

Aggie life

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COURAGE UNDER FIRE

The Corps of Cadets traveled to Austin for a week to participate as extras

By Kristina Buffin
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Corps of Cadets had a second opportunity to be showcased in a major motion picture when the casting director of *Courage Under Fire* was looking for a few good men to serve as extras.

Col. Donald Johnson, interim commandant of the Corps, said the casting director wanted about 150-200 cadets a day for six or seven days during the Spring of 1995.

"We decided that if the cadets wanted to do it it would be okay," Johnson said. "We also checked the story line because we didn't want them to be involved in a movie we wouldn't be proud of."

The production company paid for the cadet's transportation from College Station to Austin and gave cadets \$75 a day for their participation.

Francisco Armada, a junior English major and member of K-2, said the cadets participated in a lot of the background shots and met some of the stars of the movie.

"I got to talk to Lou Diamond Phillips and he was really down to earth," Armada said. "We kind of joked about his role in *Stand and Deliver*."

However, Armada's impression of Academy Award-winner Denzel Washington was completely the opposite.

"When I talked to Denzel he was kind of an asshole," Armada said. "But I didn't really get a chance to talk to Meg Ryan one-on-one."

The cadets left at 4 a.m. every morning and did not return until 8 p.m. each night. They worked for approximately 13 hours a day.

Johnson said it was harder to find willing cadets as the week wore on.

"It didn't take long for them to realize that this was not going to be a piece of cake," Johnson said. "But I think they enjoyed it and they got paid. Overall it was a positive experience."

On the first day, Armada said, the cadets had to patrol the field, which meant walking



Karen Walden (Meg Ryan) celebrates her completion of military schooling in *Courage Under Fire*.

back and forth for a long period of time. "On the second day we went to an obstacle course with barbed wire and mortars going off," Armada said. "But on Thursday we

students we can say our cadets were in it. Both were excellent movies, and it was a thrill for our cadets."

The release of *Courage Under Fire* caused anger and disappointment to ignite amongst the cadets. Unlike in *A Few Good Men*, *Courage Under Fire* never credited the Corps for their participation.

"In *A Few Good Men* the Fish Drill Team was featured and in *Courage Under Fire* they were not really recognizable," Josh Marcus, a junior biomedical science major and member of A-1, said. "So it was different but they could not have filmed the movie without a large group of guys."

Marcus said the Corps was an integral part of the movie and the cadets spent a lot of time working on the movie so one credit mention would have been nice.

He said leaving them out of the credits was inconsiderate of the filmmakers.

"We did help out and we were paid," Marcus said. "They just had to do one line for a credit."

"All major movies thank places where they shot the movie. A lot of people feel they could have just added one line of thanks easily."

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— COL. DONALD JOHNSON
interim commandant

got to get into flight gear and go out to the airfield and mess around.

"It was fun depending on the day. The mornings were cold but the afternoons were hot. We got to get into full camouflage gear and use fake M-16s."

Johnson said the Corps' participation in *Courage Under Fire* and *A Few Good Men* will allow cadets to show prospective students that they may have similar opportunities.

"I don't know if A&M will get direct credit," Johnson said. "But when we talk to stu-

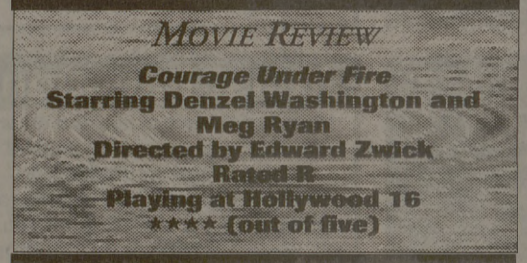
Washington and Ryan give Oscar performances

By Jeffrey Cranor
THE BATTALION

be exposed.

By coming to terms with

what one knows as real, one can move forward in life. Montfriez cannot face the events, errors or victims of the night of the rescue attempt. Phillips gives an Oscar-caliber portrayal of Montfriez's struggle.



Denzel Washington's latest movie, *Courage Under Fire*, proves Hollywood formulas can result in a well-made film.

Courage Under Fire has action, a love story, over-simplification of the military, an internal battle within the hero, and a corny-but-touching ending. Through all of this, the producers have borne a great film marking the beginning of Oscar season. To the Army, Lt. Col. Nathaniel Serling (Washington) far from emulates a Gulf War hero.

In the heat of a midnight tank battle with Iraqi forces, Serling gave the order to fire at what he thought was an enemy tank. But the tank was "friendly," and several American soldiers were killed.

Now Serling is confined to a desk job at the Pentagon, and his new assignment is to review the nomination of Capt. Karen Walden (Meg Ryan) for a Medal of Honor. Walden is the first woman to be nominated for the award, but the nomination is posthumous.

The job seems simple enough — a rubber stamp and a ceremony — but Serling soon finds himself in a mass of confusion. His own past in the Gulf War is haunting him while the story of Walden and her men changes with each man's recollection.

One of the soldiers, Ilario (Matt Damon), recalls Walden's fine leadership and bravery during her command of a helicopter rescue mission. Montfriez (Lou Diamond Phillips), on the other hand, describes Walden as a coward and a poor decision maker.

What Serling and the script writer want is for the truth to

little screen time in the film, plays the most significant figure. Karen Walden is symbolic of all the characters' buried truths. Serling cannot return home and face his past until he first deals with Walden's past.

Ryan does an excellent job of portraying the constantly changing Walden. Talks of an Oscar nomination for her will probably die down by next March, though.

Washington should gain another nomination for his superb performance, but Oscar followers may remember last year's inexplicable oversight of the entire African-American community by Academy voters.

Courage Under Fire makes everyone proud to be an American, but Aggies may be disappointed with the lack of recognition for the Corps of Cadets in the final credits.



Denzel Washington is in charge of a crucial investigation.

Rising Star

A&M senior James Jackson made his acting debut in the summer hit *Courage Under Fire*

By Pamela Benson
THE BATTALION

When a friend gave him the telephone number to the Texas Film Hotline, James Jackson never thought he would participate in a film with one of his favorite actors.

Jackson, a senior agricultural development major who will graduate in August, sent his résumé to Austin in hopes of getting a part in the film, *Courage Under Fire*.

The results of those actions proved to be worthwhile.

Several weeks later, the casting director called and asked if Jackson was interested in doing a scene with Denzel Washington, Lou Diamond Phillips and other extras.

"He (the casting director) called me on a Monday and I needed to be there on Thursday," Jackson said. "I've always wanted to meet Denzel Washington so I jumped on the opportunity immediately."

Jackson said he was instructed to arrive on the set at 5 a.m. and didn't

end up leaving until 5 p.m.

The day his scene was being filmed, Jackson was asked to walk past Washington and step over a bench.

"I kept thinking that I would fall on Denzel or something," he said. "If someone messed up during a scene, they would simply kick them off the set and find someone else to do the part."

Jackson said the scene was repeated at least 15 times until they were able to move on to something else.

"The process (of making a film) is so meticulous," he said. "All of the different angle shots take up a lot of time."

When Jackson was not busy, he was determined to speak with Washington about acting and his expectations of the future.

Jackson said he didn't want to approach Washington at first, because he is so serious on the set.

"He sat around and concentrated on what he was doing so much that I

didn't want to disturb him," he said. "But I was determined talk to him and get a picture."

Although Jackson did get to talk to Washington and take a few pictures, the majority of the advice he received about acting came from other professionals on the set.

"We really don't know how long we have on this earth. I don't want to look back 30 years from now and realize that I didn't at least try to pursue my dreams."

— JAMES JACKSON
senior agricultural development major

"I learned more from the people on the set like Washington's make-up artist and personal bodyguard, who have been around him for 10 to 15 years," he said. "They told me how to survive in the industry as an African-American man."

Jackson said he still stays in contact with various people on the set and plans to continue keeping in touch.

Jackson will certainly have that opportunity when he moves to New York to go to acting school in August.

Herbert Bergoff Studio in Greenwich Village will be Jackson's new home.

He said he plans to study acting technique, acting scene study, speech, movement, dance and directing.

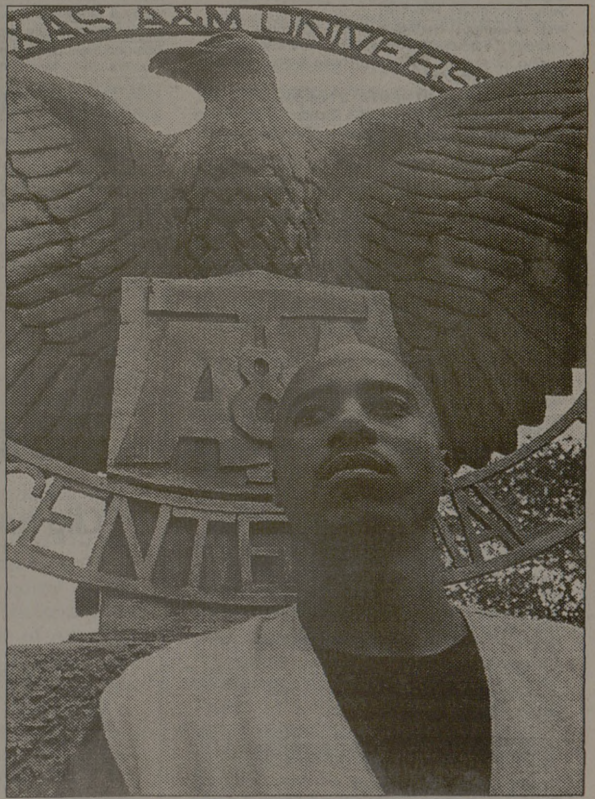
At first, Jackson said he wasn't sure about the idea of acting because it is such a risky business.

However, when his fraternity brother was killed and his grandmother passed away, he realized that life is too short not to be happy.

"We really don't know how long we have on this earth," he said. "I don't want to look back 30 years from now and realize that I didn't at least try to pursue my dreams."

Jackson also said he is not necessarily looking for fame, but rather an opportunity to do something he loves.

"I'm not at all concerned with being famous," he said. "I want to do a good job and have longevity in the business. If I can do that, everything else will follow."



Pat James, THE BATTALION

James Jackson, a senior agricultural development major, will leave for New York in August.