



DAVID KYLE
SF Fandom Pulp Historian

25th ANNIVERSARY! **FILMFAX** PLUS

The Magazine of Unusual Film, Television, & Retro Pop Culture

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BOOTH COLMAN
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BOOTH COLMAN

Working with Boris Karloff, Claude Rains & Basil Rathbone!

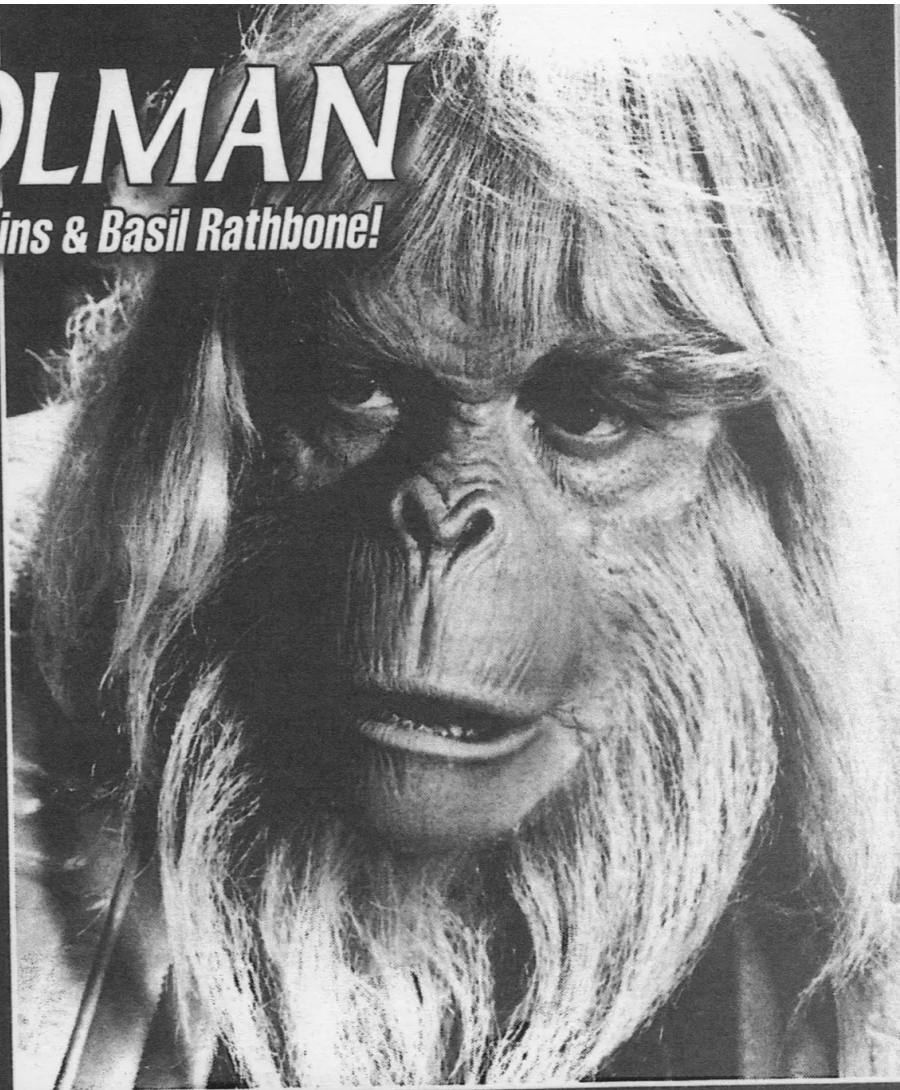
Interview by JAN ALAN HENDERSON

IN TODAY'S CULTURE, ACTORS COME FROM ALL WALKS of life. Some are discovered in their home towns, some sing and dance on talent variety shows. Some are merely picked out of the workaday world by agents looking for the next big thing. But back in the day, actors and actresses came to public prominence through the legitimate stage. Actors would perfect their craft on the boards, before ever stepping in front of the lens of a motion picture camera. Such is the case with veteran actor Booth Colman.

Mr. Colman, a native of Portland, Oregon hit the stage as a pre-teen. An early assignment was a radio serialization of *David Copperfield*, with Colman playing David as a youth. As a juvenile player, Colman was building a sizable *résumé* by appearing in civic theater in the Portland area.

From there, Mr. Colman went on to appear on stage, in film, (including the sci-fi B-movie staple *World Without End*), and as a guest star on multiple television series (with a recurring role as Dr Zaius on *Planet of the Apes*) over a five decade span. Still accepting acting assignments, currently Booth has been featured in the very popular "Go-Daddy," Super Bowl commercials, on contemporary television, such as *My Name Is Earl*, and in recent film roles such as *Intolerable Cruelty* with George Clooney.

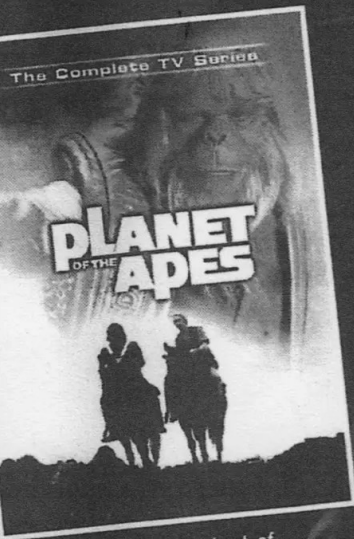
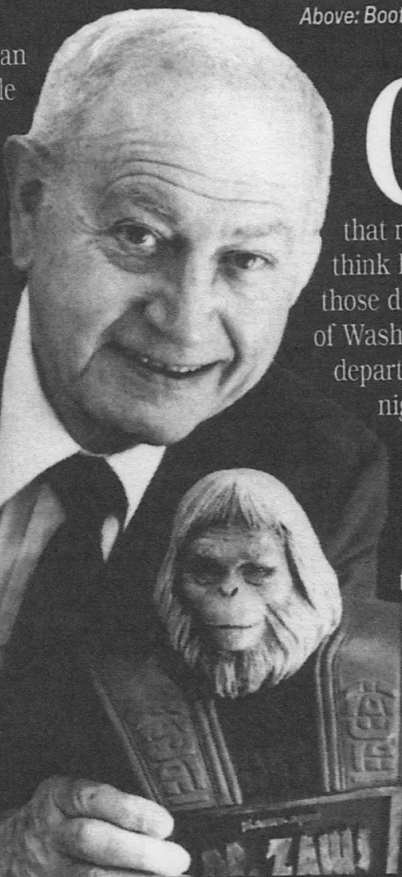
Recently, *Filmfax* talked with Colman about his multi-faceted career, while rubbing shoulders with show business luminaries such as Boris Karloff, Humphrey Bogart, Claude Rains, Basil Rathbone, and a host of others.



Above: Booth Colman in full prosthetic make-up as Dr. Zaius in the 1974 *Planet of the Apes* TV series. Make-up by Frank Westmore.

COLMAN: I played in amateur theatricals in Portland, Oregon when I was a child. I also played on radio there. I played in *David Copperfield* as the boy in those broadcasts, until he grows up. It was a serial that ran about ten weeks—that was my first professional job. I think I received five dollars a show, which was very pleasant in those deep Depression days. After that I attended the University of Washington in Seattle because they had a very fine dramatic department. There, when you were in a play you played six nights a week for six weeks, so you learned something during the run of the show. It was getting to be wartime—the Army and the Navy sent scouts around wanting people that they could train to speak Japanese because there was a shortage of caucasian people who were familiar with the language, the reading and writing of it. I majored in the Oriental language department and minored in the theater arts department. There were two theaters on the campus, the Showboat, which was a proscenium theater, and a Theater in the Round.

I have continued to do theater, appearing outside of Detroit, at the Meadow Brook Theater in Rochester, Michigan and, since 1981, have portrayed Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* more than 700 times on stage. ➔



Booth Colman holds a bust of Dr. Zaius, his character from the *Planet of the Apes* TV series (as seen on the DVD box art above.)

When it came time to go in the Army, I was sent immediately to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, where there was an Army Japanese language school. After nearly a year there, having had several months in Seattle, I was sent to New York City and worked in an office there. After the war came to an end, I went to Fort Dix. I stayed on the East Coast because I wanted to get a job on the stage. In New York I joined a group called the Equity Library Theater.

FAX: Didn't you get to visit the set of *Casablanca*?

COLMAN: I spent a summer here in Los Angeles. I had an uncle and aunt and I stayed with them. I was taken over to Warner Brothers to see the lady in charge of talent. They had a theater group there. In those days they used to hire good-looking young kids from all over the country, and sign them to a minimum kind of contract, and out of that group one or two would get somewhere. They would get bit parts in the movies. Robert Cummings was one such actor that came out of that program. I was auditing the classes and lectures. I remember Elia Kazan was a working actor playing in a picture called *Blues in the Night*, which had Billy Halop of the Dead End Kids in the cast. Kazan came in one day and spoke about acting. Ronald Reagan was a contract player who used to attend the classes. I was allowed to go onto any set, as long as I didn't get in the way or bother anyone. I was on the set of *Casablanca* (1943) quite a few times because I wanted to talk to Claude Rains, who I admired very much. Now, I marvel at his patience with me, answering questions and so forth.



Left: Coleman once met and talked with Claude Rains on the set of *Casablanca*. He also visited with Walter Hampden on the set of Errol Flynn's *They Died with Their Boots On*.

[Author's Note: Colman appears in a crowd scene during the raid of Rick's Cafe, where Claude Rains as Captain Renault gives his famous line, "I'm shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!" (a croupier hands Renault a pile of money.)]

I had no impressions of Mr. Bogart. I think I said hello to him once. Claude Rains told me about himself, and you know actors like an audience. I learned a great deal about his career, from the days when he was a poor kid in London. I enjoyed talking to him.

Another set I visited was the set of *They Died With Their Boots On*, which starred Errol Flynn and Walter Hampden. Walter Hampden was one of the great American stage actors and the only performer aside from Maurice Evans to play *Hamlet* three times on Broadway in the post-World War I era. I spoke to Mr. Hampden a couple of times. Errol Flynn was a dashing figure, both on screen and off. I think he was a personality actor. What he did, he did very well. I watched several scenes being shot, and he was totally professional—an actor with great charisma.

I wasn't star struck; I was more interested in Claude Rains and Walter Hampden than I was in Humphrey Bogart or Errol Flynn. I was interested in Rains and Hampden as professional actors of great standing. That might sound pompous, but I was interested in craft. I ran into Hampden a couple of times later in Los Angeles.

Claude Rains I never saw again. But I've always thought he was an incredibly gifted actor. I've read about him since in a book that his daughter had something to do with, *An Actor Speaks* by David J. Skal and Jessica Rains. It's quite amazing when you realize Claude Rains came from extremely humble beginnings and what he achieved in his life. In his first picture, *The Invisible Man*, he was in bandages

throughout. It was the voice they were after, and he did have an unforgettable voice. Rains spoke to me about his mentor, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree.

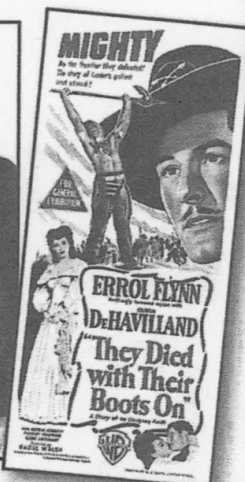
FAX: Didn't you also work with Boris Karloff after the war?

COLMAN: The first job I had after the Equity Library, an agent approached me. I was cast into the Broadway show *The*

Assassin [as Monsieur Jacques] by Irwin Shaw, which Martin Gable directed. It had a very limited run. It was a war play. I understudied the lead. They brought an actor in from Sweden to play the lead. After that I was cast in *GI Hamlet* [as Guildenstern], a streamlined version of *Hamlet*, adapted by Maurice

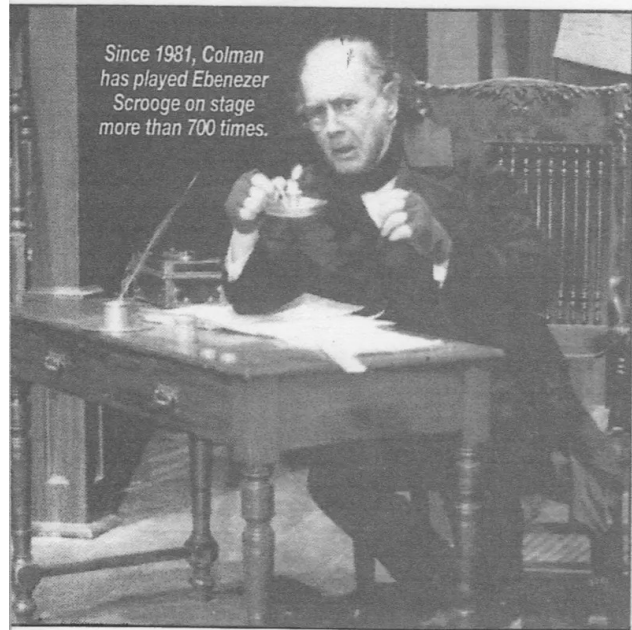
Evans. I had auditioned for Margaret Webster. We performed that at the Merchant Sailors Club. Several of the Allied countries had a floor at the club, where they would entertain their sailors. Britain had a floor there, and someone I knew was arranging the entertainment. I was still in uniform, and I recited some classic soliloquies from Shakespeare. We did *Hamlet* dressed in kind of 1870s uniforms. George Schaefer was the director. It had a very good run in New York after a break-in tour.

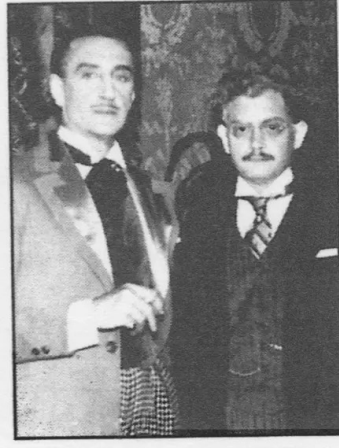
Boris Karloff was one of the backers. Michael Todd was the producer. His name was officially on as producer, but I never saw the man. Karloff put up some of the money. He and Maurice Evans were great friends. He was courting a lady in the company, named Evelyn Helmore. He married her when we were in Philadelphia on the try-out tour. Morton DaCosta was playing Osric later became quite a director on Broadway and in Hollywood. He directed *The Music Man* and *Auntie Mame* on stage and screen. [Mr. Colman appears in the feature *Auntie Mame* as Alan a party guest.] Morton sent a telegram to Evelyn on the eve of her marriage to Boris saying,



Booth Colman as Scrooge in the stage play of *A Christmas Carol*.

Since 1981, Colman has played Ebenezer Scrooge on stage more than 700 times.





Above and center: Colman first got to know Boris Karloff as one of the producers of *G.I. Hamlet*, in which Colman was an understudy. Right: Colman also appeared with Basil Rathbone in the stage production of *The Winslow Boy*.

"Don't let him scare you out of bed!" I came to know Boris Karloff much better later on. I worked with him three times. He was a charming man, the youngest of seven boys. His father was Scottish, and there was a title in the family, which the oldest brother had. They were all barristers [lawyers]. Boris wanted to be an actor and ran off to Canada. It was not well looked upon in the family. He lived like a gypsy. His dream was to be an actor. He would join cheap stock companies, get stranded and all sorts of things. He told us stories about

those days in Canada with stock companies. He ended up coming to America where he did extra work. He ran a luncheonette at one point, and he was a truck driver. He was befriended by Lon Chaney, Sr., and eventually got into pictures. He received his great break in *Frankenstein* with James Whale.

FAX: You did stage work with Basil Rathbone?

COLMAN: I was on tour with Basil in a production called *The Winslow Boy* by Terrence Rattigan. [Author's note: Rathbone played the attorney, Sir Robert Morton, and also staged

(produced) the play.] The London company played on Broadway, and as soon as they closed, we opened for the Theater Guild. We toured in 1950. Rathbone was a master actor. He was the opposite of the characters he frequently played, which were icy, very cold and calculating individuals. He was a fun-loving, charming man. He would answer questions about his Hollywood career when asked. At that point, he was trying to distance himself from the role of Sherlock Holmes. He would get a bit annoyed when people would come up for autographs and wouldn't want to talk about anything but Sherlock Holmes.

Basil had a very extensive theatrical background. He made many motion pictures besides the Holmes series. Basil was born in South Africa, educated in England. His aunt and uncle were Shakespearean actors who toured, and he earned early experience touring playing small parts in Shakespearean repertory. His wife was quite an extravagant lady, Ouida Bergere. I asked Basil once where his wife ⇒



Basil Rathbone with his wife, Ouida Bergere.



The FANTASTIC FILMS & TV of BOOTH COLMAN!



Colman (left) in a scene from the sci-fi classic *Them*.

FAX: How did you get cast as a reporter in *Them*.
COLMAN: My good friend Stan Laurel knew the man who directed *Them*. Gordon Douglas. Gordon had worked with Laurel and Hardy a lot. Stan had called Gordon and had mentioned me, and I went out to the studio, and they hired me. It was a nothing part, but it was still a nice job.

FAX: How did you meet Stan Laurel?

COLMAN: I met Stan while I was here in Los Angeles for ten weeks with Gertrude Lawrence and Noel Coward at the Biltmore. We were doing *Tonight at 8:30*. Noel directed us in New York and traveled with us. Noel left us in Philadelphia and rejoined us in San Francisco. He had been invited to the Royal Wedding in London of Elizabeth and Philip. The entire tour was before the Broadway opening, and he acted with us throughout the entire tour. Each stop on the tour was for ten weeks, and we didn't have many stops. So, that's a long run—we were at the Biltmore in Los Angeles. On an off night, I had dinner at the home of my dear friend Pat Silver Lasky, author and screenwriter who lived in the San Fernando Valley, who had gone to college with me, and who

was married to Tony Romano, the musician who was always with Bob Hope. We talked at the dinner table about all matters theatrical, and I mentioned I thought that the great comics were Buster Keaton, Stan Laurel, and Charlie Chaplin, because they were originals. She said, "Stan Laurel is our next door neighbor, and I'm going to invite him in for a drink after dinner." That's how I met Stan.

He was very impressed with the people I was working with, Noel Coward and Gertrude Lawrence. He and his wife wanted to see the show so, I spoke to Miss Lawrence the next day. She and Coward were both fans of Stan's—it was sort of a mutual admiration society. I saw Stan a number of times after that. We corresponded—he was a great letter writer. I have about 70 letters I received from Stan. Stan was listed in the phone book, and corresponded with almost anyone who would write him. He wanted to keep in contact with people who saw his films. He craved an audience. He had a slight limp caused by the minor stroke that he had. Lois, his daughter, told me that he looked upon me like a son.

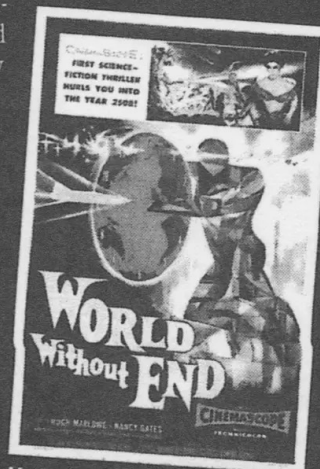


Booth as the evil Mories in *World Without End*.

This could have been a slight exaggeration, but we were very close.

FAX: You also played a villain in Allied Artists' *World Without End*.

COLMAN: That was a good part for me. Civilization is forced underground in the future, after a nuclear war. Rod Taylor, ⇒



Modernist poster art from *World Without End*.

born. I mentioned I thought she was born in England, and Basil turned to me and said, "No, dear boy, she was born on a train going from Madrid to Paris." I don't know whether that's true, but she gave birth to quite a number of exotic stories about her origin. She was quite possibly born in New York. They gave extravagant parties when they lived in Hollywood. She was a social climber, a very talented woman. She wrote title cards for silent pictures and screenplays, and was a great promoter. I think she was probably responsible for some of Basil's success in Hollywood. But she knew how to spend money!

Basil took over the direction of *The Winslow*

Boy. We were supposed to play two or three weeks, but we ended up giving performances for four or five months.

FAX: Didn't you also know Jack Pierce?
COLMAN: Yes, Jack made me up once for some TV show, which I can't recall the name of, at Universal. We had a long conversation. He was a very gifted man. Jack Pierce's make-up set the standard for movie monsters. It was brilliant!

FAX: After you appeared on the New York stage, you traveled to Hollywood.

COLMAN: I came west to attend my sister Sharlene's engagement party, some kind of

family function, after I had appeared on the New York stage. Then I came to Hollywood to visit my friends Alan and Betty Dexter, friends from New York—Alan was working in pictures. I met an agent here through him, and was immediately taken over to RKO Studios and introduced to the casting director. There was a part that the agent was thinking of, and he immediately had the casting director take me in to meet Howard Hawks, who was in the process of casting *The Big Sky*. It was for the part of the youngest member of the expedition, Pascal, a French Canadian trapper. I had an interview with Howard Hawks. You couldn't hear him if you were standing

Hugh Marlowe, and the crew of a spaceship broke through the time barrier and went into the future, where they encountered the underground civilization I was part of. I played the character Mories. Hugh Marlowe, who played the lead, was a pleasant fellow, very much like his screen personality. He was very quiet, and a very competent actor. I think Rod Taylor came from Australia. He had quite a career at MGM. He's still around, but I haven't kept up with his career. Ed Bernds, who worked a lot at Columbia was on board for this show at Allied Artists and several other Allied Artists productions, was the director. He did loads of work with the Three Stooges over at Columbia, was getting to direct at Allied Artists. He also worked as a director with the Bowery Boys. The actor I had the most scenes with was Everett Glass, who was an elderly gentleman. Glass had done quite a bit of work and appeared in a couple of TV *Supeman* episodes after he did *World Without End*.



Booth Colman, as Mories, has the Earthmen arrested and restrained in *World Without End*.

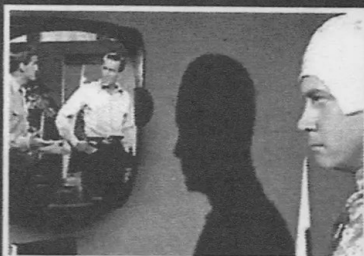
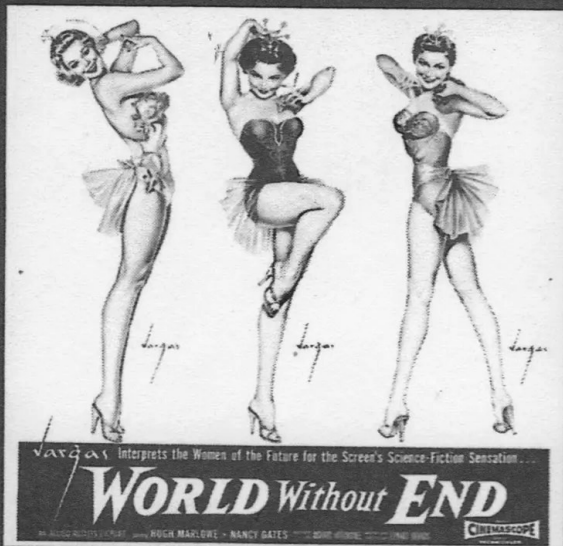
FAX: You appeared in one episode of the unreleased Boris Karloff television series *The Veil*.

COLMAN: That episode was called "The Crystal Ball." I didn't see Boris until I arrived on the set. I had a nice reunion with Boris. Evie was there, too. He was my uncle in the story. I thought, to be honest, Boris sort of walked through it. The script didn't give him much to do. Because it had a French theme, we were all trying to be Maurice Chevalier. It was a good part for me. Recently someone in Vermont sent me a copy of the *Veil* DVD collection containing "The Crystal Ball," which I didn't know was available. I remember that when we shot "The Crystal Ball," the studio was in financial trouble. It was the old Hal Roach studio. Hal Roach, Jr. produced *The Veil*. The studio was about to go into receivership, so they couldn't finish *The Veil* television series. They had to stop the series, and Boris was not paid.

I also did other television shows of the day, including *Dragnet*, *Route 66*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *77 Sunset Strip*, *Man with a Camera*, *Death Valley Days*, and *Science Fiction Theater*.

FAX: You also appeared on Boris Karloff's *Thriller* series.

COLMAN: Boris didn't appear in either of the *Thriller* episodes I was in. He was the host, and shot his introductions and closings sep-



Above, top down: Eye-catching window card poster for *World Without End*. An even more alluring eye-full of Vargas pin-ups on this *World Without End* lobby card. Right, top down: Everett Glass, left, converses with Booth Colman in a scene from *World Without End*. Colman, as Mories, spies on the Earthmen, using a hidden televisor.

next to him. He was a very pleasant man. He said, "I understand you speak French. Would you mind speaking for us?" I got the role, and it went on for weeks and weeks and weeks. I had a death scene in that picture, I was dancing on top of the boat with Buddy Bear, he was a giant, 6' 7", then an indian arrow shoots me in the neck. I remember, they had to string a line off camera, for the arrow to travel up to my neck, for the one shot.

Kirk Douglas played the lead. He was very nice, rather flamboyant, we became friends. It was a fairly small company, a small number of principal players. They hired a whole indian tribe. I ran into Kirk after *The Big Sky* a

number of times. I remember once he picked me up and I spent the afternoon with him at his tailor's. He enjoyed talking to me; we had long conversations about the theater.

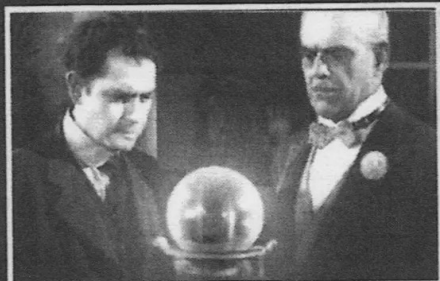
FAX: You appeared in a film called *Ring of Fear* with Clyde Beatty, as one of the psychiatrists, along with veteran character actor Arthur Space.

COLMAN: Arthur Space was a good fellow to work with. It was one of those quick jobs. My friend Sean McClory, who played Major Kibbee in *Them*, had been with the Abbie Theater in Ireland, and came to Hollywood under a contract with RKO. I remember traveling to Deming, New Mexico on the train with Sean,

where we shot *Ring of Fear*, at least, the part that I was in. That's where the Clyde Beatty Circus was located, the picture was produced by John Wayne's production company Wayne-Fellows Productions.

FAX: You also were in a film with Michael Rennie called *The Prodigal*.

COLMAN: That was at MGM. It was just a job, I didn't have a very impressive role. It was a few days' work. Lana Turner was in that as well, with Richard Eagen, Anthony Quinn, Rita Moreno, and Jeffrey Hunter. I came to know Jeffrey Hunter later. He was a charming fellow, very handsome. He was going to play Jesus, in the remake *King of Kings*, ⇒ 118



Left, above: Colman appeared with Karloff in an episode ("The Crystal Ball") of the unaired suspense anthology, *The Veil*. Center: Richard Basehart, Eddie Albert, and Colman in a scene from the pilot episode ("Eleven Days to Zero") of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. Top right: Colman was in two episodes ("Man in the Cage" and "Waxworks") of Karloff's TV classic, *Thriller*. Bottom: Colman also appeared with Joanna Frank in an *Outer Limits* episode ("Zzzzz").

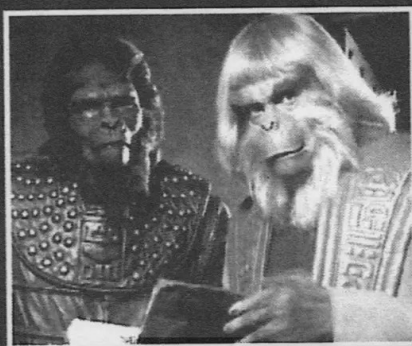
arately. I didn't see him at all during those shoots. I was in two episodes: "Man in the Cage" [as the desk clerk] and "Waxworks" [as Lt. Bailey]. Oscar Homolka was one of the stars. It was a rehash of all of those wax museum film vehicles that were later transcribed to television. I was a homicide inspector and my assistant was Ron Ely. We must have looked like Mutt & Jeff, because he was a tall fellow and I was short. I saw Ron later when he was about to do his own series, *Tarzan*. I shot two episodes of *Tarzan* back to back in Acapulco, Mexico.

FAX: You did an *Outer Limits* episode [as Dr. Warren] called "Zzzzz," directed by John Brahm.

COLMAN: We shot that at MGM. I remember looking up, and there was a big burly gaffer who appeared to be crying. He was listening to the radio—he had a transistor radio set in his pocket with a single earphone. It had just been announced that President Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas. The news went around the set like wildfire. Someone came in, I believe it was the producer, Joe Steffano, and they dismissed us for the day. I remember meeting the star Phil Abbott at SAG (Screen Actors Guild) meetings after that, and he would always mention that horrible day. Marsha Hunt, who played Abbott's wife in the show, was a very liberal lady who had gone through the blacklisting.

FAX: You also were in the pilot for *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*.

COLMAN: Yes, I was in two episodes as the Chairman: "The Mist of Silence" and the pilot "Eleven Days to Zero," produced by Irwin Allen after his success with the motion picture of the same name. It guest-starred Eddie Albert as a scientist who has an experiment that he has to perform on either the north or the south pole—some simple task like that!



Booth Colman (right) in full make-up as Dr. Zaius in the *Planet of the Apes* TV series.

I worked with Richard Basehart again on a pilot for the Irwin Allen television series *Time Travelers* [as Dr. Amos Cummings], in a story by Rod Serling about an outbreak resembling a disease that existed around 1871. Sam Groom as Dr. Earnshaw, looking for a cure, is approached by Jeffrey Adams, played by Tom Hallick, who believes that he could help him. Dr. Amos Cummings has perfected the art of time travel, and the plan is for Earnshaw and Adams to go back to 1871 and learn how Dr. Henderson, Basehart, cured his patients.

FAX: Around the same time, you appeared in *The Planet of the Apes* TV show as Dr. Zaius.

COLMAN: I auditioned for the casting director, Marvin Paige, and the producer and some studio people. I read from the script, and they liked what I did. One of the producers said that some of the people they auditioned had become claustrophobic because of the make-up. I said that would not bother me, because Lon Chaney's ghost would come down and protect me! Frank Westmore, of the world famous Westmore family, did my make-up every morning.

Frank was a charming man. We talked a lot about his family during our morning make-up sessions. He had extraordinary family stories, and, as you well know, their dynasty goes way back in the picture business to the silents. I was lucky, because all of Maurice Evans' wardrobe fit me. I had worked with Maurice Evans on Broadway in *Hamlet* during my time New York, a period which also included, *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep*, with Fredric March. One day I received a call from England. Maurice congratulated me on getting the job, and was very kind. ⇒ 118

Playing that part in that series was a milestone for me. One must remember, this is 36 years later, and in that time I'd been invited to Japan, Germany, Holland, to do autograph and fan conventions, and many shows locally. *The Planet of the Apes* was highly popular with the Europeans as well. I'd go to the Shrine Auditorium every couple of months for a comic book convention and sign autographs there. The character of Dr. Zaius has been very good for me financially, and I enjoyed doing it. It was heavy work with all the heavy make-up and

the costuming. It was difficult, for example, to have lunch, and most times I went without. The studio cancelled it. They could have had a second season, and possibly a third. It had a big adult audience that the studio didn't even know about, and there were all kinds of side projects and spin-offs waiting in the wings. They didn't pay attention to the quality of the scripts and, in my humble opinion, they were lousy. I would have gone after someone like Ray Bradbury to write, supervise scripts, and produce the show. Someone who had a genuine feel for science fiction—Edgar Allen Poe not being available. (laughs) The problem was,

it didn't have the quality of story the films had, and that was its undoing. The original picture was a shocker, and had something to say. It was a financial hit and a classic. On our show, they didn't make the effort or had the wrong people handling story. It was a missed opportunity that could have been really great. **FAX:** You did an unusual episode of the McCloud TV show starring Dennis Weaver, and the episode was "McCloud Meets Dracula." **COLMAN:** Actually, I did three McCloud episodes shot at Universal. It was kind of an interesting idea, having a modern day detective battle a legendary vampire. I played the coro-



Booth Colman and John Wayne in *The Comancheros*.

BOOTH COLMAN from 99

shot in Spain. I had an interview with the director of that project on the RKO lot. I was hoping to be cast as one of the disciples, but they didn't want to pay transportation—that was the year of the Actors' strike. I went to Spain via train to New York, then sailed from New York to Spain on the American Export Line. I waited there for several days; they had a production office there. There was no action—I guess they came up short of money. They had one producer in New York and one in London trying to raise money.

I went on to Italy after that and stayed on in Rome, where I worked for the better part of the year I had a contract with a dubbing outfit, and I worked in a Peter Ustinov picture, *Romanoff and Juliet*, with Sandra Dee. I also made a picture called *Under 10 Flags*, [*Sotto dieci bandiere*, a true story about the sensational 666-day pursuit of the killer-ship Atlantis] with Van Heflin and Charles Laugh-ton. Then I went to Yugoslavia and worked on two Italian pictures there. I had more work that year in Europe than I probably would have gotten in the States.

FAX: Didn't you do an episode of *Yancy Derringer* in 1959, starring Jock Mahoney?

COLMAN: Yes, I also did a now-forgotten movie with Jock Mahoney somewhere in that period of time. I can't remember the name of the movie, but Jocko had his start in pictures as a stunt man. He had aspirations to become a dramatic actor. Around that time,

I did an episode on Disney's *Zorro* television show, "An Affair of Honor," starring Guy Williams. Hollingsworth Morse was the director. He had directed all the *Rocky Jones*, *Space Ranger* episodes for Roland Reed Productions a couple years before that, and had done quite a few *Lone Ranger* television shows as well. Morse was a big, heavyset fellow. After that I was involved in a *Rifleman* episode, "The High Country," that guest starred James Colburn. I remember Chuck Connors trying to hide his nervousness by showing off, and what he did he did very well, that kind of character. I never really got to know Chuck Connors, it was just another quick job.

FAX: You also did an episode of the popular Warner Brothers series *Cheyenne*.

COLMAN: I had a guest starring role in one episode, "Johnny Brassbuttons." I played a character named Colonel Travers. What I heard later was that Walker was not given a very good deal by Warner Brothers. He was the star of a popular series, and he was so under-paid. I believe he walked off. They started some other shows as temporary replacements. *Sugarfoot* and *Bronco* were used to replace him before they came to a settlement. He must have had a kook for an agent to have a deal that bad. When an actor like Clint Walker provides the studio with a successful series, he should be paid adequately.

FAX: You also were on the *Untouchables*.

COLMAN: Vincent McEveety directed two of the three episodes I was in. I think it was his first day as director, Ed Asner and Charles

Bronson were in one of those episodes, "The Death Tree." I worked with Ed again in three episodes of *Lou Grant*. There was an incident where I think we were in a gun battle, and one of the guns went off very close to my head, and for quite some time after that I thought I was going to be deaf.

FAX: You did two *Perry Mason*'s around this time and played a prosecutor who confronts Perry in a dramatic courtroom faceoff in an episode, "The Case of the Paper Bullets."

COLMAN: Yes. I first met Ray Burr in radio. I did some shows with him before *Perry Mason* episodes. The radio shows were directed by Andrew Love—*Great Expectations* and *Charles Dickens*. We did several Dickens stories on radio, radio serials. I don't specifically remember which Dickens stories they were, but Ray Burr was in the cast and we often in our downtime chatted about working on Broadway. On *Perry Mason*, we didn't have time for any lengthy conversations, just pleasantries like, "Hello, how are you," and then we went to work. The same with Hedda Hopper's son, William.

FAX: You also were in *Adventures in Paradise*.

COLMAN: Yes, the leading man was Gardner McKay, a very pleasant man to work with. In that show "Once There Was A Princess," I was forging historical autographs, which was my hobby. I could duplicate from memory famous historical signatures. Gardner sent me a Mont Blanc fountain pen after we wrapped the show. That was quite an expensive gift. I will always remember him for that reason. A very nice fellow. He later became a writer.

FAX: You were in the Carol Lynley version of *Harlow*.

COLMAN: Yes, that was shot for TV on video. The Carol Baker theatrical version has been around on television, but to my knowledge the Carol Lynley version has not been reshown since its original broadcast. I played



Colman (right) in the Mike Hammer flick, *My Gun Is Quick*.

nor in this and in "This Must Be the Alamo."

I also did one of two episodes of *The Virginian*, around that time. The episode "Nightmare," the guest star was Joan Crawford. Joan Crawford was utterly charming. She was so good to me. My friend Robert "Bob" Gist directed it. I knew him from New York, because he and Jessie White were in the original stage cast of *Harvey*. Bob knew I had a great admiration for Lon Chaney, Sr. In the mornings, we sat around and did a table reading of the script, and he had Joan Crawford talking about Lon Chaney. She became emotional when she started talking about him. She teared up,

and said he was the greatest actor that she ever worked with, including the Barrymore brothers, Gable, and everybody else. She had worked with him in a picture called *The Unknown*. That picture started off her career. She spoke for five minutes about that experience at our table reading. Lon Chaney, Sr., had an impact on everyone he worked with and who knew him. He was such an intense actor that he virtually leapt off the screen into your psyche. I know that Boris Karloff was influenced by him. And that day at Universal with Miss Crawford, during our table reading, it was more than obvious the effect he had

on her. His skills as a mime were second to none, but he learned that as a child, probably because his parents were deaf-mutes. I shall always remember that morning, and that script reading with Joan. My next door neighbor was Betty Barker, Joan's secretary for 30 years. The secretary had nothing but nice remarks to say about Joan Crawford. As you know, Joan was a movie star in the 1930s, and there was a certain protocol that went on. She was the queen of all she surveyed.

FAX: You also appeared on *Star Trek Voyager*.

COLMAN: That was "Nemesis" around 1997. It was a very nice experience, a nice job. Ω

the minister who married her and Paul Bern.

After that, I did an episode of *The Fugitive* called "Trial by Fire," then I did a guest spot on *Gilligan's Island*. I knew Alan Hale and his family. Alan's nickname was 'Bud.' I knew his father. Bud was very jovial, like his dad. He liked to imitate Oliver Hardy a lot. Sometime during the run of *Gilligan's Island*, he opened a great seafood restaurant down on La Cienega, where he was the greeter. I also did a *Wild Wild West*, "The Night of the Dancing Death" with Robert Conrad and Ross Martin around that time.

FAX: Didn't you also guest star on *Bonanza*?

COLMAN: I remember Lorne Greene, Pernell Roberts, Dan Blocker, and Michael Landon with great affection. Lorne was a Canadian actor who had gotten some attention from



Michael Nesmith with Booth Colman on *The Monkees*.

his appearance as a prosecutor in the film *Peyton Place* in 1957. Lorne was a very nice fellow, quite jovial and a theatrically trained actor—very competent.

Pernell Roberts had seen me in a play here in Los Angeles, *The Andersonville Trial*. Pernell had said some very nice things about my performance to the producer of *Bonanza*, David Dortort. David came to see the play, and I was hired for the show. I did four episodes throughout the years on *Bonanza*. Michael Landon was very quiet and stand-offish. The other boys were friendlier. Dan Blocker was much more expressive. He had been a high school teacher, from what I remember.

On one of those shows, we went up and did

locations in Bishop, California a location that became known as the Ponderosa. The show was about a fanatical minister. He's a bit off the wall, because he has two wives. They were Mormons. That was a two-part show, and I played Reverend Parley. I worked again with Lorne Greene in *Battlestar Galactica* 1980, in an episode titled "Space Croppers."

FAX: During this time, you had guest starred on *The Monkees*, two episodes of *I Dream Of Jeannie*, three episodes of *The FBI*, and *The Invaders*, but you also worked on a picture called *Maryjane*.

COLMAN: I played Maynard Parlow. I was a high school principal. The premise of the picture had to do with the usage of marijuana in high schools at that time, an exploitation picture about the dangers of marijuana. Around the same time I did a picture called *Raiders From Beneath the Sea*.

After that, I did a *Tarzan* episode "Rendezvous for Revenge" where I played Commissioner Lacing. I was impressed with the jungle set on that show. It was adjacent to a very-fashionable hotel. Jock Mahoney, a stunt man turned actor, guest starred on two of those, but they weren't the same shows I worked on. Ron Ely was the star, who made a magnificent *Tarzan*.

In 1969, I also worked on the second episode of *Marcus Welby*, which co-starred Elena Verdugo as Welby's nurse. She had been the female lead in a Universal horror classic, *The House of Frankenstein*. The episode was "The Foal" and I was Mr. Huntsman. Robert Young and I were chatting about a Paramount Picture we both had done, *The Secret of the Incas*, where I played a curator, and Robert Young said to me, "Oh my goodness, I remember that, it was the last feature I made before I started working in television!"

After Welby I worked in things like *Mission Impossible*, *The Flying Nun*, *The Mod Squad*, three episodes of *Mannix*, and two episodes of *Gunsmoke*, one being a color episode titled



Booth with Fred MacMurray in *Kisses For My President*.

"Alias Festus Haggin." That show had a great cast—Jim Arness, Amanda Blake, Milburn Stone, and Ken Curtis, who was one of the original Sons of the Pioneers musical group. I also did three episodes of *My Three Sons*, one around that time. Fred MacMurray wasn't very talkative. I had done a feature with him before that called *Kisses for My President*, where he's the First Husband to the first sitting lady President, played by Polly Bergen. I did *Canon* with William Conrad, and a *Barnaby Jones* episode with Buddy Ebsen. And I appeared in a *Kung Fu* episode entitled "The Squaw Man" with David Carradine.

FAX: Tell us about making the picture *Norma Rae* with Sally Field.

COLMAN: The director Martin Ritt was a friend of mine from the New York days when he was acting. I had worked with him before. We make all kinds of mistakes as we go along, and one of mine was not following up on things. And the director said, "When you read I'm doing something, call me!" Could you believe that anybody wouldn't do that? Well, I didn't! In *Norma Rae*, I portrayed the doctor at the mill. My character's name, ironically, was Dr. Watson. We shot that picture in Alabama.

I must say that my working experiences in Hollywood generally have all been very pleasant, and I have been greatly blessed to be able to continue to work. Ω

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