

1

By Cecil B. DeMille

Public adulation being what it is, it is virtually heresy to contend that the real artists in Hollywood never get in front of the camera.

1918  
33  
1951 ?

Yet that is the case on many Hollywood levels.

These behind-the-lights artists make no loud publicity noises, rarely are seen in fan magazines and never spy their name on the marquee.

Yet they are the skillful ones in this citadel of glorification. They are the [unsung unknowns.]

The credit titles of any movie -- which, I think, are a sort of irritant to patrons anxious to see the film get on to Betty Hutton or Jimmy Stewart -- are an honor role of powerful names that mean something within the industry.

A hundred such persons could be named but here is a representative unsung "star" -- Ann Bauchens.

She is a soft-spoken unobtrusive [little woman] who makes a living doing what you would least expect of a soft-spoken unobtrusive woman. She edits the [two-fisted, brawling epic-style motion pictures] which some directors seem obdurately intent on making.

"Annie" has edited my pictures for thirty-three years. By temperament she prefers gardening or poetry to strident motion pictures, but like all missionaries she knows the value of patience in her work.

No publication or reproduction (either photographic, photomechanical or digital) without written approval. Original in BYU Library Special Collections.

She became, I think, Hollywood's first woman "cutter" when one day in 1918, her eyes shining with excitement, she tried her hand at editing "We Can't Have Everything," the Rupert Hughes story which recorded the post-war tribulations of Kathlyn Williams, Thurston Hall, Elliott Dexter and Wanda Hawley. Up to that time editing was usually done by the director.

Annie has a splash of wrinkles about the eyes which gives her a sort of built-in smile, but which might not be there at all except that three decades in my employ have given her a divine tolerance for the foibles and petulance of motion picture directors.

Like all cutters Annie works in an atmosphere of open resistance or outright obstructionism. It is her job to improve the dramatic power of a scene. She goes through a great deal of mental torture in the job of tightening, pruning, mending and generally improving the values of the thousands of feet of film which producers send into the cutting room during the intense weeks on the sets.

It is easy to see what Annie is up against. Every director loves most of the film he has "shot." He shudders when little pieces of it drop to the cutting room floor. On the other hand there were times when, looking at certain completed scenes, I felt like running into the hills to hide. But Annie says quietly, "Go up to the ranch for a few days. I'll take care of this." And she always does.

As Annie puts it, referring to her job of bringing these film children into the world: "I've never lost a director yet."

(3)

An actress feels she has given the world a scene of immortal beauty but along comes Annie with her shears, whereupon the actress cries out with the anguish of a mother watching her daughter's first curls fall before the barber's clippers.

Somehow actors get the idea that the way it appears on the screen is the way they did it. Not always. It may be the actor's performance is off the beam emotionally, and it's the cutter's task to scissor the episode into acceptability.

Annie's first really big recognition came in 1940 -- an Academy Award for her editing of "Northwest Mounted Police," making her the first woman cutter ever to win an Oscar.

Though a gentle person, professionally she is as firm as a stone wall. More than once she has stood her ground. We argue over virtually every picture. On "The Ten Commandments" we "fought" for days over Moses' parting of the Red Sea, a miracle now generally attributed to Paramount. I thought the scene was too long. Annie said no and won out.

There are only six woman film cutters in Hollywood. 6 —

Annie says they usually die young, but most career women would prefer to be in front of the camera and not behind it.

Annie happens to be one star who has never appeared before a camera.

#