

Aggie history buff gets to try his hand at acting

By Dawn Butz
Staff Writer

Most people have at one time or another dreamt of becoming a movie star.

For Robert Reed, a member of the Texas A&M Living Historians, that dream came true for four days in April.

Well, maybe not quite a star — Reed worked as an extra in the television mini-series, "North and South, Book II," which is running this week on CBS.

Reed said Warner Brothers sent a newsletter to living historian groups throughout the United States calling for re-enactors for the movie.

"This is the first movie where Warner Brothers relied more on the re-enactors rather than the movie stars," Reed said.

The living historians group is made up of people throughout the nation who have a common interest in the Civil War.

The groups re-enact the battles of the Civil War. Reed said each member owns replicas of the uniforms and equipment the soldiers wore.

"They called for re-enactors so they wouldn't have to worry about teaching people how to do it," he said. "We were told we'd get paid 60 a day and just to bring the uniform and everything that was correct."

Reed was the only member from the A&M group who was able to

make the trip to the filming site just north of Natchez, Miss.

"I skipped school and went out there for a weekend and a couple extra days for the filming of the show," he said. "I just walked onto the set. It surprised them that I had just walked on the set after coming all the way from Texas."

"I strategically went at the very end of the four weeks of filming. Everybody runs there right away at the beginning. What can you do with 2,000 people? Mainly just shots that are far away."

"As time goes on, the numbers start dwindling, people have to go back to work, they've taken all the leave they can."

"I went so that I could do the close-ups."

Reed said all of the filming was done on one field, but the field was disguised differently for each battle.

For the sake of authenticity, some of the soldiers at night slept in replica tents while others slept under the stars. They also ate army-issue food similar to that served during the Civil War era.

"We had 'hardback,'" he said. "That's just flour and water mixed in a bowl, made into a paste and baked just like cookies."

Reed said they also ate "pigback," the backside of a pig. He said this consists of two inches of fat with a small amount of meat on the bottom.

The soldiers were filmed while eating and each morning as they

were awoken by a bugle call, he said.

"We'd come out of our tents and the cameras were on us," he said.

Reed said the filming went from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m., at which time everyone gathered at the campsite, singing songs from the era while some played banjos.

Reed said he made a lot of friends during the filming.

"Everybody knew me because they were surprised that someone would just pop up out of nowhere like that," he said. "They called me 'Texas' the whole time."

For the battle scenes, Reed, who played a Confederate soldier, said he was matched with a Federal soldier so he knew who he was supposed to fight.

"They'd put us behind the walls and we'd pick a Yankee on the opposite side so we'd know what we were going to do," he said. "It's like, 'I'm going to kill you and you're going to fall this way and that' — to save people from getting hurt."

Reed said there were a lot of accidents at the film site.

He said a 12-year-old boy shot himself in the eye, and a gun went off when a man was cleaning it, shooting the ramrod through his finger.

No bullets were used, just gunpowder, but many people were stabbed with bayonets and run over by horses, he said.

Reed said ambulances were always on the scene.



Patrick Swayze, left, and Robert Reed on the set of "North and South, Book II."

"In one shot that'll be in the Battle of Antietam, they gave me a rubber stage knife and put a Yankee in front of me with a couple of guys shooting on the side of us," he said. "I wrestle him to the ground and stab him."

"I was worried because they do a lot of clipping, but when I was watching last night (Monday) a guy looked right at the camera and they didn't cut it, so I don't think they'll do anything because the shots were pretty good."

Reed said the stars of the movie stayed on location. He said most of them were "regular human beings and really nice."

But the biomedical science major from Houston said he doesn't want to be a movie star.

Two friends of slain woman missing; search continues

HAWKINS (AP) — Police questioned an Ore City man Wednesday in the slaying of an 18-year-old Hawkins woman as the search continued for two of her companions who disappeared during a weekend lake outing, authorities said.

Investigators from Wood and Upshur counties feared Hawkins residents Bryan Boone and Gina Turner, both 20, were abducted along with Suzanne Harrison.

The 38-year-old suspect, twice convicted of sexual offenses, was charged with two counts of attempted aggravated robbery. Wood County Sheriff Frank White said he was being ques-

tioned about the slaying and disappearances.

A Wood County clerk said the alleged robbery attempts, though they happened at Lake Hawkins, were unrelated to the slaying and disappearances.

Wood County sheriff's dispatcher Joanne Monk said the search for the missing man and woman had been unsuccessful, despite the use of tracking dogs, scuba divers and searchers on horseback.

Harrison, who disappeared along with Turner and Boone at Lake Hawkins Sunday night, was found beaten and strangled Monday.

Southland magazine policy receives support

DALLAS (AP) — The decision to stop selling adult magazines in 7-Eleven convenience stores has prompted 15,000 telephone calls and letters, most in support of the move, an official with the chain's parent company, Southland Corp., said Wednesday.

Allen Liles, vice president for public relations, said 92 percent of the letters and phone calls have been supportive, "which we've been very happy with."

He also said it was a new customer survey showing declining support for the sale of Playboy, Penthouse and Forum that contributed to Southland's decision to stop selling the magazines.

Liles said Southland never reveals the results of its scientific customer surveys, but the decline in support

of 7-Elevens carrying the magazines was "substantial."

In an interview last August, Southland Chairman John Thompson had said customer surveys then showed that 7-Eleven's customers favored the convenience store's sale of the magazines.

In announcing its policy reversal April 10, Southland also had pointed to testimony in hearings conducted by the U.S. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

Liles said Southland had its own representatives at those hearings and had concluded that "there is a growing public concern about a possible link between pornography and child abuse."

His comments were made in an

interview after Southland's annual meeting on Wednesday.

Thompson didn't mention the decision on the magazine sales in his remarks to shareholders.

But one of the shareholders, Louis Benno of Dallas, brought up the issue.

"I want to thank the officers for their stand on pornography," he said. "It must be working because Playboy closed three of their Bunny clubs."

He called for applause, and there was sparse hand-clapping. Thompson merely thanked him for his comments.

Thompson also announced at the meeting that while he will remain as

chairman, he will step aside as chief executive officer to give the job to his younger brother, Jere Thompson, president.

"We think this will promote a smoother transition as I approach the age of 65," said the 60-year-old executive. "I will remain as chairman of the board. I am not retiring."

In addition, shareholders re-elected directors of the company, including Clark J. Matthews II, the executive vice president and chief financial officer whose conviction on securities violations was reversed in March.

While his conviction by a federal jury in Brooklyn, N.Y., was on appeal, Matthews continued to serve as an officer of the company.

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