

Wall of water



Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

Texas A&M Waterski Club member Darrell Ruby leaves a sheet of spray in his wake as he slaloms around a buoy during

the 15th Annual Polar Bear Waterski Tournament at Century Lake Saturday. The A&M women's team placed third overall.

Major studios shunned Oscar favorites

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The movies "Born on the Fourth of July" and "Driving Miss Daisy," both shunned by the major Hollywood studios, are the favorites to win Oscars when the film industry honors its own Monday night.

The 62nd Academy Awards extravaganza at the Los Angeles Music Center will begin on ABC at 8 p.m. with Billy Crystal as master of ceremonies.

"It was turned down by all the major companies," reports Richard Zanuck, who produced the film with his wife, Lili.

"Then we went to some of the minor players among the companies. No one thought it was commercial. The consensus was that it would be a nice movie with good reviews, but it couldn't attract a wide audience.

"They also felt that it needed a stronger cast. By that time we had locked in Jessica Tandy and Morgan Freeman on a pay-or-play basis (meaning they would have to be paid whether they appeared or not).

"Every agent turned it down, every studio turned it down."

Schulman stuck to his story about an English teacher who inspires his students to creative thinking with bursts of poetry.

He finally interested producer Steven Haft who took the project to Disney's Touchstone Pictures, where the script previously had been rejected.

"Dead Poets Society" ended up with a \$94-million gross in the United States and Canada.

Director-writer Phil Alden Robinson devoted six years to bringing "Field of Dreams" to the screen. He

Charles took it to Tom Pollock at Universal, who said yes even before a star had been signed.

Costner learned about the script and accepted immediately after reading it. The "Field of Dreams" domestic take—\$63 million.

"Born on the Fourth of July" holds the record among this year's best-picture nominees for length of time in reaching the screen.

Oliver Stone and Ron Kovic wrote the script, which is based on Kovic's Vietnam experiences, in 1977-78. In 1979, Stone was on the brink of directing the film with Al Pacino as star.

"Ten years later, Tom Cruise took an interest in it, 'Platoon' was a success, and Universal Pictures, which had originally killed the picture, came back and financed it."

Producer Noel Pearson didn't even canvass the major studios for backing of "My Left Foot," realizing that a film about a cerebral palsy victim would attract a chilly reaction.

Slowly he accumulated enough for the budget—"under \$3 million," he says.

The same pattern of rejection of Academy Award nominees by the big studios has occurred increasingly in recent years. Why?

"I think it's the cost factor," theorizes Richard Zanuck.

"Even with smaller pictures, the cost of advertising and prints can amount to a major investment. The studios naturally avoid projects that they consider 'dangerous' or not in the mainstream.

"But 'Driving Miss Daisy' and the other nominees have proven that audiences are hungry for material that is not devoted to rapes, car crashes, murder and blood."

The contenders for the acting prize include 80-year-old Jessica Tandy and Marlon Brando, 65, who both achieved fame 40 years ago when they co-starred on Broadway in "A Streetcar Named Desire."

Miss Tandy, the cranky dowager in "Driving Miss Daisy," is deemed the favorite in a difficult-to-predict race for best actress.

Michelle Pfeiffer, the sexy singer of "The Fabulous Baker Boys," is also highly touted.

Leading the race for best actor are Tom Cruise, the disabled veteran of "Born on the Fourth of July," and Daniel Day-Lewis, the cerebral palsy victim of "My Left Foot."

Brando was nominated for best supporting actor for his role as the liberal South African lawyer in "A Dry White Season."

Among the stars who will present the awards are Warren Beatty, Jessica Lange, Jack Lemmon (from Moscow), Jack Nicholson, Steve Martin, Rachel Ward and Bryan Brown (from Sydney), and last year's acting winners Jodie Foster, Geena Davis and Kevin Kline.

All five nominees for best picture of 1989 were movies that all of the major Hollywood studios spurned as being too special to attract a wide audience. For instance, "Driving Miss

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— Richard Zanuck producer, "Driving Miss Daisy"

"They wanted a younger actress, like Meryl Streep, Shirley MacLaine or Jane Fonda, who could be aged. But for a character that started the film in her 70s and ended in her 90s, that seemed impractical."

The Zanucks solved the problem by trimming the budget for the film from \$12.5 million to \$7.5 million and cutting 20 days from the production schedule.

"It took two years before I could find anybody to consider 'Dead Poets Society,'" says Tom Schulman, who wrote the original screenplay.

first read W.P. Kinsella's baseball fantasy "Shoeless Joe" in 1982 and tried to interest the studios.

"I was turned down at every studio," Robinson says.

Finally, in 1985 Robinson found a taker. Lawrence Gordon, then head of production at 20th Century Fox.

The script was developed at Fox, but then Gordon left for independent producing and "Field of Dreams" went into "turnaround," meaning it could be peddled to other studios.

Gordon and his producer-brother

Rodeo

(Continued from page 4)

The motivation behind the idea of drawing more publicity towards college-level rodeo eventually may benefit Bryan-College Station.

Altizer says that Bad Company is trying to attract the attention not only of college rodeo fans, but of the Collegiate Rodeo Association as well.

"Bad Company Rodeo is trying to help us bring the National Collegiate Rodeo Finals here to Bryan-College Station," Texas A&M Rodeo Committee Chairman Blane Chapman said. "If we can host the finals here it would be a great economic boost for both cities."

The finals currently are held in Bozeman, Mont., and bids for hosting this major event will be accepted early in 1992.

Bad Company's rodeo announcer Boyd Polhamus says Bryan-College Station has a lot to offer as far as restaurants, hotels and a spirited college atmosphere.

"The location of this area within the state of Texas is just ideal," Polhamus said. "Not to mention its surroundings."

Also helping out in the "new look" of rodeo is Gretchen Polhemus, who was Miss USA 1989.

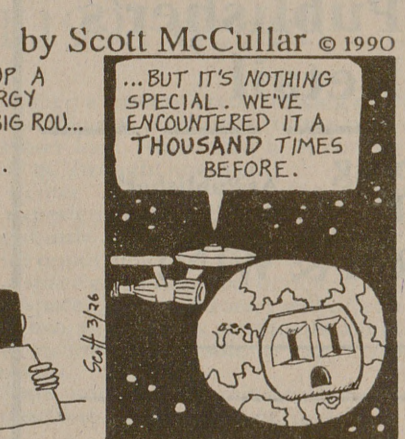
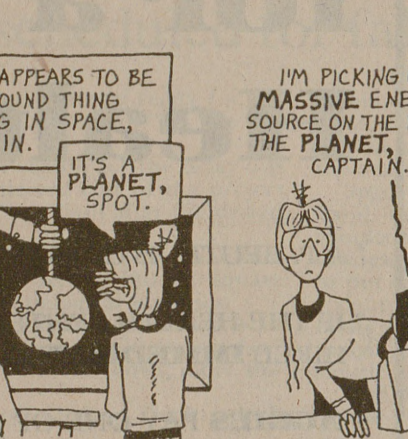
Bad Company asked Polhemus to help promote the rodeo. She signed autographs and talked to people in the stands.

Polhemus says a rodeo cowboy is just as much an athlete as any other football, basketball or baseball player.

"A lot of people think cowboys are a bunch of hicks or red-necks who stumbled out of the back woods," Polhemus said.

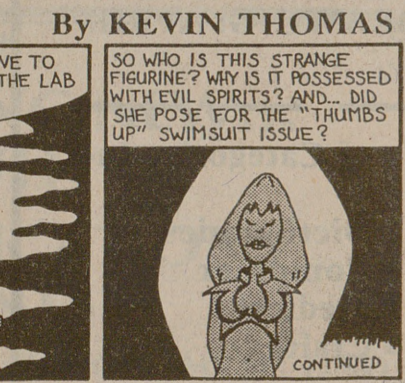
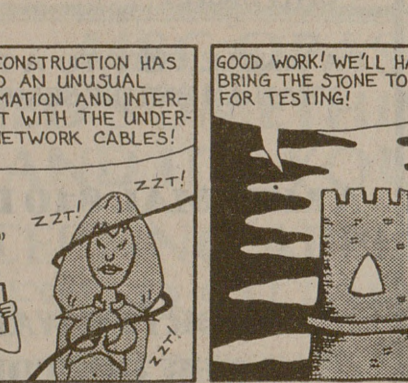
"The truth is, both the cowboy and the animals in rodeo are athletes that share pain, frustration and pride just as much as the next player."

WARD



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