

# Now playing in Santa Cruz: Hollywood memories

SENTINEL *Authors 2000 \$24.00*

Santa Cruz has gone Hollywood with the re-opening of our own movie palace, the Del Mar Theatre.

The town's movie history has also been recorded in a book of photos and memories, "Now Playing in Santa Cruz," put together by Santa Cruz's own Daisy Gandolfi.

A loving tribute to the Del Mar and the Santa Cruz that once was, the book is filled with photos, collages and memories from the people who worked the theater as teenagers or went there on Saturday afternoons when they were growing up.



But "Now Playing in Santa Cruz" is also a treasure chest of gems about the links between Hollywood and our own little town.



Plenty of people know that the great suspense director Alfred Hitchcock lived on a 200-acre ranch in Scotts Valley during the 1940s, and that movie actress ZaSu Pitts grew up in a house next door to what is now the Nickelodeon Theatre.

But the book also reveals that:

■ Cowboy star Rory Calhoun lived in Santa Cruz as a boy in the 1920s and '30s when his mother worked as a waitress at Roudell's Coffee Shop on Pacific.



**STARS SHINE:** Look for these stars of yesteryear in Daisy Gandolfi's book: ZaSu Pitts, top; Walter Reed, middle; and Rory Calhoun, bottom.

According to Gandolfi's book, Rory liked Santa Cruz because: "You can steal milk bottles off of somebody's porch, turn them into the creamery for a nickel apiece, buy some candy and then go to the Unique Theatre and watch Westerns."

A few years later, Calhoun no longer had to steal milk bottles to get into the movies. Instead, he starred in Westerns like "River of No Return" and "Powder River" that were shown at the Unique.

■ When flamboyant movie star Paulette Goddard was in Santa Cruz filming "Forest Rangers" with Fred MacMurray, she showed up to see a film at the Del Mar one night because there was nothing else to do in town back then (if only she could see it now).



Johnny 'Tarzan' Weissmuller takes a swim in the San Lorenzo River.

Contributed photo

## Book

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According to Marilyn York, who worked as an usherette that night, "She was wearing a fur coat pulled up over her head trying not to be noticed."

"When I took her to her seat, her coat opened and I could see her fur coat and heels were all she was wearing."

■ A teen-age runaway named Frances Ridste stopped in Santa Cruz for a short time in 1935, working as an usherette at the Del Mar.

Moving up to San Francisco as a nightclub dancer, Ridste was discovered, her name changed and she became the short-lived star, Carole Landis.

■ Johnny Weissmuller, everyone's favorite movie Tarzan, spent summers in Santa Cruz with his family.

Locals could stroll along the banks and see Tarzan swimming in the San Lorenzo River, or doing one of his swan dives at the old Plunge pool.

■ Santa Cruz has had its share of Tinseltown actors who moved north to find a home away from Holly-

wood:

Character actor Walter Reed, who died in Santa Cruz last year, made more than 150 movies and 400 TV shows.

Comedian-turned-actor John Hoyt, worked with Orson Welles at the Mercury Theatre and later played in "Blackboard Jungle" and "Spartacus."

Actor John Beal ("The Sound and the Fury," "Les Miserables") also directed, painted, wrote — and fathered Santa Cruz's own multi-talented performer Tandy Beal.

■ Then there are the Santa Cruz kids who found fame in Hollywood, no matter how brief, including:

Valor Baum, who graduated from Santa Cruz High in 1959, moved to Hollywood, changed her name to Valor Norton and appeared in "The War Wagon" with John Wayne and Kirk Douglas.

Barbara Riegelhuth, who worked as an usherette at the Del Mar, was chosen to appear in a Lassie movie, "The Sun Comes Up," when she was 11.

To order a copy of Daisy Gandolfi's book, "Now Playing in Santa Cruz," call her at 469-7113 or e-mail her at: [alanddaisy@earthlink.net](mailto:alanddaisy@earthlink.net).