

# Looking Back

MIAMI MEMORABILIA COLLECTORS CLUB

VOL. 3 NUMBER 10 *Free!*



Commodores Yummies for Thanksgiving, Pg. 3

Budd Schulberg's **WIND ACROSS THE EVERGLADES** TECHNICOLOR PRESENTED BY WARNER BROS.

Actor Burl Ives and fellow "Swamp Rats" (Plume Hunters) await the arrival of Audubon Warden Christopher Plummer in Budd Schulberg's 1958 movie, "Wind Across the Everglades" Photo Courtesy of Jorge Hernandez

## Wind Across the Everglades

*Everglades film was way ahead of its time.*

BY CESAR BECERRA

### Pick of the Month

Years before Christopher Plummer sang his way out from under the watchful eye of the German Reich in the classic musical, *The Sound of Music*, he was first introduced to movie-goers as Walt Murdock, guardian of the swamp, in Warner Bros. 1958 production of *Wind Across the Everglades*. Plummer plays the role of a South Florida Audubon Warden at a time in our history when manufacturers as far away as New

York and Paris were paying plume hunters as much as \$32 an ounce (more than the price of gold in those days) for choice egret feathers.

As a local history buff I was surprised to see Hollywood take such an interest in what is still today a mere footnote in the pages of South Florida history books. Much more surprised was I when I heard that they filmed the entire movie on location in Everglades City, a privilege that few Hollywood movies had in those days. To top it

off, the cast consisting of Burl Ives, Gypsy Rose Lee, Peter Falk, the fighter Tony Galento, Emmett Kelly, the world-famous circus clown, and newcomer Christopher Plummer, were considered top notch Hollywood heavyweights.

So aside from the prior knowledge of our infamous mosquito problems, heat, humidity, and swamps, who was it that convinced Hollywood that the plight of Audubon warden, Walt Murdock, *Continued on Page 2*

Tonight's Guest Speaker

HISTORIAN  
HOWARD KLEINBERG.

INSIDE

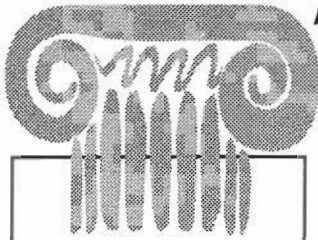
DON'T MISS THE ANNUAL  
CHRISTMAS PARTY AT THE  
MERRICK HOUSE!  
DETAILS ON  
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CESAR'S WORLD PG. 4

Happy  
Thanksgiving

From  
The Turkeys at MMCC



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## CLUB NEWS



AS YOU CAN SEE THE  
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Continued from cover

who's story was fashioned after the first Audubon warden to die in the line of duty, Guy Bradley- would be worth taking a chance on? That person was Budd Schulberg, the movie's writer.

Generally, writers in Hollywood were not considered to be the industry's power brokers, but Budd Schulberg was the exception. Known as one of Hollywood's most powerful and influential people. Schulberg not only attracted Warner Bros. studio but top director Nicholas Ray as well. Not to mention persuading Hollywood away from the confines of its sound stages, to shoot on location in the middle of the Everglades!

Despite its keen cinematography, renowned cast, and excellent writing and research, the movie was not well received. In fact critics took jabs at just about every angle, even hinting that director Nicholas Ray, who directed *Rebel without a Cause*, should think about calling it quits. It was by most standards a complete flop. Or was it?

The movie begins with Plummer trying unsuccessfully to stop the smuggling of egret plumes by the plume hunters, led by the notorious Cottonmouth (Burl Ives). Plummer decides that he must confront Ives face to face if he is to make any significant impact. Doing

so might cost him his life! However, once the two meet they both realize that neither is much different from the other.

In a rare review, writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante discusses the element that gives the movie its presence; "the birds are prettier than their feathers, alive they are a spectacle not for women's hats but for the man that truly loves nature." Infante goes on to say that the reconciliation of both men on opposite sides of the law gives "a double recognition that has the grandeur of human brotherhood and that gives the movie its stature. Apart from its intellectual connotations, there is much cinematic sensuality in *Wind Across the Everglades*...and the photography is perhaps the best color photography of 1958!"

So why did the movie not appeal to the public at large? "I think *Wind Across the Everglades* was a movie that was simply well ahead of its time..." explains Jorge Hernandez, Director of Foreign Films/Post Production at Paramount Studios who is also a movie-buff. "...people have seen the effects of what has happened in this country to our natural resources and therefore could relate better if a film such as *Wind Across the Everglades* were shown today."

The problems we face today in the battle to save our Everglades are estimated to cost millions of dollars. Though these problems are more complex than those presented in *Wind Across the Everglades*, no one can say that we weren't warned.

*Looking for Wind Across the Everglades in your local video store will prove to be impossible. The movie was so tainted with negative reviews that it was never transferred over to video for mass distribution. It has however been duplicated by Twentieth Century Fox onto video for this past year's 4th of July celebration in Everglades City. I am awaiting a copy of the video and hope to share it with the group one day, along with a more comprehensive "behind the scenes" view of the making of the movie.*



First Audubon Warden to die in the line of duty, Guy Bradley, pictured here in 1902. Bradley's story is the thrust behind "Wind Across the Everglades" Photo Courtesy of State Archives



A young Christopher Plummer joins Gypsy Rose Lee in the lobby of one of Miami's first hotels. (Could it have been the Royal Palm?) Photo Courtesy of Jorge Hernandez