

A PINWOOD DIALOGUE WITH BUDD BOETTICHER

A college football player, a boxer, and a bullfighter, Budd Boetticher lived a life as full of adventure as the westerns that he directed. He was one of a select group of American filmmakers whose artistry wasn't fully appreciated until the rise of auteurist criticism in the 1960s. Boetticher's best films were the seven westerns he made with actor Randolph Scott and screenwriter Burt Kennedy, including *Seven Men from Now*, which was restored and presented at the 2000 New York Film Festival. In conjunction, Moving Image presented a retrospective of Boetticher's films; this was one of his last personal appearances before his death in 2001.

A Pinewood Dialogue following screenings of *The Tall T* and *Comanche Station*, moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz (October 1, 2000):

SCHWARTZ: Please welcome Budd Boetticher.
(Applause)

BOETTICHER: Two new hips, so you'll have to bear with me. (Laughter) I was a real macho. They told me to wait six months before I got the second one and I did it in six weeks, and I'm really paying for it. (Laughter) Last night, when we ended after a great, great couple of days, I said to the audience, "The hell with the Oscars. This is the best weekend of my life." So I'll start with you the same way. (Applause)

SCHWARTZ: How did you get into bullfighting? Because this is... Did your parents approve this?

BOETTICHER: A very overweight fat man who spoke beautiful English—and I learned later that's why he was talking to me—commandeered me, and he asked me—one of the few lies I've ever told; I've always told the truth in Hollywood and that's why I've gotten in so much trouble—but he said to me, "How do you like the bullfight this afternoon?" And I said, "I would love to be a bullfighter." Now believe me, I didn't mean that, but I figured I would take a few lessons and then when it got time to fight a bull... Well, to start with, my mother would be terribly ill in Evansville, Indiana, and I'd get the hell out of there. (Laughter)

So the next morning at eight o'clock, there was a knock on the door—and we'd just gotten back to

the hotel, [my friend] Tom and I, at two o'clock in the morning. And they said, "Mr. Boetticher," pronouncing it right—I was nineteen—they said, "Lorenzo Garza is downstairs to see you." In other words, Jesus is here and you can join the church. (Laughter) So knowing it was phony and knowing that my pal in the other twin bed had made this up as a joke, I said, "Fine. Send him up. And Clark Gable's down here to teach you how to act." So I went back to sleep. In about three minutes, a knock on the door, and I went to the door and there was the manager of the hotel and Don Lorenzo Garza. He was there to teach me to bullfight. And I found out very quickly that the old fat gentleman who was such a good friend of mine the night before was General Maximino [Avila] Camacho, the brother of the President of Mexico. He was the only one in the world who could call up Lorenzo Garza and say, "Get your tail over to the hotel and teach the redheaded football players how to fight a bull." And I did, and fell in love with it, and before I could get out of town they had called me for a technical director on *Blood and Sand*.

SCHWARTZ: I just have to ask you about bullfighting, because I'm never going to find this out for myself—

BOETTICHER: Really?!

SCHWARTZ: (Laughs) What is it like to be in there?

BOETTICHER: It's terrifying. But I never—when I was a matador, if you wanted to meet high society in Hollywood, you went to Tijuana every Sunday and there was Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, Spencer

Tracy. Everybody was there. It was very fashionable. I never tried to sell it. But I will tell you one thing (and then we'll get off the bullfight bit; it's not fashionable today): I'm glad I did it because I can promise every one of you guys here, after you've been a matador and fought bulls, there's nothing in Hollywood that's going to scare you. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: Around 1960, after you made [*The Rise and Fall of*] *Legs Diamond*, you essentially left Hollywood in a way to do the project that was a real labor of love, that was a major turning point in your life. Andrew Sarris (who's one of the critics who really appreciated your work from the beginning) in 1968 wrote, "Does anyone know where Budd Boetticher is? The last we heard, our gifted friend was on his way to Mexico..."

BOETTICHER: "...way to Mexico to make a picture about his great bullfight pal Carlos Arruza." I memorized it. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: How did that happen? Why did you leave Hollywood?

BOETTICHER: I don't think, David, that there's going to be another matador that's a motion-picture director. I was tired of doubling Tony Quinn and Bob Stack and Gilbert Roland. I thought, "God, you've got the world right in the palm of your hand. Your best friend in life is Carlos Arruza, who's the best matador in the world. Let's get rid of these guys and play yourself. And everything in the world happened to me during those seven years. Even Carlos was killed in an automobile accident. I stayed there and finished it. And I feel—and I still do—that quitting must be something like stealing. Once you steal something, the next time around it comes a little easier. I was damned if I was going to quit that picture. I'm very proud of it. We'll get it out this next year. We'll get it out again.

SCHWARTZ: You are known primarily as a director of westerns. You've made a lot of films that were not westerns. We showed *The Missing Juror* here, which was your first ...

BOETTICHER: That was my second feature, for God's sake.

SCHWARTZ: Yeah. These are, of course—were the days before film school. So tell us about how ...

BOETTICHER: I didn't learn anything in film school.

SCHWARTZ: How did you... But how did you learn to direct?

BOETTICHER: I watched my first pictures and I said, "Good God, don't ever do that again." (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: Now, tell us about the importance of *Bullfighter and the Lady* in your filmmaking. Because you've made films for about ten years as Oscar Boetticher. This was the first film [in which] you signed your name Budd Boetticher.

BOETTICHER: Well, it was the first good picture I made.

SCHWARTZ: How did that come about? How did John Wayne get involved?

BOETTICHER: He heard about the screenplay that I had written, and I met James Edward Grant (who eventually became the head of Alcoholics Anonymous in Los Angeles—and you have to be really a drunk to get that far!). (Laughter) Duke [Wayne] hired him to write, in 78 pages, the story of my life. He might as well have written the story about tennis. Bob Stack read his story, and he came to me and he said, "Budd, I'm going to go home. I can't make this thing." And, I said, "Bob, we'll shoot the 78-page script," which we did.

And Duke and I disagreed about a lot of things. I've done six forewords for John Wayne books in the last couple of years, and before they can put the book out and use my foreword—and you know I memorized this because I wrote it—each one says, "Everyone who really knows me knows that I truly love John Wayne. But if they know me well, they'll also realize I really hated his guts." (Laughter) So he was angry at me, and he had a problem. He took 42 minutes out, and it took me about 10 years to get them back. So that was a sad period of my life, and the worst thing that ever happened to me.

SCHWARTZ: But a few years later you were working with him again. He produced *Seven Men from Now*. That started this series of films which—really what

you're most famous for: the films you made with Randolph Scott.

BOETTICHER: Well, I think they're the best. *The Bullfighter and the Lady* and the—six out of seven of the Scott pictures I like very much. And you cannot be modest when you love your own stuff. When you see Lee Marvin and Richard Boone and Craig Stevens, and Pernell Roberts and James Coburn in their first pictures, you have to be really happy that you've had something to do with that.

SCHWARTZ: You are naming these marvelous villains. What's great about these films is the so-called "bad guys" are so appealing and interesting. There's a special chemistry that these films have. Part of it comes from Randolph Scott, part of it comes from...

BOETTICHER: Not a lot comes from Randolph Scott. (Laughter) No. Let me explain something so you'll understand it. He didn't need me. He was the richest guy in Hollywood—from oil wells. One day at Lone Pine, I walked out to get on horseback and exercise on a Sunday. (And people don't know this; they think it was [Frank] Sinatra, Bob Hope, people like that...) Randy had a rocking chair that he didn't need. He was the most wonderful guy in the world. He was rocking back and forth and reading *The Wall Street Journal*. And I walked out and he said, "Budd, the most terrible thing happened to me." And I said, "What happened, Randy?" He said, "Three of my new oil wells blew out." I said, "How many came in?" He said, "Eleven. But damn it, you shouldn't lose an oil well with today's technology." So he was really loaded. But the way we got Randy...

Burt Kennedy—who was very responsible for what the pictures turned out to be—his scripts were so beautiful. I walked on the set one day and Duke had given me a beautiful script called *Seven Men from Now*. I read 35 pages of it at lunch and I had never read anything this good. I walked back, and John Ford and a very handsome young man and John Wayne were sitting on Mr. Ford's—I was allowed to call him Jack; everybody else called him Jesus or Coach or... (Laughter) Terrifying man. I walked on the set and I said, "Duke, this is the best thing I've read in my life. I want to do it." He said, "Well, you couldn't have read much of it in an hour for lunch." I said, "I read 35 pages. I don't have to

see another thing and I would give anything in the world to meet this author." He said, "Mr. Burt Kennedy, Mr. Budd Boetticher." And I said, "Burt, what a pleasure. You are brilliant. It's wonderful to meet you." He said, "No, no. We met two years before. I was the villain in your picture with Rock Hudson." (Laughter) And we were together ever since. When he became a director, he called me in Mexico City and he said, "Budd, a terrible thing or maybe a good thing happened: I'm a director. They just made me a director. What should I do?" I said, "Don't do anything but your own scripts and don't change a word."

And talking about John Ford, he and I were deadly enemies when he cut 42 minutes. He didn't do it, Duke did it. And we became great friends. And he was dying over such a long period of time. Mary and I would have horses come from Lisbon to Mexico City to Tijuana and then cross the border after months of hassle and money. Once a month, we would go by Palm Desert and see Mr. Ford. I was allowed to call him Jack. And I would say—I know you've all seen *Of Mice and Men*—I would be Lennie and I would play the part. Instead of saying, "Tell me about the rabbits," I would always say, "Jack, tell me about what you're going to do with your new picture." And it was about the Buffalo soldiers, the black troops in the Civil War. He would tell me these wonderful things he was going to do. And the last time I saw him was two weeks before he died. I stood up; I was sitting on the bed. Mary always went in and talked to Mrs. Ford, who was very ill, too. And I said, "Jack, tell me about your picture with the colored troops." He said, "Budd, you know I'm never going to make another picture." And he reached up, and he held my hand like my wife would, and he said, "Listen kid, if you ever want to be known as the best director in the world, just remember: everybody else is a son of a bitch." (Laughter) That was the real John Ford.

And when I said that Randy didn't have too much to do with it, I meant that with great love and affection. He just played Randolph Scott and allowed us to use all these new fellows you'd never seen before. He said one day to us, "Who is that fellow in the red underwear I played the scene with this morning?" And I said, "His name's Coburn. James Coburn. This is his first picture." He said, "I like that boy. Let's write some more lyrics for him." And we wrote a scene in our mind and shot it, and if you've seen

Ride [Lonesome], it's my favorite thing in the picture. When Whit [James Coburn's character] wants to know why he's not going to be a partner and Richard Boone says, "Because you're going to work with me."... He says, "How long have we been together?" And he says, "You're not going to work with me." And he says, "Three or four years." And he says, "More like five. We're going to be partners." And he says, "Partners? Why?" And he says, "Because I like you, Whit." And Coburn says, "I didn't know that." (Laughter) It's a wonderful scene, and I cut it together and sent it to John Sturges and that's how he got *The Magnificent Seven*.

SCHWARTZ: Hmm. How did you cast Richard Boone in *The Tall T*?

BOETTICHER: I had seen Richard Boone with the wonderful pock-marked face, and I begin watching *Medic*. I needed somebody to take the place of Lee Marvin, who suddenly was a big star. And the studio head said to me, "You don't want to use him." I said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, you know, he has no sense of humor. Your stuff is funny." And I said, "Well, I bet he does." And he says, "Well, look, you're going to get what you want anyway. But do Columbia Pictures a favor: have him over to lunch, go to dinner with him, spend some time with him. See what he's really like. Please don't just go out and hire him." And so I said, "Okay, I will."

So I called him and I said, "Mr. Boone, this is Budd Boetticher." And he said, "Oh, congratulations. I just saw *Seven Men from Now*." And I said, "Well, we can do the same thing with you, but I have a little bit of a problem. Can you come in today and have lunch with me and maybe spend the rest of the day, and we'll get to know each other? It's at the request of the studio." And he said, "What seems to be the trouble?" And I said, "Well, I really don't want to tell you yet." But he said, "I can't do it, Budd, my wife maybe has cancer." (But fortunately, she didn't). And he said, "We're on the way this afternoon to Scripps Clinic near San Diego, and I won't be back until the end of the week. What really is the trouble?" And I said, "Well, the heads of the studio don't think you have a sense of humor." He said, "Well, you've got to admit those heart operations are pretty friggin' funny." (Laughter) So I said, "Don't even bother to come in to lunch. Just go to wardrobe and we'll get you in." And that was Richard Boone.

SCHWARTZ: Okay, this is a question about the spirit of *Maverick*...

BOETTICHER: Well, I'm glad you asked that because it's a very funny story. I could do no wrong at Warner Bros., and Mr. Warner... I always liked the tough guys and they liked me. I am a little worried about the ones that try to tell you what to do, because they're not going to get away with it. But I was walking down the street to have lunch one day and Mr. Warner came along, the colonel. He had four to five people with him. And he said, "Budd, come out here. I want to show you something." I said, "Well, I'm just going to have lunch, Jack." And he said, "Budd, come with me. I want to show you something." They were making *Sayonara* in the islands. So, I walked in and sat down next to the boss.

Now, nine minutes went by, a whole reel. And there was a very handsome young guy (in a green officer's uniform from the navy) and Marlon Brando. Now, I won't go into the nine minutes, but I'll give you a thirty-second summary. Josh Logan was directing. And Marlon Brando said, "Are you rolling, Josh?" And he said, "Yeah, we're rolling." He said, "Where do I look?" He said, "Over there at a fellow waving their handkerchief on the bridge." "Well, hell, I don't want to look at a fellow over on a bridge." Film, film, film, film. Warner's getting more and more angry. And he [Brando] said, "Okay, get him out of it. Thank you. Now, what's my line?" "Oh, Mr. Brando, you say, 'Here he comes now.'" He turns to the young man, a handsome young man, and he said, "Do you know your line?" And the fellow said, "Yeah, I know my line, Marlon." This went on for nine minutes. And the minute the lights came on, I looked up there and I said, "That's *Maverick*." And Warner said, "I wouldn't work with that son-of-a-bitch again as long as I live." I said, "Who are you talking about?" He said, "Brando." I said, "I'm not talking about Brando. What's his name?" And they said, "James Garner." And that's the way he got the job. We became great friends. He was 40 pounds overweight and we spent a couple of months together and he got in shape. I love Jim Garner. He's been just great. I did the first four, too, because I liked Garner so much I didn't...

SCHWARTZ: The location plays such a key role in your films.

BOETTICHER: Lone Pine, yeah.

SCHWARTZ: Just if you could talk about how you found that and how you...

BOETTICHER: Well, they found it hundreds of years ago and I've made nine pictures there, and you can't get a bad close-up of a gorilla in Lone Pine, it's so beautiful. I would take a couple of my horses up and ride around on Sunday. I know every rock in Lone Pine. And a wonderful story, because whenever you think you're really smart and doing something that's very good... I love stories that happen to me, and this one I love particularly. I wanted him in *Ride Lonesome* for Randolph Scott, to be this big way in the background before the titles came on. And he comes closer and closer and closer on horseback. And finally, we turn and there's Jimmy [actor James] Best and we start the picture. I found this great spot and I rode and rode and rode away up at the top of this mountain. I found a spot and Lucien Ballard was with me. I said, "Lucien, tomorrow morning at 7:30, I want a 35mm lens, and put it right here for the opening shot of the picture." And he walked over about ten feet and he dug a hole and there was a spike. And he said, "Come over here a minute. Raoul Walsh and I made this shot eleven years ago." (Laughter) And I said, "Mine."

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [Inaudible question about Monument Valley.]

BOETTICHER: Well, people ask me why I never went to Monument Valley, out of respect for Mr. [John] Ford. But I think Lone Pine is more beautiful, and I think you're right. You just can't make a bad shot there. But I would never follow him.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You mentioned before about Lucien Ballard, the cinematographer...

BOETTICHER: The best.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Did he do all the seven films with Scott?

BOETTICHER: I have to use a little naughty word, but my introduction to Lucien was really something. I walked in the producer's office (on *Magnificent Matador*) and my producer was sitting with his feet up on the desk. Over in a corner in a big leather

chair was absolutely the most beautiful man—and with Lucien you could say that—I've ever seen in my life. And as I walked in, not trying to be too obvious, I thought, "God, I wish I had a part for this guy." My producer said, "Mr. Budd Boetticher, Mr. Lucien Ballard." And I said, "Mr. Ballard, I've seen everything you've ever photographed and it's such a pleasure to meet you." My producer, his name was Eddie Alperson [Edward L. Alperson], said, "Well, I'm glad you two are friends; this is your cameraman."

Well, if you're a director, especially with my disposition, and somebody tells me that's my cameraman, the stuff's going to hit the fan. So, I said, "Let me tell you something," and I gave a lecture. "Don't drive another nail, don't turn on another light, don't cast anybody, don't do anything. Stay off the set." When I got through (I hadn't been looking at the man who became one of my dearest friends), I said, "Mr. Ballard, I'm terribly sorry that you got involved in this tirade. I am very, very proud that you're going to be my cameraman. But my only thing is, because of my background, when we get into bullrings I have a very definite idea of where I want to put my cameras." He said, "Mr. Boetticher, as far as I'm concerned, you can take your cameras and stick them up your ass." (Laughter) And he became my best friend. (Laughter)

We have—I have never had a picture where we didn't have a really happy set, where everybody liked everybody. It's a lot easier that way. And regarding cameramen: if the director and the cameraman really don't care about each other, you're not going to have as good a picture. And that doesn't mean they have to answer each other's questions. It's just the thing that you've got or you don't have.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What is the one film you did with Randolph Scott that you don't like and why?

BOETTICHER: That's very easy. I always say I made six good pictures with Randolph Scott. Randy called me at the end of the fourth picture and he said, "Budd, I have terrible news." I thought he had a problem with one of his adopted kids and it frightened me for a minute. I said, "What is it?" He said, "I have one more picture to do on my contract at Warner Bros. and I can't get out of it." So I said, "I'll take care of it." So the next morning I went over to Warner Bros. and I found out who was producing

the picture [*Comanche Station*]. I asked if I could come up and introduce myself and he said, "Please do." And I went up and he said, "How do you like the script?" I said, "I haven't read it." He said, "What do you mean? You want to make it?" I said, "I want to save it. I don't want you people to screw it up." So I made the picture, and I don't think we screwed it up. And it helped—it didn't hurt Randy. But if somebody else had made the picture without my deep love and affection for Randy Scott, it might have been even worse than it is. And it's not a Randolph Scott picture, it's a Warner Bros. damn Western. (Laughter)

He was more classic than we could put him on film. He was so beautiful. Such a great guy. And he didn't need me. He didn't need Burt. He just needed to buy some oil wells. (Laughter) No, he was really for real.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How did you cast Wendell Corey in *The Killer Is Loose*?

BOETTICHER: He was already cast. And wasn't he wonderful? (Applause) Lucien Ballard and I came by—and he really did become my and my wife's dearest friend. I read in the paper that they were making an eighteen-day picture. And when Lucien Ballard and I came back from Mexico, everybody in Hollywood said, "Don't ever let those two characters ever work together again or we'll make another *Cleopatra* and the studio will go broke." So I went over the same way (the only other time I ever did it) and said, "Please, let me make this picture with Joseph Cotten and Rhonda Fleming." You can't get better-looking than that. And a great, great gal. The interesting thing is, we made it in fifteen days to show them what we could do and just [make them] get out of our way, and none of the three actors objected. The usual actor would say, "What happened to the three days we could have used?" It was done, I thought, so well that it was a good picture. I had never seen it until last year when they ran it in a retrospective in Los Angeles. And it's so great (when you're a little worried about what you've done) when you sit and watch one of your own pictures, and say to yourself, "Damn, that's good!"

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I want to ask you about working with Audie Murphy. What was he like?

BOETTICHER: What [are] you going to do for an encore when you got a Congressional Medal of Honor when you were eighteen years old? I loved Audie Murphy. (Laughter) No, he was great. And a dear, dear friend. He didn't drink, he didn't smoke, he didn't womanize, but he gambled about everything. Two crows on a fence, he'd bet you a thousand dollars that the one on the left would fly out first. (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Was he right?

BOETTICHER: Sometimes. (Laughter) I lost a lot of money with him.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The earliest films of Sam Peckinpah kind of take off from where your films were. Did Peckinpah ever acknowledge any debt to you, or were you friendly with him?

BOETTICHER: Not at all. But I'll tell you a very funny story. Lucien Ballard came down to see me when I was stuck in Mexico and he said, "I just worked with what's going to be a great director. A kid named Sam Peckinpah. And I want you to meet him. You'd really like him." So my sweetheart at the time was Elsa Cárdenas who was a beautiful, beautiful, darling young lady, not just an actress. Sam sent her a script where this lovely girl was going to play a hooker in the middle of the picture. I read it and I said, "Honey, don't do this. You don't need to do this. And the hell with the American pictures."

So he heard about it, and he sent the limousine for me. And I'm the only one in the world who went from a new Rolls Royce to a second-class bus. I was in that position at the time. So I got in the back seat—I felt like I should sit up front, but the chauffeur insisted—so I sat in the back seat and we went to the Del Prado Hotel. Mr. Peckinpah got up. (He was a great director, don't misunderstand me—you asked me a personal question and I didn't like him at all; I'll tell you why.) So at any rate, he was there with my crew. Randy wasn't there and Lucien Ballard wasn't there, but Joel McCrea was there and everybody else was there. And Sam came walking across the room, and he had his Bloody Mary here, and he turned it over here like this and he put his hand out and he said, "Budd, I just want you to know that I've seen *Bullfighter and the Lady* ten times." And—I didn't mean it this way—I just unconsciously said, "How do you like

my Westerns?" He said, "I never saw one of them." (Laughter) So, we were a little different. But he was a great, great director who should still be alive making good pictures. But our personalities are a little different... (Applause)

SCHWARTZ: I do want to ask you about Sergio Leone because there's a—to me, there's a clearly...

BOETTICHER: The Leone thing just happened a few years ago. I shouldn't tell these, but trust me; I think you begin to believe me now. We were—Mary and I were—flying across the ocean to be honored in Italy, and I hadn't seen the program. And I'd got up and I looked at this program and I said, "Oh, damn." And Mary said, "What's the matter?" And I said, "Look who's the head of the judges: Sergio Leone." And Mary said, "So?" I said, "Well, they wrote the same thing about Leone that they wrote about Sam Peckinpah: that they stole everything from me." I said, "So if you see a little fat guy with a beard who looks real cute, tell me, and we'll walk the other way; otherwise (Laughter) I don't want to meet him."

So, we were going up the stairs and with the bellboys in front of us with our luggage, and down around the corner came Leone. He looked at me, swear to God, and said, "Buddy, darling, I stole everything from you!" (Laughter) And we had—for the whole week of the festival, we had breakfast, lunch, and dinner together. Finally, we agreed on something. He said to me, "You know something? I want to produce your next picture. And if I produce it and you direct it, everybody in the world will see it." I said, "Great, just one thing. Stay off the set." (Laughter) And so I loved him. He was a great guy. We were really going to work together, and then he was going to do the big Russian Revolution [movie] and never got to make it; he died. But there's a big difference between, you "stole everything," and "I'd be—the reason I do violence is because I want the world to know how against it I am." (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: In connection with the film score, it seems like the music that is played in the other ones is studio music or it's a theme. The music is the same.

BOETTICHER: Well you know, you're probably right. Because they didn't spend any money on these pictures. We did the best we could and I think we

did pretty well. But that's the last thing that they do. And we found out way after I finished making any Scott pictures that three of them have the same theme. How cheap can you get? (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How did you like working with Cinemascope?

BOETTICHER: I loved it. Cinemascope was invented to get rid of television because nobody was going to the movies. And people had a different idea than I had. They thought that Cinemascope, your leading lady should be over here and your leading man should be over there and then you fill the middle with trees. (Laughter) I put them both together over here and it was a choice for the audience: Do you want to look at the trees or the two people in it? (Laughter) But I liked it a lot. And I think that the Cinemascope pictures that I made with Scott are very good.

SCHWARTZ: Now, we're back to *Comanche Station*—[which] of course is in Cinemascope—which we're about to see. How was it decided which would be Scope and which wouldn't?

BOETTICHER: Oh, the studio. If they were going to spend the money.

SCHWARTZ: It costs that much more to shoot in Scope?

BOETTICHER: Not if they thought they could get more people back to the theaters. And it was beautiful. But everybody went back to television. The pictures got so bad they had to look at television.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is not a very sophisticated question, I'm afraid, but I love *The Tall T*; this is not the first time I've seen it. But I have to ask you, what the heck does the title have to do with the movie? (Laughter)

BOETTICHER: You know, it took Burt and me one year to find out what it was. The original title was *The Captives*, but it would've cost Columbia \$200 to buy the title. So all of a sudden...

SCHWARTZ: \$200?

BOETTICHER: \$200. So I would've paid it myself if I would've known what in the hell they were doing. So, we found out that the ranch—the owner of the ranch...where he got the bulls and was going to get it until he got clobbered, was named Ten Verde. And some brilliant twenty-year-old executive in New York had felt that would be a good title. And it really took us a year to find out where that came from. So I have no idea what he was thinking. (Laughter) I walked in my producer's office—I was about to make *The Magnificent Matador*, and that's about as bad as you can get. I walked in one day and he held up Barnaby Conrad's great book about my friend Manolete called *Matador*. And he said, "Budd, I wish we could steal your friend's title." I said—I thought, Well, I'll kill him right away, so I thought of the worst title I could think of. And he was the head of the studio; I should've known better. So I said, "Why don't we call it *The Magnificent Matador*?" He said, "God, that's great." (Laughter) So you have to be really careful. (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Were you actively involved in the restoration for *Seven Men from Now*?

BOETTICHER: There was no restoration. It's exactly the way I shot it. The Duke and I fought a lot, and you're not supposed to win if you're fighting with John Wayne. And I won a lot. He ended up—started hating my guts, and he just held the picture back, 44 years. Now his son is doing a better job, but he's lost, too. So you'll see it in theaters soon. Actually, I'm very lucky that they held it up for 44 years, because the color is so much better now that it is a better picture. So Michael Wayne, not meaning to, did me a big favor.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Did you ever have any contact with Don Siegel and Clint Eastwood when they actually filmed *Two Mules for Sister Sara*?

BOETTICHER: Yeah. Ron Neely was one of my best friends, and we lived together for a while in Mexico when I was dead broke trying to write *Two Mules for Sister Sara*. I sat [with Ron at the premiere of *Two Mules for Sister Sara*] in front of Don and Clint—and I hadn't met Clint yet. Now we're very good friends, despite this. When Clint Eastwood—this great director and a fine, fine actor—walked—W-A-L-K-E-D—down to put out the dynamite, I was in the Pantages Theater and I said, "Son of a bitch!" And

there was dead silence. Ron said to me, "We ought to get up and hit those two guys." Well, I still have a little injury. I said, "I'll tell you what. I'll hit Don and you hit Clint." (Laughter)

But Don called me the next morning—he was a great director—and he said, "Budd, thank you so much for not walking out on the premiere." (There's a reason I'm telling you all this.) And I said, "Don, how could you make a piece of crap like that?" He said, "Well, it's a wonderful thing to get up every morning, and every week, and know there's a check in the mail." And I said, "Don, it's a better thing to get up in the morning and look in the mirror when you shave and not be ashamed of what you see." (Laughter)

I have now gone back to my original script, where she was a nun until the last two minutes of the picture. *The Los Angeles Times* printed what I thought of the picture, where I said, "The stupidest son of a bitch in the theater was the leading man. Couldn't he smell her breath?" Here's a nun smoking cigars and taking shots of bourbon. It's not my nun. (Laughter) But we will do the picture—I won't direct it but I have a screenplay—and shoot it just exactly like it was written. She was a nun until the last two minutes of the picture. The only one that was keeping her out of bed with Clint was God. And he's pretty important. (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Why couldn't we have allowed Richard Boone to ride off? Because, after all, he did save Randy's life. Is that part of a code that required...?

BOETTICHER: That was a code, but—this is very interesting. A lot of people have asked that. In *Ride Lonesome*, I called the studio halfway through the picture and I said, "Fellas, I don't want to kill James Coburn and Pernell Roberts." And they were aghast. They said, "What do you mean, you don't want to kill them? They are the villains. You have to kill them." I said, "I don't have to do anything." They said, "Well, all right. Will you do us a favor?" (This was after a long argument.) This was the head of the studio, Sam Briskin [Samuel J. Briskin]. He said, "Will you shoot your way, whatever it is, and then kill him like we have in the script?" I said, "Of course." And we got to the last day, and I'd saved the killing for the last. It was a very important thing the studio wanted. And son of a gun, it got to be

four o'clock in the afternoon and all of the toilets and the dressing rooms and everything was in the way—can you imagine?—of where I wanted to film. We never got it. I went back to the studio, and we cut the picture together, and all the powers that be joined me, and we ran it and they said, "God, That's great." I said, "You want to see the death scene?" They said, "Hell, no. We don't need it." And I said, "Okay." (Laughter) You have to do those crooked things.

SCHWARTZ: What was the sort of creative atmosphere like? How much freedom did you have to tell the kind of story you wanted to tell with these movies?

BOETTICHER: Freedom, my new friend David, is a word I have... They [the studios] don't fool around too much. And that Burt would write beautiful scripts. And I would read them and just marvel [at] what he had done. Then we would be on the set together. We would say, "Why don't we do this? Why don't we do that?" And I would guess that maybe thirty percent of each finished picture was never on paper.

SCHWARTZ: When we were first talking about this show, you sent me a manuscript, which was filled with these incredible stories from your life. I'm just going to ask [for] one because it amused me so much. The Doctor Bash story.

BOETTICHER: Ha ha!

SCHWARTZ: After reading this story, I couldn't believe you even survived your youth. Could you just tell us about this incident and how you... You could show us the scars if you like.

BOETTICHER: First, I have to tell you, the first book that will be out again this year is *When in Disgrace*, the story of my seven years in Mexico. I couldn't possibly direct it because you wouldn't believe one word, and it's all true and I'm still here. But I think one of the most—forget the bulls—I think one of the most dangerous periods of my life... Steve Crane, who at one time was married to Lana Turner and lived with me for a while after she divorced him, and I had to suffer through all of that... (Laughter) And I was kind of glad when she did; he's such a great guy. But he came to me one day and he said the most wonderful thing, "Are you losing your hair?"

And I said, "Well, I hope everybody is." And he said, "No, I'm serious." And I said, "Yeah, I guess so. I look at it and shudder every so often." He said, "For \$500 we can save all of our hair." I said, "Yeah, tell me about it." So he said, "There's a Dr. Bash and he's experimenting with this serum that he has invented. And we get two holes in your head and then he fills it with this new serum and we'll never lose our hair." So, I said, "Well, \$500?" I said, "Where? Why \$500, why not \$5,000?" He said, "We're the experimentation. Then when our hair stays in there, then we'll make a lot of money." I said, "You mean, he'll make a lot of money..." Well, whatever.

So we flipped. And I lost. And I went in to meet Dr. Bash. Steve was really suffering, because Lana was on the cover of every magazine in the world. He was waiting in the other room and I went in and they strapped me—which should've made me wonder—in a chair. (Laughter) And out comes the syringe. The syringe was bigger than I was. And the nurse stood kind of back—I knew later [this was] because I was going to squirt a lot of blood. But he started sticking these holes in my head. All of a sudden, Steve came in with a beautiful picture in *Photoplay* of Lana on the cover, and I wasn't feeling a thing. It really was quite a hypodermic needle. And he came in looking at the picture of Lana, and he looked up to show me the picture and he went like this and threw up. I thought I was in a little trouble.

So I had always been five-eleven, working on six feet—never quite made it. Then I went home and went to bed, and the next morning I was six-foot-three. I had a head that was up to here. And I was in the middle of a picture. What the serum did, it went right to the roots and where the roots would die from pressure as you got older, this serum kept you from dying (which of course it didn't).

And so Steve said to me, "I'm not going to do it." And I said, "I've killed a few bulls in my life and no animals otherwise but if you don't do it, I'm going to kill you." So he did it, and he had a beautiful new girl that he was with, really with, and as he went to sleep in that pain of that night, he slept on her shoulder. The next day, he wasn't six-feet-three, but he had a big hole on the side of his head where her shoulder had been. (Laughter)

So years went by and I wanted Mary to meet Steve, and Steve to meet my wife. And we were there with the people from Columbia. Evelyn Laye, who was Miss Columbia—she ran the studio even more than Harry Cohn—and she said, "Steve wants to ask you a question." And I said, "What is it, Steve?" He said, "Do you have any problem with your head?" I said, "No, not when I got back to five-eleven, I didn't. But why?" And Evelyn started to laugh. They thought Steve had cancer of the brain. He gained a little height, so the doctor opened him up and all of this stuff like putty oozed out. And I said, "Steve, you know what that's from, don't you?" And he said, "You didn't have any trouble like this?" I said, "No," and I said, "You're lucky, because if I had had and you hadn't, I really would've killed you." Before Steve died, we went into the bathroom together and he showed me that he had had some more hair sewn in. So forget the life I've lived, that was the worst experience. But all the men—the women don't give a damn—but all the men want to know about that. So...

SCHWARTZ: And your hair looks pretty good.

BOETTICHER: Well, yeah. What I've got left is exactly like it was and it cost me \$500. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: As one reads this life story of yours—which is so farfetched that nobody could've made it up—I want to ask you about where this sort of lust for adventure came from. Because you said that you were born not with a silver spoon in your mouth, but with a golden spoon. You came from a very successful family...

BOETTICHER: I came from a very, very filthy-rich family, and it took me thirty years to find out I was adopted. I'm not being disrespectful, but when I was thirty and found out right after the war, I really said, "Thank you. Thank you." (Laughter) Because I didn't get along very well with my parents. But I don't think we were laughing about it today. I've lost thirty pounds; I really don't look like this. This is all plastic surgery—and there's not a hell of a lot about me that hasn't been fixed one way or the other.

So when I was eight, nine, ten years old, I was the biggest sissy—we called them sissies in those days—I have ever known in my life, in retrospect, looking back. You fellows aren't old enough to know it, but when I was eight, nine, ten years old we

didn't have zippers, we had buttons. And every day after school, they would tear my pants open and throw my pants up in a tree and I would race home. When I was a sophomore in high school, I became the hundred-yard-dash champion of Indiana. (Laughter) Which is true. I could run like hell but I couldn't fight. So I had to... I would make a couple of touchdowns and then get the hell kicked out of me on the way home. So I went down to a wonderful black gymnasium in the toughest place in Evansville. If my mother had known where I was, she would've died. I had \$100 that I had saved for this specific thing. And I said to the owner of the gym, "Look, I've been beaten up from all directions, and I am the champion of the hundred-yard dash, but I'd like to survive to get to college. Can you teach me how to fight?" And after that, I never lost one. They told me things to do that are just terrible. (Laughter)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Actually, I was curious not about the films, but you must've been contemporary at Ohio State with Jesse Owens, and you say you were a hundred-yard fast champion. Did you ever run track against him?

BOETTICHER: I ran next to him one time at the Drake relays. And I had the best-looking track outfit you ever saw. And I looked over at this beautiful young man next to me, and he said to me, "Don't run away and leave me, white boy." And I thought, "Oh, you poor sucker." (Laughter) And we finished and I came in second, and we were walking back and I thought, "My God, what happened to me?" I knew all those six guys to my left, but I didn't know who he was. Nobody did. And the announcer said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the results of the hundred-yard dash are: First, Jesse Owens, Cleveland Tech. Second, Oscar Boetticher Jr., Central High School, Evansville, Indiana." And I don't know who came in third—by that time, I was shocked! But they said, "And the time is nine and four-tenths seconds, which ties the world's record."

SCHWARTZ: Wow.

BOETTICHER: Well, when I went to Ohio State, Jesse was a senior and I was a very green freshman. And that much difference—because I weighed 170 at Culver [Military Academy]. And I went to Culver for 2 years to put on a little more weight, because at 192 pounds, I was the smallest running back on the

Ohio State team. And I would see a lot of him when I could. He was so special. I will guarantee you, with all the great runners that there are today, if Jesse Owens had had these tracks and these shoes and this equipment, there would be new world records that were below what we have now.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [Inaudible question about whether he met Ernest Hemingway]

BOETTICHER: Yeah. He wanted to meet me because he thought I was crazy; I was the only American in the world... No, he was very, very special, and I got to know him pretty well.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [Inaudible question about whether they talked about bullfighting]

BOETTICHER: Oh, that's all we talked about. What the hell else am I going to talk about with him?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [Inaudible question about learning to direct by making movies as opposed to overeducation today]

BOETTICHER: I think it's very simple. I think the problem today is that they don't deal with people anymore. They blow up buildings and sink ships. And if you go to a theater like this and people aren't in love or they [don't] frighten you or they [don't] make you laugh—the things that we want [them] to do—you don't have a movie. People have asked me (and it's a compliment that they asked this), "Why are your pictures different than any other director's pictures?" Well, it's true, and this is just the way I've lived. Everything that I put on the screen, I have either done or I know can be done. I don't have Kirk Douglas and Clint Eastwood walking down a street and they're shooting at them with machine guns and they don't get hit because they're the two leading men. I just don't think they understand that we would be much more

fascinated with what we see on the screen if there were people we could relate to.

When we ran *A Killer Is Loose*, I got up on the stage and the audience—like you; you're here and it's great... And I said, "Do you people realize the most terrible thing that ever happened to Hollywood?" And they said, "No, what?" I said, "*Titanic*. I'm not talking about the picture, I'm talking about the expense. You know how many pictures I can make with \$200 million? Two hundred." (Applause)

They asked me in New York (and you'll know the word) why I hadn't made a picture in the last 18 years. I said, "I don't think a leading lady has to say F-U-C-K to establish character in the first reel." And I still don't believe it. No, I think there are some very good pictures. I hope that Curtis Hanson will direct my book. I saw *L.A. Confidential*, after I had seen him for the first time in years, and I knew with all the profanity, I knew I would hate it and would be ashamed of it. And I just loved it. And I thought, "I don't care if he said that. That's where it belongs." But I just kind of maneuver my scripts around so I don't have to use four-letter words.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Are there any actors or actresses that you see in movies today that you would like to make a movie with now?

BOETTICHER: Yeah, not really *like* to, but there are a few whom I admire. And it's not a long list. But there are some very good ones there. I decide whether I like *people* or not. Not whether I like actors or not. You can usually take a nice guy or a lovely lady, and if they have a brain in their head, you can help them enough to be good on the screen. But I just don't work with anybody I don't really like.

So, thank you so much for coming. (Applause)

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