was too to be able to meet Heath McLaughlin, one of the film's producers, to be able to thank him for such a simply beautiful film.

It was a special evening filled with memories, friendships I shall always treasure. I am forever grateful to one and all who made it possible for me!

Luckily for you who read this report (as meandering as my 'navigational skills'), tide, time and duty prevented me from attending the entire weekend in Milwaukee. For details of the rest I shall now defer to our fearless, intrepid 'pilot' of 'Mission Milwaukee'!

Jeannine:

Feeling giddy with anticipation, I donned my imaginary "Escaped Mom" t-shirt and flew off in my X-Wing (a.k.a. my oh-so-mundane family minivan) to the Milwaukee airport very early on the morning of January 28 to pick-up two of my fellow Markfan friends, HdShroom/Sue and Penny.

Leaving the airport, we managed to find our way (thanks to the map-reading skills of 'navigator' Penny, who good-naturedly answered my cries of "R2! Which way do we go now?!?!") through the unfamiliar

city to our hotel. After checking in, we had a lovely time visiting and laughing together (with anticipation of The Big Event building the whole while). We headed back to the airport to retrieve yet another one of our Markfan friends, Cheryl. We found our hotel much more easily the 2nd time around, (happily) necessitating far fewer yells out the car windows of, "Sohrry 'bout that U-turn! We ain't from 'round these-here pahrts!" and entered our hotel lobby to find our friend Laura already waiting for us.

After enjoying a lunch, liberally dosed with lots of hilarious conversation amongst this group of new/old friends, we headed back to our hotel.

Finally, the long-anticipated hour arrived, and it was time for us to head over to the Mayfair Theater where Mark would be appearing.

I spent the short wait at the theatre repeating over and over in my mind, "Don't babble ... just don't babble... and don't turn into a puddle of gelatinous goo at his feet...". A murmur went up through the crowd and I knew that Mark had arrived. I picked him out instantly, despite his being completely surrounded by adoring fans, and felt my heart rate leap up to what was probably not an entirely healthy rate. I did my best to calm myself down, and almost before I knew it, Sue was introducing Penny and me to Marilou, whose warm smile and friendliness did much to soothe my nervousness. Just a few seconds after meeting Marilou, Mark walked up (gasp!) and then Sue introduced us to him. As soon as Mark heard my



name, Jeannie, he smiled and said something to the effect of, "Hey! I have a sister named Jeanie" and I, amazingly enough, did NOT babble, (Woohoo!) and found myself giving him a coherent reply. I told him that in "kind of a funny coincidence, I also have a sister named Jan -- just like you!" and so we talked for just a few moments about his sisters' names as we all walked towards the area where members of the press were waiting to photograph him.

Following the photo session, we headed into the auditorium where Mark introduced "Walking Across Egypt" to the crowd. We then enjoyed watching this wonderful film together (my second time seeing it!).



After the movie, Mark did a Question and Answer session with the audience, which was a lot of fun to see. Mark is really articulate, and very, very funny 'in person', and he handled all the questions with good humor, some hilariously dead-on impersonations, and interesting anecdotes. After the Q&A session, "WAE" was shown a second time, so we saw it again.. It's such a great movie!!

After that showing ended (close to midnight), we left the theater only to notice two of Mark's younger fans standing nearby, trying to figure out how to get home. Upon learning that they were going to try to take a

bus at that hour of the night, that really jangled my internal "Mom Alarm", we offered to give them a ride home. Luckily, we had our 'Fan Club Staff' badges with us to reassure them that we were not homicidal maniacs. We had many 'adventures' trying to get them home (read: getting seriously lost and being forced to yell, "Sohrry! We ain't from 'round these-here parts" numerous times). I was really touched when one of the them asked me, after we'd been driving around aimlessly for about 30 minutes, "Are you doing this for us because we're 'the least of these your brethren'?" This is one of the 'message lines' of "WAE". We all laughed, although I admit the question kinda choked me up, but I replied, "No, I'm a Mom. This is in my job description," and we all laughed again. But isn't it good to know that the boys picked up on the message of the movie? See what a great influence 'good' movies can be?! Well, to finish up the tale of our little adventure, I, being a WOMAN, not a man, eventually decided to stop at a gas station that, rather frighteningly for us, had all kinds of 'questionable' looking persons hanging about and had the boys 'phone home' and ask for better directions. Armed with 'new and improved' directions, we finally found the right house, and after a few "Woohoo! We found it!" exclamations, we said good-bye to our new young Markfriends at the delightful hour of 1:00 am. And hey, Rex and Tim, it was great meeting you guys, so if you happen to read this, email us to let us know how you're doing!!!

Well, after such a late

night, Saturday morning rolled around *much* too early. (And even earlier for poor Penny who unfortunately had to catch a very early a.m. flight home!) But by the time we got to the theater for the Make-A-Wish Foundation's "Meet-and-Greet" session with Mark, I was wide



awake and extremely jazzed-up at the prospect of getting to talk to him again. I was also to meet up with several more of our Markfan friends who would be arriving at the theater that morning. When we walked into the theater, the line for the Meet-and-Greet was already incredibly long -- it was wonderful to see how many of Mark's fans had showed up for this great opportunity to meet him! Despite the crowd, we found our friends Cathlene, Joan and Ilona) right away. I then moved out to the front of the theater to try to find Kathy, the last of our friends we were expecting to arrive, and also the only one of our little Milwaukee group whom I had not met before. Although I didn't end up finding Kathy at this time, my 'looking-for-Kathy' position out in front of the theater proved fortuitous. After just a few minutes, I glanced to the left and suddenly -- there was Mark *not 10 feet away from me* (gasp!) and greeting me with a warm, "Hi! How are you?" Unfortunately, being caught so off guard by this sud-

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Blast From the Past: Corvette Summer

director: Matthew Robbins
 screenplay: Hal Barwood & Matthew Robbins
 photographed by Frank Stanley
 Music and lyrics by Craig Safan
 starring: Mark Hamill, Annie Potts,
 Eugene Roche, William Bryant, Richard
 McKenzie, Kim Milford



‘The Hot One’ is a Corvette Stingray sports model Kenny Dantley (Mark Hamill) “rescues” from its terminal fate. Together with classmates, he owns and customizes the car in the garage of their high school. A car with a high performance engine and ‘something’ special – Kenny becomes obsessed with it. When he car is stolen, he will do anything to find and bring it back.

Working at a petrol station, he shows customers a picture of his beloved car. On being told it was seen in Las Vegas, he decides to hitchhike to Las Vegas. He meets up with a pretty but scatty girl called Vanessa (Annie Potts). She has a customized van; the interior is something like a bordello. She intends to get rich quick in the “world’s oldest profession”, but is still a

trainee hooker. Kenny isn’t comfortable with that, and he has absolutely no experience with women. He has to decide what’s more important– his car or his growing relationship with Vanessa.

They separate – Kenny goes to the hotel where the car had been seen – it is a red car but not his beloved Corvette. He gets work at a petrol station again –the chance to see his car are very high here. When he sees his car, he tries to follow it. Finding it at a car wash/body shop, he ends up in a pile of tires. The guy who owns the garage warns him, but Kenny doesn’t give up. Even painted yellow, he recognises the ‘Vette. Since they stole the car, he intends to steal it back. He ends up completely covered with oil and Vanessa has to clean him properly.



The garage owner Wayne Lowry (Kim Milford) contacts Kenny’s teacher, Mr Ed McGrath (Eugene Roche) to come to Las Vegas because Kenny is causing trouble. He’d gotten a postcard from Kenny, so he knows where his pupil is.

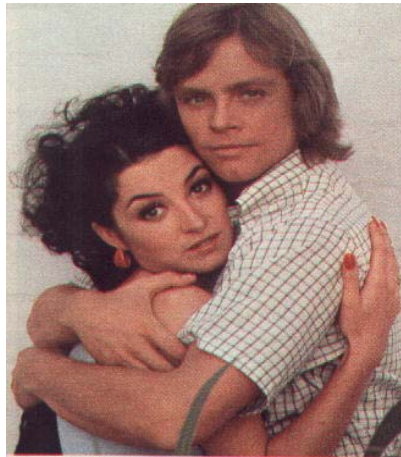


He goes to Las Vegas to meet Kenny, and explains everything to him. He has financial trouble- inflation– a teacher isn’t paid too well – he needs the money. Kenny is shocked to learn the teacher he admires is behind all this. McGrath suggests Kenny work for the Wayne, to use his skills and work in a field he loves. After some thinking, he agrees. The thought of stealing his car back is still deep in Kenny’s mind.

Vanessa is now working at a fast food drive thru; her dream to get rich quick didn’t come true. So their ways cross again and again. He looks different one morning when they meet – fine clothes and all. He explains, shows Vanessa his money and he books a hotel room for the two of them. After telling her his plans, she calls him crazy.

Mentioning he wants to keep working on a car, he stays late one night to spray his car its special color again. The next morning he leaves with his car. Now he has to find Vanessa – he still doesn’t like the thought of her working as a prostitute. He storms the hotel suite where she “works” and grabs her. It’s

not very easy for her to walk with flippers still on her feet. Kenny knows he has to leave Las Vegas as soon as possible 'cos his former "boss" will be after him to get the car back. A wild chase ensues – and in the end the winner is Kenny. He brings the car back to his high school where pupils clean it properly. He gets his diploma and leaves with Vanessa – he's in love with her.



"I insisted on looking different. And I'm only interested in the car, not even any girl, until Annie Potts came along. ... It's not a car movie. It's really a love story. And I'm so thrilled to be working with Annie Potts. She reminds me of Judy Holliday. She's a unique creature." (Mark Hamill)



Future Watch

Question:

What do the following incredibly talented, superstar voice actors have in common?

Frank Welker: 'The Simpsons', 'Scooby Doo', 'Mulan'

Tress MacNeille:

'Animaniacs', 'The Simpsons', 'Pinky and the Brain'

Jeff Bennett: 'Johnny Bravo', 'Earthworm Jim', 'Freakazoid'

Jim Cummings: voices Tigger and Winnie the Pooh, 'Earthworm Jim', 'Animaniacs'

Kevin M Richardson:

'Earthworm Jim', 'Family Guy', 'Spawn'

Answer:

Thursday, 2 March, Mark directed them in voice work for the computer game version of *'The Black Pearl'*.

Work is continuing on it, so look for Microsoft to release the game early next year.



'Walking Across Egypt' will be a Blockbuster Premiere Video release on 28 March! Good news for outside the US fans, as well: Keystone will be the foreign distributor. Try and make it a point to rent this video– this movie truly deserves to be seen by many! IMHO, too much celluloid, money and energy is wasted on films that shouldn't see the light of day, and not nearly enough on gems such as this.

And for the animation lovers here, good news on two projects! First, look for the video release of "Prince of Egypt Part 2" sometime this spring! Mark does the voice of Judah in this sequel. Second, more news concerning

'Castle In the Sky'. Disney dubbed this Miyazaki film back in 1998, and despite their continual denials, Mark did indeed do voice work on this project. His character is the villain, Muska. Originally, Disney was doing a direct to video release, but with the strong video sales of another movie they dubbed, 'Kiki's Delivery Service', they have re-considered. 'Castle' was entered in the International Children's Film Festival, held in NYC back in mid- February. They are now looking at a theatrical release first. If you are anxious to hear Muska, the 'Kiki' video has the 'Castle' trailer, with Muska in it.

Although it has been reported elsewhere as a possibility, work commitments will prohibit Mark from participating in the 'SW at WDW' in May. Remember, appearances will be listed on the website.

(Continued from page 3)

den appearance, I instantly went into the babbling mode that I had so dreaded might grip me the night before, and instead of replying "I'm fine, how are you?" I blurted out something about how the line in the theater was about a mile long, and he just said "Uh-huh" and smiled, and then walked on into the theater. (ACK!) Ah well... It's not *every day* that Mark Hamill unexpectedly appears right before my eyes, so I'm trying not to be too hard on myself for making such an inane reply to him.

After that, I, too, went into the theater again (with Sue and Marilou) to tell my friends (who were waiting in line) that I was having trouble finding Kathy, and asked them to keep a lookout for her. As I was 'yelling' out Kathy's description to them (above the heads of the crowd), a lady standing right next to me suddenly spoke up and said, "Are you Jeannie?!" and miraculously -- it was Kathy! This funny coincidence shouldn't have surprised me -- it was just one more wonderful thing that worked out so perfectly that weekend.

After visiting with Kathy and our other friends for a minute, I then moved over to the area of the theater where Mark



was meeting his admiring fans. As I stood there taking pictures and videotaping Mark interacting with everyone, I was struck by how nice and considerate he

was of each and every person -- finding out the person's name, saying a brief comment or two to them, and just generally making them feel 'welcome'. I especially loved watching Mark interact with all the children who were there. Sue and I overheard two of the boys who met Mark say to each other afterwards, "Look at my hands! They're shaking! My hands are shaking!" as they walked away. :-)

These boys' reactions were typical of almost everyone's feelings that morning. I think my favorite unforgettable memory of a fan's reaction that day was when a little girl -- not more than 3 years old -- got up to the front of the line, but then clung to her mother's legs for a second, afraid to actually go up and meet Mark ("...kind of like meeting Santa Claus..." as Mark commented later <G>). However, after just a second or two, the little girl apparently changed her mind in a BIG way, because she suddenly made a beeline straight to Mark and literally *leaped* into his arms! She clung there, her face buried in his chest and her chubby little toddler arms flung around his neck, while Mark laughed and patted her back and talked with her mother. It was such a sweet display of uninhibited affection -- I think it warmed the hearts of everyone who saw it. :-)

Another thing that impressed me about Mark that morning was how he stood there, patiently (and cheerfully!) having his picture taken with fans, *long* after the 'ending' time for the Meet-and-Greet was past. What was scheduled to be only an hour-

long charity appearance (preceding another showing of "Walking Across Egypt"), turned into something more like a three hour event, and yet Mark just kept smiling and posing with his fans, on and on and on, uncompaining and as nice as always. And, we found out from him later, he did this after having gotten up for 3 early-morning radio interviews, too! What a great guy! :-)

Following this 'marathon' Meet-and-Greet session, Mark did yet another 'Q and A' session with the audience after the morning's screening of "Walking Across Egypt." Once again, he was warm, witty and very funny as he answered the crowd's questions, and I think everyone who was in attendance really enjoyed it all.

After the final 'Q and A' session, our little group of Mark-fans then shared the dream of a lifetime -- we were invited to meet with Mark privately in a quiet area of the theater complex. We were able to visit with him (and



Marilou) for around 15 minutes! (And a thousand, thousand heartfelt "thank you's" to Mark, Marilou and Sue for being so generous and kind, and setting this up for us! xoxox) It was so much fun chatting with Mark, but I have to admit that I had the *hardest* time not bursting out with questions on almost every topic he brought up. ("You

know Peter Boyle? Wasn't he good friends with John Lennon?" etc. etc...), but I knew that we had a mere handful of minutes with him, and no one wanted to hear only my two cents worth, so I just bit my lip and enjoyed listening to him. When our time was up, (he was being gently-but-firmly 'encouraged' by the event organizer to get going to a local Blockbuster video store for his next Make-a-Wish appearance), he still took a few extra minutes to autograph some items for us. He wrote an especially sweet and thoughtful message to one of our friends who is very ill, and also posed for a couple of pictures.



We arrived at the Blockbuster to be greeted by the now-familiar and heartwarming sight of a HUGE line of people wrapped around the building, waiting to meet Mark. It's great seeing how many other Markfans there are out there! While Kathy and I got in line, Sue, Laura, and Cheryl went into the Blockbuster, where they finally met the 'elusive' Nathan and Griffin. After a while, Nathan ended up standing outside the store and talking with us for quite a long time, so he helped turn nearly-freezing-our-fingers-and-toes-off (it was only about 25-30 degrees outside!) into quite a pleasurable experience. :-) He's a really nice guy in his own right, and we sure enjoyed talking to him. (He also cheerfully put up with all of us get-

ting our picture taken with him, too.) When it was finally our turn to enter Blockbuster, Mark saw us and greeted us with a big laugh and an "Oh -- you guys again!" comment, and then posed for several pictures with us. I was still so cold, though, while we were taking the pictures that I couldn't help asking Mark, "If we pay an extra \$5.00 donation (to Make-a-Wish), would you blow on our fingers to warm them up?" which made him laugh. He then replied that he was "wondering where you were going with that question..." which made *us* laugh!

Well, after those final pictures with Mark, we talked for a few more minutes with Nathan and then said our good-byes to him. We went to dinner, and afterwards spent the rest of the night in our hotel room watching Markmovies (and there's a funny story there, too, but I won't delve into that now <G>) and wishing that the weekend wasn't coming to an end. I had a wonderful, *wonderful* time, and meeting Mark more than lived up to all of my (outrageously high <G>) hopes and expectations. He is as intelligent, nice, and hilarious as I always imagined he would be, and I was very impressed with the constant kindness and good humor he showed to everyone around him. He unhesitatingly gave of himself to thousands of people for hour after hour, all of them wanting to feel (even if only for just a few moments) that Mark knew 'who' they were, and that he cared that they were there. He is one really great guy!! I was also so impressed with Mark's family, too -- they're just as nice and friendly as Mark is, and it was a real pleasure to

meet them! I just wish I'd known then that Marilou is originally from the area where I currently live-it would have been fun to 'compare notes'!) I want to say a heartfelt *THANK YOU* to all of the wonderful Hamills, for helping our little group of Markfans to have such an unforgettable weekend!!

And finally, I need to add one more 'thank you' to Mark -- for something he's probably not the least bit aware of having done! Mark, you have (albeit unknowingly) brought into my life some of the most wonderful, funny, and beautiful friends a woman could ever hope to have! Through the numerous web sites devoted to you, I've been able to 'meet' all kinds of wonderful people (from all over the world!) who are your fans -- young and old, male and female, all sizes and shapes, and from many races and religions. Quite a few of these dear people I've actually been able to meet in 'real life' now, and I can honestly say they're some of my best friends. So once again -- *thank you Mark* -- for bringing us all together! You really are a great guy!

Editor notes:

The turn-out to 'Meet and Greet' Mark, was so great that the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Wisconsin was able to sponsor 2 children's wishes! Blockbuster Video donated \$500, as well. And Miss Wisconsin, a big SW and Markfan, was amazed at how big a crowd that gathered at the theatre.

And yes, we have heard from one of the young Markfan friends, Rex.

A Mark of Excellence is the



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The Last Word...

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:

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