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"THE FLAMINGO KID"

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

The El Flamingo Beach Club, Far Rockaway, New York, is an island of leisure in a sea of upward mobility.

It's Camelot with cabanas, Valhalla with cha-cha lessons, the sandbox of the nouveau-riche, the just reward for hanging tough in the urban jungle of the early 1960s.

Cabana boys scurry back and forth through the land of the open palm. The P.A. system crackles with rock hits and news of fun and games. Well-oiled bodies glisten in the sun. Well-filled bellies rise, like hillocks, from the depths of deck chairs.

To Jeffrey Willis, a plumber's son whose horizons had not stretched beyond his old Brooklyn neighborhood, the El Flamingo is a revelation. So, too, is flashy Phil Brody, the glib, gregarious sports car dealer who reigns as the club's unofficial "king" and its star gin rummy player.

Every youngster needs an idol. Jeffrey now has his.

In his first screen comedy, Matt Dillon stars with Richard Crenna, Hector Elizondo and Jessica Walter in "The Flamingo Kid," which was directed by Garry Marshall and produced by Michael Phillips. The ABC Motion Pictures presentation of a Mercury Entertainment Production of a Garry Marshall Film co-stars Fisher Stevens, Brian McNamara, Carole R. Davis, Martha Gehman, Molly McCarthy and Leon Robinson, and intro-

duces Janet Jones. Neal Marshall and Garry Marshall wrote the screenplay, which is based on a story by Neal Marshall. "The Flamingo Kid" will be released through Twentieth Century Fox in the U.S. and Canada.

Jeffrey is about to take the first step towards fulfilling the dream of his working-class father -- that of a summer job with an engineering firm where his Dad (Hector Elizondo) fixes sinks and drains. The year is 1963, and while most of Jeffrey's friends have migrated with their parents to suburban splendor, the Willises still reside in the same nondescript tenement on the same Brooklyn street, in the shadow of the El train, where Jeffrey was born.

That's where two old pals (Fisher Stevens and Brian McNamara) search him out on July 4th...Independence Day... with an invitation to join a gin game at the El Flamingo against a trio of well-heeled collegians.

His arrival at the club is less than impressive. With pineapple shirt, pork-pie straw hat and schoolyard sneakers, he stands out against a dress code of monogrammed chic and uniform tan. His first crack at dressed crab from the buffet table is a resounding victory for the crab. His poolside banter needs work.

But when he comes to the rescue of a stalled driver who's blocking the club's main entrance, Jeffrey is offered a job there parking cars. One night's tips will total more than he'd make in a week running memos between engineers.

Everything about the El Flamingo impresses Jeffrey -- Phil Brody (Richard Crenna) most of all. Brody has flash,

style, a quick grin, a gift of gab, the only Ferrari in the parking lot, a closet full of silk shirts, a star sapphire pinky ring, a beautiful pampered wife (Jessica Walter) and the high regard of the El Flamingo membership.

He is admired not only as the "top mover of performance cars on the whole East Coast," but for the seemingly psychic skill with which he skewers his opponents in the endless gin game on the far side of the pool.

To be in Phil Brody's presence is a privilege. To be invited to his home -- as Jeffrey is, at the suggestion of Brody's visiting niece (Janet Jones) -- is a surprise. But to be made privy to his outlook on life is more than Jeffrey could have hoped for.

"Forget literature, religion, music, philosophy... things like that," he tells the boy during a spin in the fabled Ferrari. "You've never seen a philosopher drivin' a car like this. Socrates rode around on a donkey.

"It's the salesmen of the world that make the money. I've been watching you. And what I've seen spells...salesman."

The reaction of Arthur Willis to his son's decision to skip college -- and go directly into sales -- is equally blunt.

"What I've seen spells...crap!" he shouts. "I don't care what you do. If worse comes to worse, be a plumber... but be an educated plumber.

"This friend of yours, this Brody, has some funny ideas. I WON'T HAVE THEM IN MY HOUSE."

"This is the last innocent summer for Jeffrey Willis," says producer Michael Phillips. "When the film begins, it's the end of his high school years and his horizons have not yet extended beyond Brooklyn and his own neighborhood. Suddenly, he is taken out to this mecca called the El Flamingo Club, which in his eyes is the ultimate in glamour, elegance and luxury.

"The girls even look different from the girls in Brooklyn. They're splashy, beautiful and sexy. Everybody dresses different, everybody is so nice and slick and tan and glitzy. At the El Flamingo, people know how to have fun. People know how to live life. People know how to make money and spend money.

"All of this stands in sharp contrast to his drab Brooklyn life. Although he loves his family, Jeffrey suddenly finds them boring and old-fashioned."

It's not surprising that Jeffrey falls under the spell of Phil Brody, who preys on the young man's eagerness to get ahead in the world, says Phillips. "It's very seductive. Jeffrey's been living in a world where everything's black and white and pretty simple, and now he's surrounded by a world of color and complexity and new ideas. Plus, Brody's always making these wonderful speeches and showering him with attention.

"There's no way he'll ever be satisfied again with the narrow confines of the world as he knew it, which was mostly defined by his father."

A confrontation of role models and values is not the traditional stuff of youth-market comedy, admits director

Garry Marshall, whose last film, the comedy hit "Young Doctors In Love," also for ABC Motion Pictures, marked his directorial debut.

"Jeffrey Willis is a teenager whose problems have nothing to do with beating someone to a pulp or losing his virginity. He does have a romance, a warmly satisfying one, which grows out of the atmosphere of the club.

"But that's not the crux of the story. 'The Flamingo Kid' is about values, about the fact that for every youngster, there comes a point where you have to choose a road to follow.

"That decision -- and where it takes you -- will shape the rest of your life."

Phillips also distinguishes "The Flamingo Kid" from most of the youth comedy fare that has dominated the screen during the recent past. "'The Flamingo Kid' is much more in the tradition of 'The Graduate,' 'Breaking Away' and 'American Graffiti,' than in the tradition of 'Animal House' or 'Revenge of the Nerds' or 'Porky's.' This is not a flat-out comedy. This is much more a comedy-drama.

"There are some very serious undercurrents to this film that we hope will appeal to adults, as well as to young people. This boy is possibly throwing his life away, by making some poor decisions at a critical moment in time. There is also the dilemma of the parents who are watching their son who is now too old to be told what to do, going off and listening to some very bad advice, taking it seriously and giving up college. He's not going to go to college. That is the

immigrant's dream -- to have his children educated. Jeffrey's about to throw that out the window and become a car salesman.

"At one time or another, we've all had to confront the foolishness of our choices."

It was the ten-year commitment of Michael Phillips, who produced "The Flamingo Kid" under his Mercury Entertainment banner, that finally got the film before the cameras. It took so long, he observes, "because the concerns of young people had not been accepted as a popular, potentially-successful genre until after 'American Graffiti' and a bunch of other films about the trials and tribulations of growing up and making decisions along the way succeeded during the Seventies."

Phillips first became aware of the script in 1973 -- ironically, during an all-night card game between himself, his ex-wife and then co-producer Julia Phillips, old friend Andrea Eastman and her guest Cass Elliott (the late member of the popular musical group, The Mamas and The Papas).

"We played cards and talked about playing cards until the sun came up," he recalls. "Cass said, 'You've got to read this script that a friend of mine, Neal Marshall, wrote about playing gin rummy.' So she arranged for us to get the script and we optioned it. But in the short period of time that we had it under option, we were unable to get financing.

"The subject matter was too unfamiliar and we didn't have any elements (cast, director) attached. Also, Julia and I didn't have much credibility ourselves. 'The Sting'

had been shot, but it wasn't out yet. So we did the best we could with it and then we gave up.

"I retained an interest in and an affection for this project because it was close to my own roots."

It is not surprising that Michael Phillips would eventually prevail in getting "The Flamingo Kid" made. His career has been noteworthy for his enthusiasm for and skill in finding screenplays by unknown writers, then providing the nurturing necessary to get a project filmed. With then-partners Julia Phillips and Tony Bill, he discovered the screenplay by unknown writer David S. Ward that became the boxoffice and critical smash, "The Sting." Within two years of moving to Hollywood, Phillips had an Oscar for Best Picture for the Robert Redford-Paul Newman comedy, which was honored that year with six other Academy Awards out of ten nominations. Following upon this success, the Phillipses acquired the screenplay for "Taxi Driver," also from an unknown writer, Paul Schrader, which was nominated for four Oscars (including Best Picture) and was presented with the Palme d'Or, the Cannes Film Festival's top prize. The Phillipses' next project was Steven Spielberg's "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," and this time their collaborative efforts resulted in eight Academy Award nominations.

Besides his long-time fondness for card games, Phillips had a special rapport with the unique geographical and social setting of "The Flamingo Kid," because of his own roots in Brooklyn, where he was born, and Long Island, where he moved

with his family at the age of ten to the suburb of Roslyn on the north shore.

"In Roslyn I was exposed to these cabana clubs, which existed because it was the dream. It was the dream of the children of immigrants born in the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens and the Bronx to make some money and to move out to what they called the country, which is what we call the suburbs today," he recounts.

"They would get out there and buy a home, move from an apartment to a home -- which is what my family did -- and then the American dream was to have the luxury of access to a swimming pool or to the beach.

"So there sprouted up these cabana clubs, which were mostly swimming pools with a little something else on the side. The ones on the south shore could actually be on the ocean also. You'd have both the pool and the ocean -- like the El Flamingo. And they named them what they thought were exotic, Mediterranean names, like The Lido, El Patio. The El Flamingo would have been the type of name they would have chosen.

"My family didn't belong to one of the clubs on the beach; they belonged to a pool club," Phillips continues.

"My father at that time was a garment manufacturer. I went there every day during the summer to go swimming, either with my mother or other friends who were members."

The Roslyn Country Club, where the Phillips family idled away the summer, shared one characteristic common to all the Long Island clubs of that era: "Whether they were cabana

clubs or country clubs or tennis clubs, still they always had this permanent fixture -- usually the men playing gin and the women playing canasta -- permanent summer-long card games. The roles in this movie are true; they come from real-life models," he says.

Phillips emphasizes, however, that the "Flamingo Kid" story is not his own. "These characters are all modeled after people that Neal Marshall knew. In fact, he worked in the parking lot of one of the clubs that he used as the principal model for this film."

But Neal Marshall (no relation to the director) says he tried to write a story that went beyond the limitations of his own firsthand experience. "The same social phenomenon was happening in every city. We'd come through a depression, a world war and Korea. Gas was cheap, land was plentiful, prosperity was forever. The sons and daughters of the immigrants who'd settled the inner cities were making more money more quickly than anyone ever dreamed was possible."

"Tract houses were sprouting in open fields. There was a new leisure class, and it created its private pleasure palaces like the fictitious El Flamingo Beach Club, in imitation of the old wealth."

Phillips' sustaining interest in "The Flamingo Kid" was not primarily due to his familiarity with the story's milieu. It was his fondness for the issues presented in the script. "I like what this story has to say: an affirmation of family values, disillusionment with a mentor, the discovery of the

illusions of 'the easy path' -- these are all interesting issues to me," Phillips explains.

Although the screenplay was originally rooted in the 1950's by writer Neal Marshall, a collective decision was made to move the time frame to 1963, which to the filmmakers represents the turning point in our American consciousness.

"We saw strong parallels between what was happening to this young man in the process of his disillusionment and what happened at a certain point in time, which we call the Summer of 1963," Phillips says. "The summer of 1963 was probably the last moment of our national innocence and the beginning of the disillusionment that dominated the latter Sixties."

During the past twenty years, Garry Marshall has distinguished himself in network television, creating, writing, producing and directing such hit comedy series as "Happy Days," "Laverne and Shirley" and "Mork and Mindy," among many others. He made his motion picture directorial debut with "Young Doctors In Love," then waited patiently for another feature project to catch his imagination. It turned out to be a frustrating experience.

"My first feature film had been a success," he recounts. "I'd told a studio, which will remain nameless, that what I wanted to do next was a more sensitive, realistic comedy.

"They said, 'Fine, that's what we want, too,' and the next day they sent me a script about a talking horse. 100%

true. I was kind of depressed after that. I was walking around the house, telling my wife, 'They sent me a talking horse, honey. That's what they think I do. Talking horses.'"

The next day, Michael Phillips showed up to play basketball, which Marshall remembers with his typical infusion of humor: "I play basketball every Saturday, rain or shine, with the same group of people. There are about twenty guys and we've been playing for about twenty years, and we never know what each other does exactly. We also don't ask last names half the time.

"One of the guys is Michael Phillips, who's been hitting me in the eye with his elbow for about five years. After he did that on this particular day, and I was putting ice on it, he said, 'You know, we should do something together.' Lo and behold, it turned out he was an Oscar-winning producer. He never brought his Oscar to the basketball game -- in fact, he wore an outfit that was embarrassing to all of us -- so who knew?"

Phillips asked Marshall to lunch, something they'd never done before. "I started to talk to him about a spoof idea, but he cut me off, saying, 'I just don't want to do any more spoofs.'

"So I said, 'What do you want to do?' and he said he would like to do a movie like 'Diner.' The more that he got into a description of what he wanted to do, he was talking a more serious story integrated with comedy.

"So I proceeded to describe 'The Flamingo Kid.' And he liked what he was hearing and began to talk about certain

things that appealed to him in what I was saying. They were directorial points of view -- such as the potential for color and energy in the milieu. So I sent him the script and he liked it and we had more creative meetings, just to see if indeed we were on the same track."

Playing Jeffrey Willis marks a major career departure for Matt Dillon, who stars in his first motion picture comedy with "The Flamingo Kid." The veteran of eight motion pictures -- including "Tex," "The Outsiders" and "Rumble Fish" -- Dillon has received wide critical acclaim for his portrayals of troubled teenagers on the outskirts of society.

While Marshall had seen Dillon only in "heavy dramatic pieces," he suspected the young actor could play comedy. "Even in serious roles like Dallas in 'The Outsiders,' there was a sense of mystery, an element of surprise," Marshall points out. "That's the essence of comedy, surprise. I've always believed in casting against type. And I was sure there was a lot more to Dillon than anyone had seen."

"Matt had to do all of the things required in comedy," says Phillips, "and we found that he has a good sense of timing. He also has great instincts and a tremendous professionalism. Every time he would bring something up, he was right. I've got a lot of respect for him; so does everyone associated with the film. He always knew what was right for the movie."

Phillips was particularly impressed with how Dillon "cared about his character. For instance, Matt chose Jeffrey's clothes, not for the sake of making himself look

good, but for authenticity. He even picked that pork-pie hat; that isn't a hat that makes him handsome. It's a hat that makes him a little bit goofy. Matt was always willing to appear goofy and unattractive, because that's what the role required."

The filmmakers had never worked with Richard Crenna, but they were familiar with the actor's remarkable transition from the squeaky-clean juveniles of television series like "Our Miss Brooks" and "The Real McCoys" to the craggy character portraits of "Body Heat" and "First Blood."

"I saw elements of Phil Brody in Richard's performance in 'Body Heat,'" notes Phillips. "I saw that he could be real slick and hard.

"But the glibness and patois that he brought to the role just blew us away. It came as a great surprise. Brody now has this constant patter -- a chatter, chatter, chatter -- on the screen. He's just so smooth. We had always seen Brody as slick, but that patter was just pure Richard -- that wasn't written into the script."

The role of Phil Brody marked a departure for Crenna as well. "Throughout most of my career," he says, "I've played comparatively substantial characters, but Phil Brody is a superficial man. He's a man constructed out of facades, like a movie set. If you walk behind him, there might not be anything there. He tells Jeffrey 'You are what you wear,' but he dresses as if he had bought all his clothes in a drug-store in Las Vegas -- he practically glows in the dark."

In one scene, Brody welcomes Jeffrey to his sumptuous home and shows off his latest toy -- a newly-invented remote control television tuner. As he changes channels and the screen flickers in response, there's a glimpse of one of 1963's most popular series, "The Real McCoys," featuring a young, almost unrecognizable Richard Crenna.

"Garry Marshall sprang that one on me as a surprise," laughs the actor.

In contrast with the bravado Brody, plumber Arthur Willis "has to seem to his son like a pretty dull guy," says Hector Elizondo. "He's a lot like my own father, who was more concerned with being a good parent than winning a popularity contest.

"He has simple tastes, simple dreams. His passion is the education of his children. His other love is the sea. All he asks for himself is that maybe someday he'll set aside enough money to buy a sailboat and take off with Mrs. Willis into the sunset.

"When he tries to compete with Phil Brody for Jeffrey's affection, he invites the whole family out for macaroni at Guiseppe's. Not pasta. Pasta is what they eat at Jeffrey's fancy club. Macaroni is what it is.

"Arthur is the same way. He is what he is."

According to producer Phillips, no one but Elizondo was ever considered for the role, possibly because Marshall was, in one sense, repaying a debt of gratitude. The actor, who won an Obie Award for the boldly experimental play, "Steambath," and a Drama Desk nomination for the Broadway production of

"The Sly Fox," starred in Marshall's "Young Doctors in Love" as a mobster, obliged by the contortions of the plot to prowls a big-city hospital, disguised as a woman.

"He wore a dress, a very ugly dress, throughout the entire picture," says Marshall. "I told him at the time I owed him one, that someday I would find a part where he could wear regular clothes."

Other key roles include Jessica Walter -- whose career has ranged from Sidney Lumet's "The Group" to an Emmy-winning performance in the teleplay "Amy Prentiss" -- as the bored, barbed Mrs. Brody; Fisher Stevens as fireball Hawk Ganz; Brian McNamara as the affable Steve Dawkins; Carole R. Davis as Brody's socially-affected daughter; Martha Gehman as Jeffrey's concerned sister and Molly McCarthy as his perplexed mother; Leon Robinson as a college-bound star basketball player; and Janet Jones as the California coed who becomes Jeffrey's romantic distraction for the summer.

Rather than create the El Flamingo Beach Club on a soundstage or simulate a Pacific facsimile, Marshall and Phillips chose to shoot the picture entirely on location in New York. Marshall, a native New Yorker, had not worked there in 23 years.

Principal sites included the Woodhaven section of Queens, which doubled for the Willises' Brooklyn neighborhood, and the Silver Gull Beach Cabana Club on Long Island Sound. Both offered the same advantage, a feeling for the recent past, and the same drawback, a nightmare for the sound department.

"One of the attractions of Woodhaven was the El train that cuts through it," explains Marshall. "But that's a pretty noisy 'prop.' We had to stop the action every few minutes to let the Sunnyside express rumble by."

When the troupe adjourned to the Silver Gull Cabana Club, on an isolated strip of Long Island shoreline, Marshall looked forward to peace and quiet. It wasn't to be.

"The club is directly beneath the Kennedy Airport flight path. Planes were coming in and taking off all the time...including two Concordes daily. We'd be deep into a scene, I'd see an actor's eyes flicker upward and within a few seconds, the conversation would simply disappear.

"The soundman kept saying, 'Bring back the El train.'"

As important to Marshall as the physical atmosphere of the El Flamingo was its fun seekers, sun lovers, card players, kibitzers, ball tossers, cha-cha students, employees and assorted guests.

He engaged several New York-based character actors for the entire ten weeks of filming on Long Island, encouraging them to relate to each other as the 'summer' progressed. "Just the way people do at an actual resort," he explains.

The validity of the concept was confirmed by the formation of a club-within-a-club dubbed "Character Actors Islands." Its charter members included Frank Campanella (who plays the club's ex-war hero owner, rumored to have shot down five planes during the war, four of them ours), Irving Metzman (Big Sid the "watcher"), Richard Stah (Charlie, "The

Olympic coughing champion"), and Joe Grifasi, Ron McLarty and Seth Allen, all card-playing cronies of Phil Brody.

Others who qualified for the elite club ranged from Sharon Thomas (Mrs. Unger, the El Flamingo's official floozy) to four-year-old Peter Costa, who was cast in the film because "in an audition full of cute, adorable, perfect children who sang, danced and read lines beautifully, he did nothing -- nothing at all, and I fell in love with him," says Marshall.

Considerable reasearch in magazines, yearbooks and newspapers of the period went into re-creating the 1963 "beach club look." Hair designer Anthony Cortino reported that it was a "vintage year for lacquer -- beehives, bubbles and other well-teased styles were in."

Make-up was heavier, says make-up artist Mickey Scott. "There were big doe eyes -- a 'Sayonara' thing -- with wings. Strong pink and orange rouges were popular, along with deep eyeliners. The look was artificial and dramatic."

As for fashions, observes costumer Ellen Mirojnick, "young girls wore mostly two-piece bathing suits. But they were tame compared to today's bikinis -- the bottom half came up to the waist.

"For more mature women, furs were essential, so no self-respecting club member would dine at the El Flamingo without wearing her mink stole or chinchilla jacket, even on a warm night. In those days, you went out to show off."

Matt Dillon did his own research, with the assistance of producer Michael Phillips, who provided stacks of Sixties

magazines. Thumbing through an old copy of Photoplay, he found a "look" he liked for Jeffrey Willis, including a well-lubricated "flat-top" haircut of the period.

Richard Crenna used a publicity still of himself as he appeared in the Sixties series "Slattery's People" as a guide, to which costumer Mirojnick added touches of richly-colored silk and slab-like gold jewelry. "She was wonderful," Crenna reports. "She found me the world's ugliest star sapphire pinky ring -- the kind a hypnotist would use to put an entire audience into a trance."

The research, reports Marshall, was a continuing and enlightening adventure. Based on a newspaper ad of the period, the Associated Supermarket in Woodhaven greeted shoppers, for one day, with window banners proclaiming "Pot Roast: 59 cents a pound" and "Bakery Special: Apple Pies, 45 cents." A billboard facing the El train came to life with a famous ad for Coppertone, a three-year-old child with a playful puppy tugging at her briefs, which -- according to one researcher -- marked the first modeling assignment for Jodie Foster.

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ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS...

"The Flamingo Kid" is director GARRY MARSHALL's second feature film as a director. He made his motion picture directorial debut with the comedy hit, "Young Doctors In Love," for which he also served as the executive producer. Both films were for ABC Motion Pictures.

Marshall previously wrote and produced the motion pictures, "How Sweet It Is" and "The Grasshopper."

During the past twenty years, Marshall has distinguished himself as a major force in network television. He has created ten television series, including the comedy hits, "Happy Days," "Laverne and Shirley," "Mork and Mindy" and "Angie"; produced over 750 series including the award-winning "The Odd Couple" series; written over 100 television scripts; and directed some thirty television shows.

The man from whose fertile imagination sprang the immortal characters, Fonzie, Laverne and Shirley, Mork and Angie, has been working in Hollywood since 1962, when he was brought out by Joey Bishop to write for "The Joey Bishop Show." But Marshall's career in the entertainment and communications fields had begun years earlier.

While studying at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism (where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1956), Marshall pursued his love of music by forming a jazz combo and playing some of Chicago's top clubs and hotel lounges.

During an Army stint in Korea, he wrote for The Stars and Stripes and The Seoul News. A member of the Army's Special Services branch, he also served as production chief for the Armed Forces Radio Network.

After returning to civilian life, Marshall joined the New York Daily News as a copy-boy, but rapidly progressed to sports statistician and reporter. At the same time, he wrote comedy material for Phil Foster and Joey Bishop, and moonlighted with his jazz combo in clubs. On the recommendation of Foster and Bishop, Jack Paar hired him in 1960 to write for "The Tonight Show," which Paar was hosting.

Two years later, Marshall moved to Los Angeles and subsequently met Jerry Belson. They became one of the most prolific, versatile and legendary creative alliances in the television industry, collaborating on the teleplays for more than 100 situation comedy episodes for such popular television series as "The Danny Thomas Show," "The Lucy Show" and "The Dick Van Dyke Show." Their efforts for the latter earned them several awards, including the coveted Emmy. The writing team of Belson and Marshall also contributed to episodes of the dramatic series, "I Spy" and "Chrysler Presents."

In 1966 Marshall and Belson created their first situation comedy series, "Hey, Landlord," which ran for 36 episodes on NBC. They moved into motion pictures in 1967, writing and producing "How Sweet It Is," a comedy that starred Debbie Reynolds and James Garner, and "The Grasshopper," a dramatic comedy that starred Jacqueline Bisset.

Returning to television in 1969, Marshall and Belson developed the long-running hit series, "The Odd Couple," which they adapted from the Neil Simon Broadway play. Marshall also served as the executive producer.

In 1972, he created the series, "The Little People," starring Brian Keith, and "Happy Days," which introduced a new national folk hero, Arthur "The Fonz" Fonzarelli.

Three years after the debut of "Happy Days," "Laverne and Shirley," which showcased the unique comic talents of his sister, Penny Marshall, was introduced to the viewing public, premiering with the highest Nielsen rating of any sitcom in the previous decade.

Widely considered to have been one of the zaniest shows in television history, "Mork and Mindy" sprang from Marshall's active mind to showcase the comic genius of Robin Williams. The series had its beginnings in the chance remark of Marshall's son, who asked him why he didn't do a show about outer space.

As an example of the significance of Marshall's contributions to primetime television, during one week alone -- that of January 28, 1979 -- "Laverne and Shirley," "Happy Days" and "Mork and Mindy" were the number one, two and three television shows in the country, according to the Nielsen ratings. In addition, the number five show that week was "Angie." That meant that four out of the five most popular shows that week were the product of one man.

But besides the satisfaction of knowing that he had created entertainment which touched the hearts of America,

Marshall had the gratification of watching his shows earn sixteen Emmy nominations over the years.

Surprisingly, Marshall has found the time to write two plays, "Shelves" and "The Roast" (the latter with Jerry Belson).

Marshall has also been tireless in his support of many charitable causes, resulting in such citations as the 1978 Arc of Excellence Award by the National Association for Retarded Citizens. His other accolades include his inclusion in People magazine's list of "The 25 Most Intriguing Men"; his designation as Showman of the Year by the Publicist's Guild in 1979 and Man of the Year by the Hollywood Radio and Television Society in 1980, by the Los Angeles Free Clinic in 1982 and by the National Association of Television Program Executives in 1983. Marshall was also presented with the Meritorious Award by the California Governor's Committee for Employment of the Handicapped in 1980. In 1983 Marshall became the recipient of one of Hollywood's most coveted honors, the addition of his own star on Hollywood Boulevard's famous "Walk of Fame."

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It was the ten-year commitment of MICHAEL PHILLIPS, who produced "The Flamingo Kid" under his Mercury Entertainment banner, that finally got the film before the cameras.

"The Flamingo Kid" is Phillips' eighth motion picture. He received the Academy Award for Best Picture for "The Sting," which he produced with Julia Phillips and Tony Bill. (The Robert Redford-Paul Newman comedy received a total of seven Academy Awards out of ten nominations.) Phillips subsequently co-produced the acclaimed films, "Taxi Driver" (which was honored with the Cannes Film Festival's grand prize, the Palme d'Or, and four Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture) and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" (which was nominated for eight Academy Awards), with Julia.

Phillips first became aware of the script for "The Flamingo Kid" in 1973, during an all-night card game between himself, his ex-wife Julia, old friend Andrea Eastman and her guest Cass Elliott (the late member of the popular musical group, The Mamas and The Papas.)

"We played cards and talked about playing cards until the sun came up," Phillips recalls. "Cass said, 'You've got to read this script that a friend of mine, Neal Marshall, wrote about playing gin rummy.'"

The Phillipses optioned the screenplay, but found that they couldn't get financing as "we didn't have much credibility," says Michael. "'The Sting' had been shot, but it wasn't out yet. So we did the best we could with it and then we gave up."

But Michael Phillips retained an interest in the film, "because it was close to my own roots." Born in Brooklyn (which is also the home of the fictional Jeffrey Willis in "The Flamingo Kid"), Phillips moved at the age of ten with his family to the Long Island suburb of Roslyn. Like many in their community, the Phillips family belonged to one of the many cabana clubs that sprouted up on Long Island during the early 1960's.

After graduating from high school in 1961, Phillips attended Dartmouth College, then enrolled in NYU Law School, from which he graduated in 1968. But instead of practicing law, he worked on Wall Street for two years. "I went straight into the stock market, because I got involved with it in college through a friend," Phillips says. "I had all kinds of illusions about it, thought I would go there a couple of years and clean up. Like Jeffrey, I was filled with illusions of 'the easy life.'"

Unfortunately, the easy life was not so easy. Wall Street hit its all-time high for the next ten years -- within two weeks of his arrival. "I began to see how easy it is to lose money," he laughs. "So I got disillusioned with that."

After a six-month stint in the Army, Michael and Julia Phillips (who had been married when he was in law school) decided to explore ways of working together. Through old friend Andrea Eastman, they met and became friends with Tony Bill, an actor of nine years who was about to produce his first movie for Paramount.

The three pooled their meager capital -- "Tony had a thousand dollars and we had \$2500," recalls Phillips -- and formed Bill/Phillips Productions. Their first order of business was to option the story for a film called "The Sting," which had been conceived by unknown writer David S. Ward. Says Phillips, "David had written one script called 'Steelyard Blues' in film school, which was being shown as a writing sample by his agent. But he had an original idea for a movie about con men that he wanted to write. Tony had heard about it; we discussed what he wanted to do as a company, and it seemed like the best thing on the table so far.

"So we decided to put all of our eggs in that basket and try to make a deal to acquire the rights to 'The Sting,' and at the same time boldly asked them to throw in 'Steelyard Blues.' We didn't expect them to, but they gave it to us for four months."

The team gave the script for "Steelyard Blues' to their agent, Mike Medavoy (now the Executive Vice President of Orion Pictures) -- "Mike was representing a lot of terrific talent, but none of them were really that famous in any way, except for Donald Sutherland." Sutherland loved the project, but another boxoffice name was needed to get the film made. So Sutherland brought in Jane Fonda, with whom he'd starred successfully in "Klute." "Suddenly, we had a package, one link in the chain leading to another," recalls Phillips. "We had been in business almost no time when we acquired the rights to 'Steelyard Blues,' and two weeks later we had a

deal. It was the easiest, most painless putting-a-film-together that I've ever been involved with."

They rushed "Steelyard Blues" into production under the aegis of Warner Bros. during the spring of 1971. "'Steelyard Blues' was a really valuable experience because we did a lot of things wrong and had to learn from our mistakes," comments Phillips.

During this time, Ward wrote the screenplay for "The Sting" and they soon after had Robert Redford interested in the lead role. They also soon discovered that they had a 'hot property.' "Everybody wanted to make that movie. It was a great, great script," says Phillips. The screenplay was shown to director George Roy Hill, who was under contract with Universal Pictures (the studio behind "The Sting"), and Hill in turn showed it to his good friend, Paul Newman. Surprisingly, Newman called and volunteered to play the role of Henry Gondorff, a part which "as originally conceived was a slob -- a pudgy, over-the-hill guy. But George felt he could make it work. It seemed like such a great opportunity that we would be fools not to go for it. So we found ourselves with Newman and Redford," Phillips says.

Phillips stumbled onto the screenplay for "Taxi Driver" over a game of chess with director Brian De Palma during the summer of 1973. "Brian told me that a journalist doing an article on him had written a script, which he didn't think was for him, but he thought I would love it," recounts Phillips. The script was called "Taxi Driver" and it was written

by Paul Schrader, who would later become one of Hollywood's top directors and screenwriters.

"Taxi Driver," however, took several years to get to the screen. Director Martin Scorsese and actor Robert DeNiro were interested in making it, but "Mean Streets" was yet to be released, so the film industry was not aware of their immense talent. "Anyway, the two of them became so successful finally -- through 'Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore' and 'The Godfather' -- that the picture became too much of a bargain not to make." It was finally filmed in 1975 for under \$2 million because DeNiro and Scorsese "stuck to their old prices. Bob DeNiro had won an Oscar, yet he did 'Taxi Driver' for \$30,000 -- and it was an arduous film for him. Everybody took much less than their market prices at that time," notes Phillips.

Phillips remembers how the studio, Columbia Pictures, did not expect the success that would rain down on "Taxi Driver." "It had opened in New York in one of the Eastside theatres and it started getting great reviews. It was a sizzling opening," he says.

"Close Encounters of the Third Kind" was an idea that Steven Spielberg brought to the Phillipses in 1973, while all three were working on the Universal lot. Spielberg was in post-production with "The Sugarland Express," and the Phillipses and Bill were finishing up "The Sting." "Steven and I used to have lunch all the time and we discovered a mutual interest in science fiction," notes Phillips. Spielberg came out to their beach home one night to talk more

specifically: "He told us an idea that was different from the way the movie turned out -- 'a combination of UFO's and Watergate.'"

While the script was being prepared by another writer, Spielberg was grappling with the difficult filming of "Jaws." "I remember going up to Martha's Vineyard, it seems like every other week, with new writers to suggest or new ideas -- something to get to the next evolution of the screenplay," says Phillips. "Finally, after Steven was finished with 'Jaws,' he said, 'I really should do this myself,' and we said, 'Great.'"

Just prior to filming "Close Encounters," the Phillipses executive produced "The Big Bus." Michael Phillips subsequently produced "Heartbeeps" and "Cannery Row."

Phillips recently was signed to a two-year, non-exclusive agreement with ABC Motion Pictures to develop and produce theatrical projects. The arrangement marked the first time ABC Motion Pictures has entered into an overall arrangement with an independent filmmaker.

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ABOUT THE PLAYERS...

"The Flamingo Kid" is MATT DILLON's eighth motion picture. Dillon appears in his first full-length comedy role as Jeffrey Willis, the son of a Brooklyn plumber who must come to grips with life-changing values when he lands a job at the fabulous El Flamingo Club.

The twenty-year-old Dillon has become one of the most lauded actors of his generation, having earned the respect of the serious film establishment for his diverse and challenging body of work in seven motion pictures -- "Over the Edge," "Little Darlings," "My Bodyguard," "Tex," "Liar's Moon," "The Outsiders" and "Rumble Fish" -- and one television special, the American Playhouse PBS production of "The Great American Fourth of July and Other Disasters."

It was early in his career that the film industry's prestigious Motion Picture Bookers Club chose him for their Star of Tomorrow Award. His international status is such that he is known in every country of the world. In Europe, where the title "Rumble Fish" was changed to "Rusty James," the film enjoyed great success -- both critically and commercially. In Italy, Dillon was given a Best Actor of 1984 Award for "Rumble Fish." This year, two of Japan's top magazine's, Roadshow and Screen, chose him as the Most Popular Foreign Actor of 1984.

Dillon has also enjoyed tremendous critical support in North America, which is aptly represented by a statement made by Jay Scott of Toronto's Globe and Mail upon seeing

Dillon in "The Outsiders": "When Dillon leaves the screen, his magnetism threatens to take the silver with him."

Dillon was discovered at the age of fourteen in the corridor of his New Rochelle, New York, junior high school for Jonathan Kaplan's "Over the Edge." When "Over the Edge" was released, it received excellent reviews but was given a limited release due to its controversial subject matter -- the violent rebellion of the children of the upper middle class. Two years later, the film was screened at Joseph Papp's Public Theatre, which marked its New York premiere, inspiring Vincent Canby of the New York Times to add "Over the Edge" to his list of top films for 1980.

It remained for Dillon's next movie, the commercially successful "Little Darlings," to really introduce him to the public. Dillon's follow-up was Tony Bill's "My Bodyguard," in which he played the exploiting tough guy with a lot of smarts who bullies and extorts his classmates' lunch money for 'protection.' As New West magazine wrote in its review: "His performance is the film's strongest, most reliable asset. Hair greased back in the time-honored DA, always surrounded by the requisite entourage of lesser goons, Moody is the swaggering, adenoidal tough done to perfection. When he tells Cliff, 'You and me, we're gonna have a little talk after school,' the verisimilitude is chilling."

The independent motion picture, "Liar's Moon," a love story set in 1946, showed another facet of Dillon, as a simple, hard-working Texas farmboy involved in a young troubled marriage. The American Playhouse PBS special

production of Jean Shepherd's satirical "The Great American Fourth of July and Other Disasters" followed. "Mr. Dillon, as young Ralph, positively radiates a boyish goofiness," wrote television critic John O'Connor in the New York Times of his performance in the latter.

Then came starring roles in a succession of S.E. Hinton film adaptations. In the early 1980s, Hollywood suddenly discovered the best-selling juvenile novels of the Tulsa-based author (who had been one of Dillon's long-time favorite writers) -- possibly because it wasn't until Dillon's emergence that there existed the acting personification of the typical Hinton hero. First in "Tex," then in Francis Ford Coppola's adaptation of Hinton's "The Outsiders" and "Rumble Fish," Dillon explored in three dramatically different character portraits the terrain of troubled youth.

Ironically, Hinton was not immediately persuaded into accepting Dillon in the role of Tex, when it was first suggested to her by director Tim Hunter. But a meeting with Dillon quickly changed her mind. "Actually, he has a lot of qualities like Tex that he used in the film," she once told a journalist. "It's hard to play naive when you're not naive, but he does an excellent job. Matt is really a sweet person, and he let that come across in this movie." Hinton was so impressed with the results of "Tex" that she circumvented the studio bureaucracy when it came time to cast "The Outsiders" by going directly to director Francis Ford Coppola, aggressively urging him to cast Dillon as Dallas.

It was with his first Hinton film, "Tex," that critics really seemed to discover Matt Dillon the actor.

Enthused Pauline Kael in The New Yorker: "Actors who have labored to learn the rudiments of their profession must want to kill...Matt Dillon, the open-faced young star of 'Tex.' He's a 'natural,' who takes to the camera with the baffling ease of a puppy. He doesn't apply any particular sexual heat in this movie, and he isn't crafty, like James Dean -- there are no Method mannerisms, no affectations of any kind."

Wrote critic Richard Schickel of Time magazine: "He's the kind of youngster who blends the antic and the stormy and makes it come out pure lopsided charm. No one has more accurately captured the mercurial quality of adolescence than he has, with anger, rebelliousness, gallantry, goofiness all tumbled together to create a confused, wholly believable vulnerability."

"As the naive, not overly bright, goof-off Tex, Dillon gets to be endearing, and for the first time he shows both his range and his natural gift for comedy," said David Ansen of Newsweek in his review.

Dillon recently told Interview magazine that he often enjoyed the tough, angry characters of his past films, because "those are the kinds of roles you can really sink your teeth into. Characters with an edge. When you're playing someone who's sort of seedy, there are fewer limits, there's so much more space you can travel. There's room to move in."

Dillon chose to portray a young man in "The Flamingo Kid" who comes from a solid, closely-bonded family, because the role was in sharp contrast to any charade he'd ever played before. It's Jeffrey Willis' exposure to the flashy lifestyles of Long Island's nouveaux riches that comes into conflict with his working-class upbringing.

To give him a feel for the period, 1963, in which the movie is set, producer Michael Phillips showed Dillon books, magazines and records from that era. From an issue of Photoplay, Dillon found a suitable haircut -- a period close-cropped flattop. Costume designer Ellen Mirojnick reports that Dillon "was very clear that he wanted to create a character and to forget about Matt Dillon, superstar-in-jeans, that image that's been thrust on him for five years." For the opening scenes, Dillon wears a green floral polyester shirt, dacron olive trousers, black-and-white basketball sneakers and a brown pork-pie hat perched on the back of his head.

"Jeffrey's a regular guy, able to fit in very well in Brooklyn," Dillon says of his character. "But when he tries to relate to the glitzy people at the El Flamingo Beach Club, he suddenly, for the first time in his life, feels like a fish out of water."

For both producer Michael Phillips and director Garry Marshall, Dillon was their first choice for "The Flamingo Kid." "We felt that of the actors in that age group, he has far and away the most charisma," says Phillips. "In addition to his talent and ability to project realism is his compelling

screen presence. We felt that he would give us a tremendous benefit in broadening the appeal of the story."

Adds Marshall: "Matt Dillon has a mystery to him. You never know what he's going to do. And in comedy, the element of surprise is very important. Even though he had only done primarily heavy things before, it turned out that he was perfect as a light comedian."

Richard Crenna, who stars with Dillon in "The Flamingo Kid," admits that he wasn't sure if "I was going to encounter a teen idol or a professional. Well, I'm happy to report that Matt Dillon is a professional. He's very dedicated, very conscientious. He was always on time, always knew what we were doing, was always ready to work. He is very concerned about being a good actor. He's going to be around a long time."

Dillon recently completed a starring role on location in Australia in the romantic World War II drama, "Rebel" (a working title for the film adaptation of the play, "No Names -- No Pack Drill"), which also stars Bryan Brown and was directed by Michael Jenkins (who wrote "Careful, He Might Hear You"). Dillon plays an American Marine sergeant who falls in love with an Australian singer in the film.

Dillon is currently filming in a starring role with Gene Hackman in the suspense drama, "Targets," which is being directed in Europe and Texas by Arthur Penn.

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In a major departure from the dramatic film roles which have recently dominated his motion picture career, RICHARD CRENNA stars in the comedy, "The Flamingo Kid," as Phil Brody, the flashy, glib and gregarious foreign car dealer who reigns undefeated as the El Flamingo Club's gin rummy king.

Crenna's diverse and prolific career began in radio at the age of eleven, followed by a move to television in the early 1950's, then to motion pictures in 1964.

If there was one source of inspiration that helped in the creation of his gallery of complicated, intriguing characters over the years, Crenna says that it was probably his unusual childhood, spent in a series of small hotels owned and operated by his parents in downtown Los Angeles.

The young observer developed a keen eye and ear for the mannerisms and idiosyncracies of the ever-changing variety of humanity who passed before his eyes. As he once recalled for Los Angeles Magazine, "When we bought the Stephens Hotel in 1937, it was just filled with gamblers, con-men, bookies, ex-jockies, characters you wouldn't believe...I really became an actor, I think, by watching these people. I loved to imitate everything that they did."

Downtown L.A. was also then the home of Hollywood's radio broadcasting industry, which supplied Crenna and his friends with discarded scripts for use in their own home productions. At age eleven he was invited to audition at KFI, the NBC affiliate across the street from his junior high school, and landed a part on "Boy Scout Jamboree" as a perpetual foul-up

named Herman. With the encouragement of his parents, Crenna became one of the most-heard voices on radio, appearing as a regular on such series as "Meet Corliss Archer," "Gunsmoke," "I Love A Mystery," "Johnny Dollar," "Have Gun Will Travel," "Dr. Christian," "Amos and Andy," "The Dennis Day Show" and "Mayor of the Town."

At one point he was working as a regular on eight series simultaneously. His specialty was comic adolescents: Oogie Pringle on "A Date With Judy," Waldo on "Burns and Allen," Beezy on "The Hardy Family" and Bronco Thompson on "The Great Gildersleeve" -- a part he played off and on for sixteen years, eventually marrying Gildersleeve's niece and becoming a father on the air.

Most notably, he was Walter Denton, the teenage nemesis of the title character of "Our Miss Brooks," played by Eve Arden. He played the part for years on the radio and, at the star's insistence, continued when the series switched to television in the Fifties. (Years later Eve Arden said of him, "He was one of the best actors I've ever known. And his talents went largely untapped. So 'Walter' would frustrate him, but he was too nice to let you know.")

Crenna left the series in 1952 and landed the part of Luke McCoy, the hillbilly grandson of Walter Brennan on the long-running series, "The Real McCoys." Asked by an interviewer about his acting credo, Crenna once said, "There's no such word as acting -- it's reacting to external stimuli -- something I learned watching Walter Brennan during those years we worked together. He was a master of film technique."

Hoping to add another dimension to his career, Crenna asked producer Danny Thomas to let him try his hand behind the camera, which resulted, ultimately, in his directing the fifth and sixth seasons of "The Real McCoys." Crenna has since directed over 100 series episodes, pilots and movies of the week. He also produced Danny Thomas' "Make Room For Granddaddy," for which he designed an innovative set that permitted directors to achieve a more cinematic shooting and editing style with television's perennial three-camera system.

After "The Real McCoys," Crenna joined forces with Bing Crosby Productions to produce "Slattery's People," a dramatic series in which he starred as a crusading legislator. The series garnered numerous citations from state legislatures and bar associations and was praised in the pages of the Congressional Record.

Equally important, it changed Crenna's image once and for all, establishing him as a versatile leading man. He followed "Slattery's People" with his first starring role in a feature film as the downed U-2 pilot in "John Goldfarb, Please Come Home," co-starring Shirley MacLaine. Two years later he co-starred with Steve McQueen in Robert Wise's "The Sand Pebbles" in which he scored a triumph with his portrayal of a betrayed and eventually suicidal gunboat captain.

Since then, Crenna has had a prolific film career, with starring roles in such features as "Marooned," "Star!", "Red Sky at Morning," "Doctors' Wives," "Table For Five," "Un Flic" (A Cop), the latter for the legendary French director

Jean-Pierre Melville, and the successful "First Blood."

Among his more memorable performances were the conscience-stricken professional killer who stalks Audrey Hepburn in "Wait Until Dark" and Kathleen Turner's menacing husband in Lawrence Kasdan's "Body Heat," of which one critic wrote: "People saw the movie and asked, 'Why didn't Crenna's wife just divorce him?' Because on the screen he made you feel he would murder his wife, pure and simple. He had those dark shades."

Success in films did not take Crenna away from television, where he has starred in a total of seven series, most recently "It Takes Two" with Patty Duke Astin. His television films have include "Centennial," "The Day the Bubble Burst," "Carney vs. Carney," "A Girl Named Sooner," "Fugitive Family," "Mayflower: The Pilgrim Story," the remake of "Double Indemnity," "First You Cry," PBS' "Double Solitaire" and most recently the highly acclaimed "Passions" with Joanne Woodward and Lindsay Wagner. Perhaps his most moving television performance was as Elisabeth Ashley's philandering professor husband in the PBS adaptation of Alison Lurey's "The War Between the Tates," but he also brought remarkable psychological insight to less-heralded roles, like the middle-class burglar on the verge of a crack-up in "Thief" and the down-and-out football coach in "Footsteps." Crenna will be seen next as an American journalist in "Squaring the Circle," an upcoming television mini-series about the origins of the Polish Solidarity movement, scripted by playwright Tom Stoppard, and in

"Rambo," the film sequel to "First Blood" with Sylvester Stallone in which he reprises his role as Green Beret Colonel Sam Trautman.

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"The Flamingo Kid" is HECTOR ELIZONDO's second feature film for director Garry Marshall. In contrast to Elizondo's outrageous portrayal of a Mafioso disguised as a woman so as to elude assassination attempts by a rival gang in Marshall's hit comedy, "Young Doctors In Love," this time Elizondo presents a more restrained characterization -- that of a concerned father who can't grasp the attraction that a fast-talking sports car salesman holds for his impressionable teenage son, played by Matt Dillon.

Recently, at Norman Lear's request, Elizondo made his directorial debut on the television series, "A.K.A. Pablo." This was a major challenge, as the show had the largest ensemble cast ever in television. It was also the first show to utilize seven cameras instead of the usual four, allowing it to be performed like a stage play with non-stop action.

Elizondo has had many successful outings in comedy. He co-starred with George C. Scott in the hit Broadway play, "Sly Fox," which Arthur Penn directed. Elizondo received a Drama Desk Award nomination for Outstanding Performance in that part. He also starred on Broadway in Neil Simon's "Prisoner of Second Avenue" and in "The Great White Hope." Additionally, he created the role of God in "Steambath," for which he won an Obie Award. He co-starred with Robert Shaw in Strindberg's "Dance of Death" at the Lincoln Center and with Cicely Tyson in "The Rose Tattoo" at the Berkshire Theatre Festival.

Elizondo starred in the NBC mini-series "Casablanca," recreating the famed Claude Rains role of the opportunistic police chief, Louis Renault, opposite David Soul, and in the television movie, "Women of San Quentin," based on a true story for producer David Gerber, playing the Captain of Correction officers. He also portrayed the father and trainer of a prize fighter played by Erik Estrada in the NBC television movie, "Honey Boy," which was a remake of the John Garfield classic, "Body and Soul." On the PBS award-winning American Playhouse series, Elizondo starred as the psychiatrist who counsels a Vietnam War hero in the highly acclaimed two-character play, "Medal of Honor Rag." He also starred in the television movie, "Sundance Woman," and in the six-hour mini-series, "The Dain Curse."

Elizondo's other feature film credits include starring roles in "The Fan," "American Gigolo" (as Detective Sunday), "Report to the Commissioner," "The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3," "Cuba," "Thieves" and "Valdez is Coming," among others.

Elizondo has starred in two television series, "Freebie and the Bean" (as the Bean) and "Popi." He has also made guest appearances on "Kojak," "Columbo," "Baretta," "Maude," "All in the Family," "The Rockford Files" and "Maverick."

Hector Elizondo, a native of New York, leads a life away from the screen as diverse and colorful as his acting roles. In his pre-acting years, he was a conga player with a Latin band, a classical guitarist, a weight-lifting coach, a ballet dancer and the manager of a body-building gym.

At one point Elizondo had plans to become a history teacher, but attending the High School of Music and Art changed all that -- he became hooked on the arts.

As a youth, Elizondo performed as a singer on early radio and television. Later, he also studied dance at the Ballet Arts Company of Carnegie Hall, and was slated for the Broadway premiere of "West Side Story" when a knee injury forced an end to his dance career. He then switched from dance to acting.

Elizondo was a sickly child, which caused him to begin working out with weights as a teenager. He played basketball and baseball and was scouted by the Giants and the Pirates farm teams. However, baseball took too much time away from singing, dancing and music.

Elizondo continues to work out daily -- running, jumping rope, boxing, bicycling, etc. He has been a student of the martial arts for over twenty years.

Elizondo and his actress/photographer/naturalist wife, Carolee Campbell, were members of the 1976 American Buddhist Academy Kendo Team which toured Japan. They both hold a Shogan degree in Kendo (Japanese fencing), which is equivalent to First Degree in Black Belt.

Elizondo speaks Spanish, as well as a little Italian and Japanese. He enjoys backpacking, hiking and river rafting, which Carolee is now making a third career; every summer she leads rafting trips down many of the most difficult rivers in the West. But Elizondo's greatest passion is still music. He states, "Music is my first language. I was singing before

I could talk." He continues to be a classical guitarist and a Latin percussionist, and now plays a Japanese flute called a Shakuhachi.

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JANET JONES makes her screen debut in a co-starring role as Carla Samson, Matt Dillon's love interest in "The Flamingo Kid."

"Carla is different from her Long Island relatives (Richard Crenna and Jessica Walter)," says Jones. "First of all, she's from California, and California and New York are two different worlds."

"She also is not impressed with the material wealth that her aunt and uncle have surrounded themselves with. Carla's more into just enjoying life, which is why she can be attracted to Jeffrey. It doesn't bother her that he's a parking attendant or a cabana boy, because he's always just being himself. He's not caught up into the 'right' clothes, having the 'right' friends or driving the 'right' car -- and neither is she."

It was just about a year ago that Jones was playing in Carl Reiner's celebrity tennis tournament when she was spotted by director Garry Marshall for "The Flamingo Kid."

After several preliminary auditions, she was finally passed into the final round of readings. It was all a pretty heady experience for the young woman who had moved to Los Angeles from St. Louis only three years before. "Garry Marshall sent his limo for me for the final audition," she recalls. "My Mom was visiting from St. Louis and she was so impressed and so excited when the car drove up and I got in."

"They had also asked the people at 'Dance Fever' if I could get out of a rehearsal for my audition -- that was when I knew they were serious about me."

But the interview took place on a Friday night and she had been told she wouldn't hear from them until the following Monday. The suspense was killing her from the moment she left the interview. "I had the whole weekend to worry and brood," she laughs. "But my mother said, 'Calm down. It's going to be alright. Just keep praying all weekend and maybe you'll get it.'"

"Well -- I was only in my apartment for ten minutes when Michael (Phillips, the producer) called with the great news -- 'You're going to New York (the film's location) with us.' I was so excited. This was like a dream come true."

Ironically, director Marshall and producer Phillips had spent much of their time searching for their Carla Samson in New York, even though she was supposed to be a California girl. Even after Marshall saw Jones at the tennis tournament, they still weren't sure.

"Janet had never been in a film before," says Phillips, explaining their initial hesitation in signing her immediately. "To go from zero experience to the major love interest in this movie was a gamble that we would have preferred not to take. But Janet was so perfect for the part."

Phillips feels that Jones has some very rare qualities. "There is a freshness, a naivete and an innocent enthusiasm about Janet. I see her as a 1980s version of Doris Day, because she's wholesome and sexy at the same time.

"And even though Janet is from St. Louis, she comes across in 'The Flamingo Kid' as an Easterner's vision of the

quintessential California girl -- healthy, athletic, attractive and bubbly."

Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, Janet Jones has had more than her share of good luck. In the less than four years since she moved to Hollywood, she has appeared as part of the Motion dance team on five seasons of "Dance Fever"; co-starred in a major motion picture, "The Flamingo Kid"; and survived the fierce competition involved with getting one of the ensemble starring roles in Richard Attenborough's motion picture adaptation of the Broadway hit, "A Chorus Line." (Jones is presently filming in "A Chorus Line" as Judy Monroe.)

Only 22 years old, Janet Jones did not even think about a career as a performer until she was 15, when she suddenly began studying ballet. The sixth of seven children (and the youngest girl), Jones was always athletically-involved, mostly in softball.

Her change of interest to dance was by accident. "I had never planned on being a dancer, because I was such a tomboy as a child," she recalls. "I played softball for about eight years and thought I was going to be a professional softball player someday.

"Then one day I was at an All-Star game and my friend left to do a recital. I went over to watch and the next thing I knew I was dancing.

"That became a whole new challenge for me. People didn't think I could do it because I started so late. But I

had such a desire to just be good, not caring what it would lead to as a profession."

However, while under scholarship with the San Francisco Ballet, Jones realized that she would never be satisfied with a future in ballet, and switched to jazz dance.

It was as a senior in high school that she represented St. Louis on the nationally-syndicated television show, "Dance Fever," which brought her to the attention of Merv Griffin and his producer, Paul Gilbert. They invited her back for an audition with the show's regular dance team, Motion, at a later unspecified date.

Back in St. Louis, Jones concentrated her energies on winning the local, state and finally the national competitions for the title of Miss Dance of America. She won over thirty other state finalists.

A year-long national tour followed; then Jones returned to New York to pass on her crown to the new title-holder. While there, she auditioned with 600 other hopefuls and won a role in the Radio City Music Hall production of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," which ran for six months.

It was after her return to St. Louis, while she was appearing in a St. Louis Municipal Opera production of "South Pacific," that Jones received a call from Merv Griffin Productions asking her to audition in Los Angeles.

Between tapings of "Dance Fever," Jones has appeared in national spots for such products as Wrangler Jeans, Ford, Almay Cosmetics, Shasta soft drinks and Kodak Film. She

also landed a chorus line appearance in "One From the Heart"
and one speaking line in "Grease II."

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