

# Battalion Classifieds

# Cronauer, actor share few real-life similarities

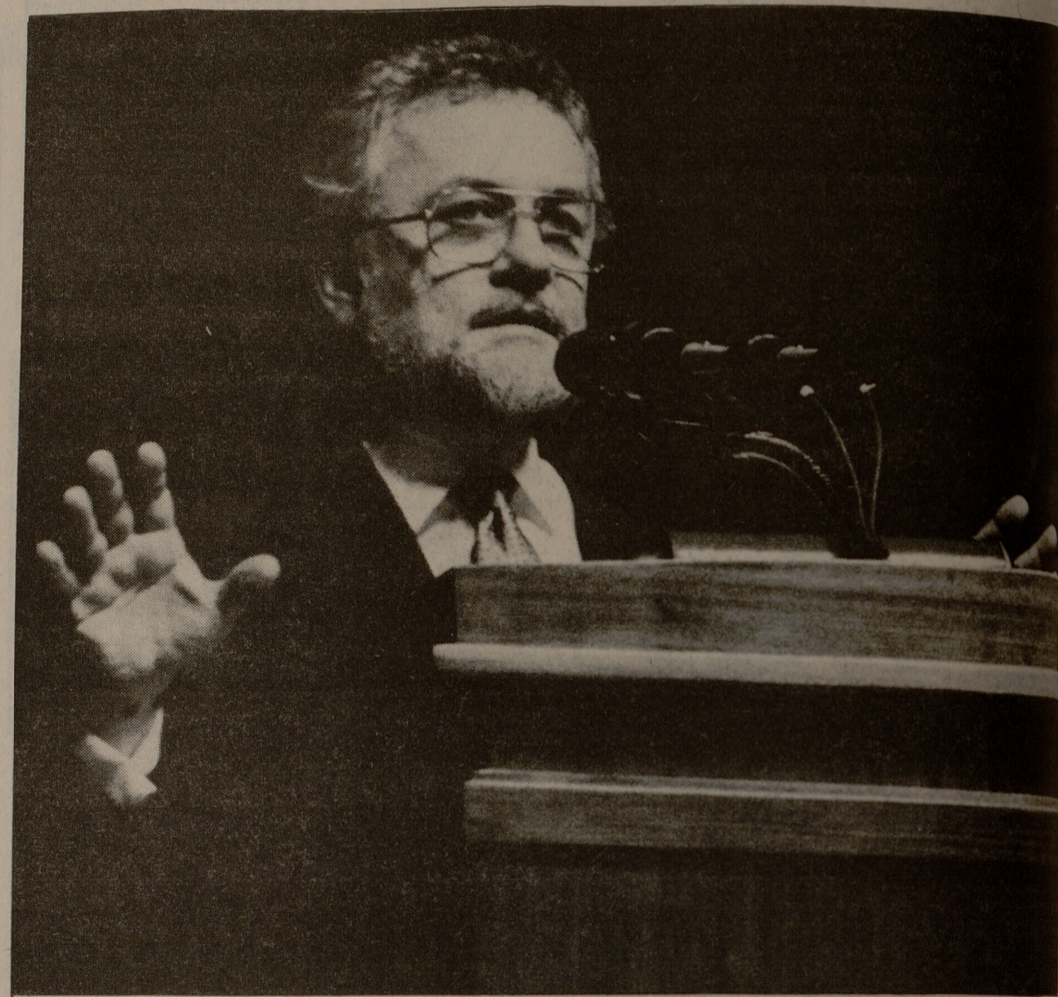


Photo by Kathy Haver

Adrian Cronauer

By Kelly S. Brown  
Staff Writer

The Adrian Cronauer in the movie "Good Morning Vietnam" and the real-life Cronauer are different entities. Both were disc jockeys in Saigon during the Vietnam War and both brought laughter to the troops by breathing comic relief into the tragedy of war. But, Cronauer said, that's where the similarities ended.

"The movie has a fictional character named Adrian Cronauer, and it so happens that we both have shared some of the same experiences — 45 percent of the movie is factual, while the rest is Hollywood exaggeration and imagination," Cronauer said Sunday in a program brought to A&M by MCS Great Issues.

The story idea was based on the time Cronauer spent during his one-year tour of duty with the Air Force. But most of the antics and spontaneity in the movie were added by comedian Robin Williams, who portrayed Cronauer, he said.

"Williams brought his own personality into the film — he is an ad-lib genius," Cronauer said.

"When people come to hear me speak, they expect to see the schitzo guy from the movie, but I have to tell them the movie was never intended to be a biography about my life," he said.

"The first thing I have to distinguish for my listeners is what is real and what is not in the movie."

Cronauer went to Vietnam after serving on the Greek isle of Crete. At that time the United States was serving in an advisory capacity, so he thought it would be safe.

"All the characters in the movie are fictional stereotypes — I didn't fall in love with a Vietnamese woman, and I didn't take her family to see a movie called 'Beach Blanket Bingo,'" Cronauer said.

He was given an honorable discharge after serving four years in the Air Force — the final 11 months were spent in Saigon.

Cronauer said he did teach English to the Vietnamese, but not with the vivid language that Williams used in the movie.

Williams borrowed the salutation — good morning Vietnam — from Cronauer's show. It became a signature for Air Force radio long after Cronauer introduced it.

It originally began when Cronauer was in Crete. He would start the mornings with "Gooooood Mooooorning Heraklion" (which was the Air Force base where he was stationed). He continued its use when he went to Vietnam and soon it was his trademark.

"I'd say, 'I'm Adrian Cronauer,' and a soldier would say, 'Who?' Then I would say 'gooooood morning Vietnam' and they'd ask me to play a record," Cronauer said.

Cronauer said he wanted the station to be like a station in the states — he wanted to bring a part of America to the soldiers.

"I had to consider who my listeners were," he said. "They were guys out in the miserable heat — shooting, fighting and being killed. Did they want to hear me say 'good morning Vietnam,' everyday? I came to the conclusion they did."

Sometimes, Cronauer said, they would tell him they loved it, but he knew of one G.I. who blew away his radio with his M1 after hearing the greeting.

Cronauer's stories had the crowd of approximately 400 people laughing, but when he turned to his serious side, the smiles would fade and everyone's attention focused solely on his words.

nam to remind you of how dangerous a situation was," Cronauer said.

"I adapted a fatalistic attitude — if I was hit or killed, that was my fate. Nothing I can do about it. If I did have my name on it — I am Adrian Cronauer. I said every one came from Vietnam with scars — some visible and some invisible."

"But too many of the scars came from the soldiers arriving home to a country who shunned them, and that was wrong," he said.

Many of the veterans Cronauer talked to said they like the movie because it shows another side of the other than just combat.

Cronauer said his happiest experience in Vietnam was when he left.

Returning to the states, he worked station manager for radio and television stations, and created his own advertising agency. In the late 1970's he co-wrote a sitcom about Vietnam — and that story idea that eventually found its way to the big screen, and became "Good Morning Vietnam."

Before ever entering the Air Force, specializing in radio and television, being transferred overseas, Cronauer was in school — 11 credit hours of graduating with an undergraduate degree in communications when someone at the registrar's office contacted the board and told of his part-time status. Shortly after that he was told he had to enlist within 30 days or be drafted. He enlisted.

He eventually returned to finish undergraduate work, get his master's degree and is now working toward a degree.

Cronauer said he has yet to figure out why anyone would want his autograph. "I was asked to sign autographs at a video store when a 13 year old girl came to me and said her neighbor was in the nam when I was," Cronauer said.

He said he never talks about it. He would like to give his message — he would like to tell you thanks... And that's all. It's moments like that that make all worth it."

Nichols captured a few examples of this on film. In addition to scenes of everyday life, less frequent Swiss happenings and customs were also explored. Nichols took viewers to the Alps, the city of Interlaken to see the dramatic "William Tell," a play similar in spirit to the "Passion Plays," which tell the story of Christ. The play tells the legendary story of Tell, whose wrongful conviction and cruel punishment (to shoot an apple off his son's head) led the Swiss people to rise in revolt against the Austrian government to gain their independence. Also covered in the film were an accordion festival in the city of Zug and a yodeling festival and competition in Langnau. Sites such as the infamous Matterhorn and the Rhine Falls at Schaffhausen dominated the screen. The purpose of the travelogue is to allow people to visit a different country by film. The only problem is that after seeing a beautiful film like "Surprising Switzerland," it makes you want to go there even more.

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# 'Suprising Switzerland' explores Swiss country

By Chuck Lovejoy  
Entertainment Writer

About 50 people visited Switzerland Sunday afternoon at the College Station Hilton at the showing of "Surprising Switzerland," a film exploring the country.

Frank Nichols, creator of the travelogue, attended and personally narrated the film.

Presented by the Texas Arts Exchange, the film was part of an ongoing series of travelogues making up their "Bringing the World to Texas" program, which travels to 12 Texas cities.

morous anecdotes out of portions of the film, which contained only a background score and no dialogue.

The picture itself was beautifully photographed. Nichols took filmmaking courses at the University of Colorado, and his talent was clear in the film's high quality.

The film was also a well-rounded portrayal of the country. Often, documentaries show only the scenery of a country. This film contained shots of famous sites, and also managed to allow viewers to glimpse into the lives of the Swiss people.

For example, the film showed Swiss army reserve training outside the city of Lugano. All Swiss males must actively serve four months in the army once they reach the age of 20. After that, they are members of the Swiss reserve army until they reach the age of 50.

brokers is the same. Nichols captured a few examples of this on film.

In addition to scenes of everyday life, less frequent Swiss happenings and customs were also explored. Nichols took viewers to the Alps, the city of Interlaken to see the dramatic "William Tell," a play similar in spirit to the "Passion Plays," which tell the story of Christ.

The play tells the legendary story of Tell, whose wrongful conviction and cruel punishment (to shoot an apple off his son's head) led the Swiss people to rise in revolt against the Austrian government to gain their independence.

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