

# Features

■ Ann Landers — Page 2  
■ County Fair schedule — Page 3  
■ Entertainment — Page 6

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Santa Cruz Sentinel

Section

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# BIOG. C. RETURN OF THE GAUCHO

...Living and  
Loving by His  
Own Code of  
Desires!

Handsome, debonair,  
the quintessential  
Rory Calhoun, below,  
in 'Dawn at Socorro'  
in 1954. . Next  
weekend, Calhoun  
returns to Santa Cruz,  
the town of his youth.



Calhoun with Marilyn Monroe in 'River of No Return.'

...OUTLAW OF  
THE PAMPAS!

UNTAMED



By WALLACE BAINE  
Sentinel staff writer

**Y**EARS AGO, when the president's name was Roosevelt and UC Santa Cruz was still Henry Cowell's ranch, a young forestry worker named Francis Durgin called his supervisors at the California Division of Forestry in Felton long-distance from Los Angeles and told them that he was quitting his job. He had landed a couple of jobs as a Hollywood extra and he figured he would make a stab at this acting business.

His boss, no doubt chuckling at Francis' capriciousness, said sarcastically: "We'll keep your pick-axe in the corner for you."

Francis Durgin never came back for his pick-axe. In Hollywood, he became Rory Calhoun. And, just as he had hoped, he enjoyed a long, successful career as a screen actor, appearing in more than 75 feature-length films and rubbing shoulders with the cinema legends of his time.

Next weekend, Rory Calhoun will come back to Santa Cruz, the town he's always considered home, for a special hometown



With Gene Tierney in 'Way of the Gaucho,' which will screen Saturday in Santa Cruz.

welcome-back celebration. The CDF will show up also, with a representative from Ben Lomond to meet the firefighter-turned-movie star. What will they present to their favorite son to mark the occasion of his 45-year career in movies? You guessed it. Rory gets a pick-axe.

Though born in Los Angeles, Calhoun, 69, grew up in Santa Cruz, living here from 1927-36 and again from 1939-44. In Hollywood, he was known most for his starring roles in grade-B westerns like "The Way of the Gaucho" and

"River of No Return." But his remarkably diverse career also included roles in comedies, dramas, adventures, romances and even horror movies.

"Primarily, I was known for westerns," said Calhoun by phone from his Los Angeles home. "My grandpa was a rancher in the Santa Clara and San Joaquin valleys and I learned to ride a horse when I was just a baby. So I've always been interested in the cowboy life and the saga of the west."

Calhoun's saga — Rory's story —



Cozying up to Betty Grable in 'How to Marry a Millionaire,' 1953. 20th Century Fox

begins in Santa Cruz, where he lived with his family at various sites: a home on Water Street as a young child, then Center Street and later to Peyton Street. He entered the first grade at Branciforte Elementary School and later attended Mission Hill School. When he and his mother moved back to Santa Cruz after a three-year hiatus in Los Angeles, he enrolled at Santa Cruz High. He did not, however, graduate from SCHS.

"In high school, they caught me stealing cars," said Calhoun. "I got

parole in Santa Cruz and they caught me again and sent me back to (reform school).

"Back then, they couldn't wait to get rid of me," he said with a raspy laugh, "and now they can't wait to welcome me back. But I was trouble back then. No one held a gun to my head and made me steal those cars."

As a young man, Calhoun worked bucking saws for the Santa Cruz Lumber Company in Boulder Creek and later for the CDF in Felton. If he had not made it in Hollywood, Rory believes he would

as the Lawless Argentine Pampas! HE ANSWERED ONLY TO HIS OWN DESIRES AND CODES!...and to the woman whose love he stole.

have been a forester his entire life.

"I probably would have stayed with the Division of Forestry ... or maybe gone to sea as a merchant marine."

**A**S IT happened, Rory Calhoun became a Hollywood star quite by accident. It is a story that would make any would-be actor working dinner theater in Pasadena in hopes of one day becoming a star sick with envy. For Calhoun, there was no sending out glossies and resumes to indifferent producers, no waiting in line at casting calls for years. By his own admission, his was a charmed life.

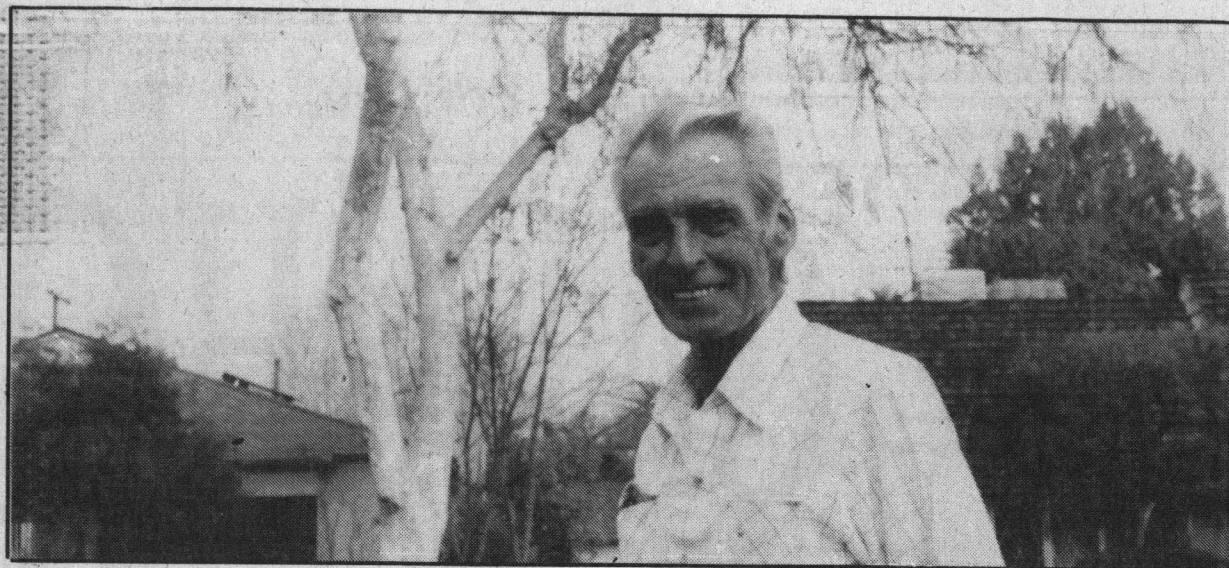
Let Rory tell the story:

"It was in early March of 1944 and there was lots of rain in the (Santa Cruz) mountains and we were not getting any work done. So I ask my boss, Les Gumm, for a week off to go to LA to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with my grandmother, who I loved very much. He said, 'Sure go ahead.'"

"When I got there, one day I decided to go see what the beach looked like. I took the street car —

Please see RORY — D2





Bruce Bratton

Rory Calhoun today at age 69, in the front yard of his home near Universal Studios in Studio City. Saturday, he'll star in a welcome-back ceremony in Santa Cruz.

## Rory returns to Santa Cruz

*Continued from Page D1*

we had street cars back then, not all these damn buses — I took the street car to Venice. On the way back, I took the car to downtown Los Angeles and the transfer stop was right in front of MGM studios. So I get off there and this fella comes up to me and grabs me and says they're doing a mob scene in the studio. He's got this voucher he wants me to sign to pay me \$37 to stand around in a mob.

"I'm in there about two hours and I come back out to wait for the street car. And (another one of the extras) comes up to me and says 'How long you been in show business? You ever done any acting?' The only acting I'd ever done was in front of the judge. So he says he knows the wife of Alan Ladd. He says he can get me an interview with the agency if I'll split half with him. Well, I said, 'Sure.' They gave me \$10,000. So I took home \$5,000 for an interview. At that point, I said to myself, 'Hey, I'm in the wrong business.'"

It was then he signed his first contract with 20th Century Fox.

**H**IS FIRST film was a small part in "The Bullfighters" a Laurel & Hardy picture. From there, he became one of the busiest actors in Hollywood, averaging two or three movies a year. His acting, in fact, became almost as dangerous as working in the woods for a living.

"I got a lot of broken bones over

the years. I broke five ribs, one arm, one leg and I broke my nose. It was mostly with horses and saloon fights. You got hurt a lot back then."

But with the hard knocks came the glamour. Calhoun had a remarkable string of luck with leading ladies. In his heyday, he was strikingly handsome with thick dark hair, distinctive eyebrows and heroic good looks. Naturally, he was paired off with some of Hollywood's most fetching actresses, including Betty Grable and Marilyn Monroe.

"I did three pictures with Marilyn," he said. "She was a great gal. Marilyn and I got along very well. I've read a lot of things about Marilyn these past few years. It was all a bunch of bull. She was always a nice person."

In one film, "How to Marry a Millionaire," Rory shared the stage with Grable, Monroe and Lauren Bacall — not bad for a kid from Santa Cruz who'd planned to spend his life fighting fires and digging post holes in the woods.

He knew all the big Hollywood stars, including a fellow B-movie actor who's known for another line of work.

"Oh yeah, I know Ronnie (Reagan) real well. Voted for him twice for governor and twice for president. But not any more. I'm an independent now."

He played many roles. In "The Way of the Gauchito" — which will be shown at the Nickelodeon in

Santa Cruz Saturday as a part of the Rory Calhoun welcome-home celebration — Calhoun played the dashing idealistic hero, pursued by the army as an outlaw for defending the gauchito way of life in 19th century Argentina. In other films, Rory was the heavy. As the years passed, he became a character actor, playing in movies, TV specials, prime-time shows, mini-series and even as a regular on a soap opera called "Capitol" from 1982-87.

Nowadays, Calhoun is retired from acting, though still in touch with the Hollywood scene. The Hollywood of today, he says, is not much different from when the studios were kings.

"The basics have not changed. You still do business now just like you did business then. But the attitudes have changed a lot. And the salaries today are supernatural. (Humphrey) Bogart, at the height of his career, made about \$450,000 a year. Today, these guys are signing for two or three million dollars a picture."

Today, Rory Calhoun is also enjoying a new surge of popularity. He gets a lot of fan mail coming from what used to be the Iron Curtain countries of Eastern Europe — particularly eastern Germany — where old movies are still the rage.

"I've been a lucky man," said the erstwhile Francis Durgin. "I've never regretted a moment of my career."

# Welcome home, Rory

## Movie star's imprints will be taken in cement

By WALLACE BAINE  
Sentinel staff writer

**F**ILM STAR Rory Calhoun's return to Santa Cruz County will feature a two-day celebration of his career and his days growing up in Santa Cruz. Calhoun and his wife Sue will arrive on Saturday.

The whirlwind tour will take the Calhouns to the Nickelodeon movie house in Santa Cruz and to the Jade Community Center in Capitola.

Saturday's events will be sponsored by the Downtown Association of Santa Cruz; Sunday's by the Monterey Bay Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

The agenda is as follows:

**Saturday, Sept. 21:**

**7:40 p.m.:** Classic '50s cars will pull up to the Nickelodeon carrying a number of local VIPs including Santa Cruz Mayor Jane Yokoyama, county Supervisor Gary Patton, state Senator Henry Mello and Assemblyman Sam Farr. The Calhouns arrive

at 7:45 p.m. Rory will be introduced to the crowd and will sign his name and put his hand and footprints in wet cement in a specially prepared block in front of the theater.

**8 p.m.:** "The Way of a Gauchito," a story of an outlaw on the Argentine pampas starring Calhoun and Gene Tierney, will be screened at the Nickelodeon after a brief talk by Calhoun about the film.

**Sunday, Sept. 22:**

**1 p.m.:** "An Afternoon with Rory Calhoun" party begins at the Jade Street Community Center in Capitola. Silent auction of Rory Calhoun memorabilia.

**2:30 p.m.:** Rory and Sue arrive and are presented to the crowd. Senator Mello, Assemblyman Farr and Capitola mayor Stephanie Harlan will make presentations. Rory will speak to the crowd and answer questions.

**3:45 p.m.:** Rory will sign photos and posters before leaving at 4 p.m.

"We'd really like to see anyone who knew Rory during his time in Santa Cruz to come and see him," said Bruce Bratton, the host of the festivities.

## Rory at the movies and on TV

**R**ORY CALHOUN appeared in more than 75 movies over his long Hollywood career. Among the notables are:

That Hagen Girl (1945)  
Ticket to Tomahawk (1950)  
Rogue River (1950)  
With a Song in My Heart (1951)  
The Way of a Gauchito (1952)  
Powder River (1953)  
How to Marry a Millionaire (1953)  
River of No Return (1954)  
Dawn at Socorro (1954)  
Ain't Misbehavin' (1955)  
The Treasure of Pancho Villa (1955)  
The Domino Kid (1957)  
Apache Territory (1958)  
The Colossus of Rhodes (1960)  
Adventures of Marco Polo (1961)  
Young Fury (1964)  
Finger on the Trigger (1965)  
Our Man in Baghdad (1965)  
Lady of the Nile (1966)  
Operation Cross Eagles (1972)  
Won Ton Ton: The Dog That Saved Hollywood

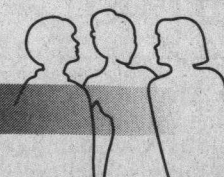
(1974)  
Mule Feathers (1975)  
Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep (1977)  
Motel Hell (1981)  
Angel (1983)  
Hell Comes to Frogtown (1987)  
Bad Jim (1989)

### TELEVISION

Death Valley Days  
The Blue and the Grey  
The Rebels  
Capitol  
Alfred Hitchcock Theatre  
Bonanza  
Fantasy Island  
Hawaii Five-O  
Gilligan's Island  
The Virginian  
Gunsmoke  
Police Story  
Alias Smith & Jones

MOBILE QUICKSCREEN

A HEALTH SERVICE FOR WOMEN



Accredited by the  
American College  
of Radiology

BASIC MAMMOGRAPHY SCREENING





UC Santa Cruz film archives

As a kid, Rory Calhoun would sell enough milk bottles to pay his way into Santa Cruz's Unique Theater and spend the afternoon watching Tom Mix movies.