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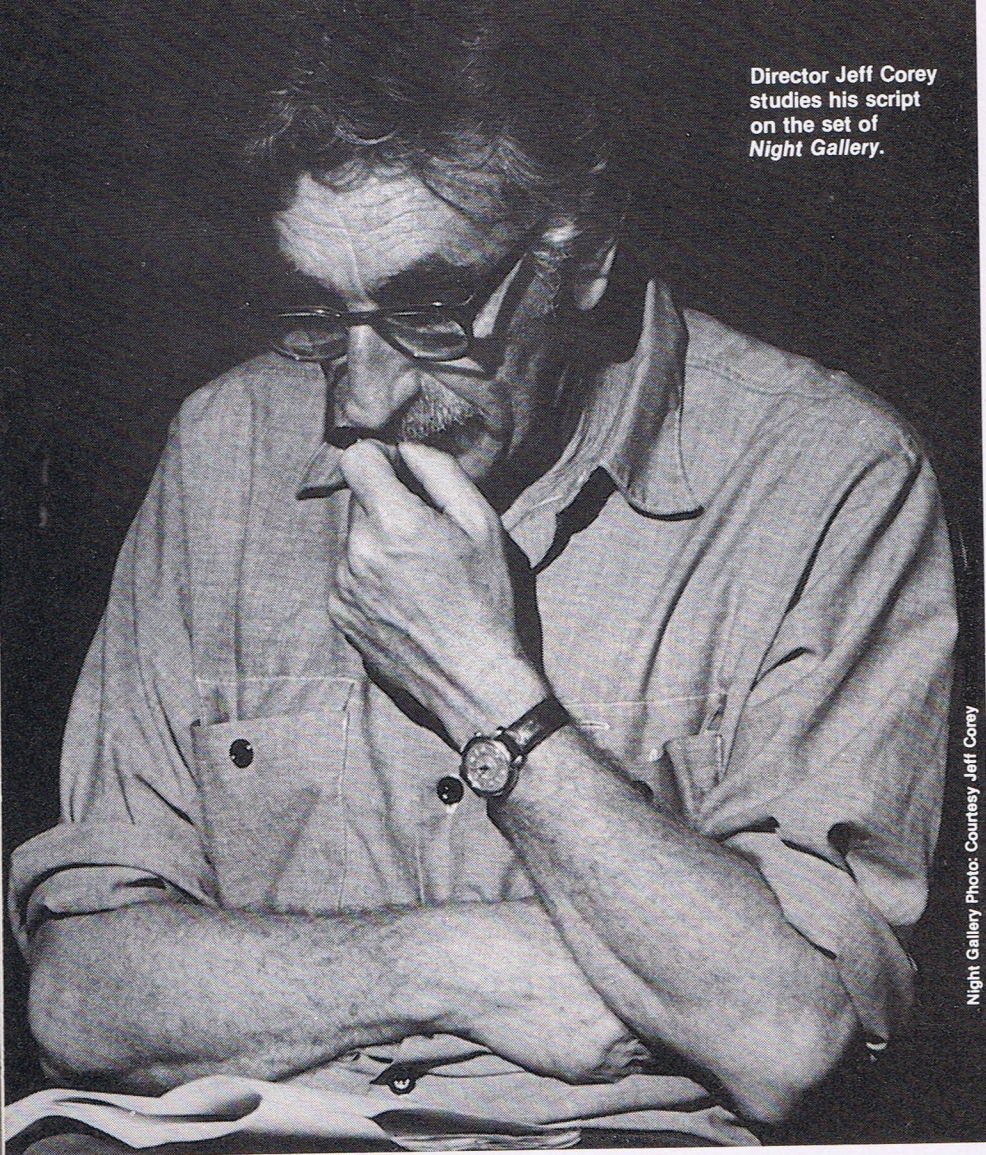
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Jeff Corey Blacklisted Cloud-Minder

Plus:

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Director Jeff Corey studies his script on the set of *Night Gallery*.



Night Gallery Photo: Courtesy Jeff Corey

By KATHRYN M. DRENNAN

A Test of Character

Actor, teacher, director, Jeff Corey remembers the delights of working and the days of the blacklist.

It used to surprise Jeff Corey when people wanted to talk to him about science fiction and fantasy.

After all, most of his work has been outside the genre. He had continuing roles in the TV series *Hell Town* and *Morningstar/Eveningstar*. In films, he is often noted for such Western roles as Wild Bill Hickok in *Little Big Man* (1971), the villain Tom Chaney in *True Grit* (1969), and the sympathetic sheriff in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and *Butch and Sun-*

dance: The Early Days (1979). On stage, he is most proud of his critically praised performance as King Lear.

But then, says Corey, his interviewers "roll out a whole chronicle of science fiction [performances]. I've found out of late that I'm a pioneer in that area." In his career as an actor, director and teacher encompassing more than 120 films and numerous TV shows, he has often crossed paths with science fiction, fantasy and horror.

Sitting now in the acting studio in which

he teaches next to his home on the Southern California coast, Corey speaks candidly of his life in acting, including an area he hasn't always felt comfortable discussing—the Hollywood blacklist which forced him out of films, TV and radio for 12 years. "Even in this day and age, I hesitated talking about it," he explains, "because it's possible someone may read *this* article and say, 'Oh, yeah, I forgot about him,' and it may revive a certain animosity on the part of some people. But screw 'em!'"

Corey became an actor because "I just didn't want to relinquish the fun of being young and imaginative and making believe." He almost gave it up, however, only eight years after graduating from drama school. It was 1940, he was living in New York, and although he had already accumulated "pretty respectable stage credits," he says, "work was very, very slow. I had been married two years at that time and I wanted to make a life and not let it hinge on the vagaries of an actor's life. But, my very sweet, dear and sensitive wife Hope said, 'Why don't you delay that decision?'"

On her suggestion, they instead moved to Los Angeles to try his luck. Once there, says Corey, "I naively took a stroll from the center of Hollywood to Sunset Strip to drop in on agents, as New York actors do. The third agent signed me, and I was working a few days after that."

Combat Photographer

One of his first roles was in a film that Corey says "we never thought of in terms of being a fantasy, but of course it is"—the classic *The Devil and Daniel Webster* (1941). It's unfortunate that the only version of the film currently available "has been cut wretchedly," Corey says. "And personally, I take umbrage because I had some wonderful scenes that were just eliminated."

That was also the year the United States entered World War II, and Corey soon left Hollywood make-believe for the U.S. Navy and the very real war in the Pacific, serving as a combat photographer on the *U.S.S. Yorktown*. To this day, Corey proudly displays one of the citations he received from the Secretary of the Navy for his work. It reads in part: "His sequence of a kamikaze attempt on the carrier *Yorktown*, done in the face of grave danger, is one of the great picture sequences of the war, and reflects the highest credit upon Corey."

After the war, Corey resumed his acting career and among the many movies he worked on during the post-war period were more fantasy films. Corey recalls that *Bagdad* (1949) and *The Prince Who Was A Thief* (1951) were considered part of a genre known then as "tits and sand" (now more decorously labeled "sword and sorcery"). But, two other films, *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947) and *The Next Voice You Hear* (1950), "were just movies" to him at that time. "Just like you do *Hamlet* and there's a ghost—it doesn't make it science fiction."

Corey had only a brief role as a reporter in the classic fantasy *Miracle on 34th Street*.

He had a more prominent role in *The Next Voice You Hear*, about a group of people whose lives are changed by hearing God's voice over the radio, but he admits the film was "kind of soporific."

Overall, it should have been a very happy time for Corey—safely returned from war to his family and to a career as one of Hollywood's best and busiest character actors. But, storm clouds were gathering. "I knew the troubles would come to many of us," he says, "beginning in 1947 when the Hollywood Ten appeared. I felt it was almost inevitable that something unfortunate was going to [happen]."

The Hollywood Ten were a group of prominent writers and directors sentenced to prison for contempt of Congress because they had refused on principle to co-operate with the 1947 House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) investigation of alleged Communist influence in the entertainment industry. After the Ten lost their final appeal in the courts, HUAC began a second set of hearings in March 1951.

The HUAC hearings were ostensibly held only to gather information. It was not a criminal court, and those persons subpoenaed as witnesses had done nothing illegal.

"We were, by and large, good-hearted people who cared," says Corey, who would end up as one of the subpoenaed witnesses. "When I was a kid, I saw people dispossessed all over the streets. [There was] visible unemployment and poverty in the country. So, it touched me, and I tried to do as much as I could. And I suppose there were certain political and social formulations that I internalized that were not totally thought through, but to err is human. Who has not made bad choices?"

"And most of us were *retired* radicals, certainly *not* affiliated with any 'awful' left-wing parties at the time. That was in the past."

HUAC never actually found any Communist propaganda in the films or television of the time, but this failure never slowed them down. "They were getting such capital out of the publicity of using film names," explains Corey. "They just wanted names."

Actors, directors, producers, agents and even a few secretaries were paraded in front of the committee to be accused, or to accuse others, of possessing unpopular political beliefs. Those who named names found they could go back to work again in Hollywood; those who refused to inform on colleagues and friends found themselves blacklisted.

On April 24, 1951, actor Marc Lawrence named Corey before the committee. Specifically, says Corey, Lawrence "mentioned my name as being at a party political meeting—and at a time when actually I was out at sea!"

The once busy actor suddenly found job offers scarce—"greylisted" as he called it. One of the few roles he got in those next few months was in a 67-minute film made to introduce a new TV series—*Superman and the Mole Men* starring George Reeves. Corey was cast as bad guy Luke Benson.



Mr. Scratch (Walter Huston, center) plants an idea in the head of farmer Jeff Corey (left) in *The Devil & Daniel Webster*.

"Robert Maxwell, who was the producer, hired me," remembers Corey. "I really applauded his guts, because I had already been mentioned [at the HUAC hearings]."

Corey has fond memories of his co-stars, especially Reeves and Phyllis Coates (STARLOG #138-139). And he says it didn't bother him at all that Superman was from comic books. He approached his role with the same seriousness he would for any film. "I just wanted to make Luke Benson a human being, a guy who belonged to this town, and had a strong point-of-view."

But overall, says Corey, "It wasn't an easy shoot for me because I was weighed down with the impending crap. I knew that I would get a subpoena by and by."

And not long after he finished *Superman and the Mole Men*, he did. He had already decided he would *not* name names, and would refuse to co-operate.

Unfriendly Witness

The only way a witness could refuse to co-operate and not be charged with contempt of Congress, was to plead the Fifth Amendment. "You just couldn't answer one question and then say I don't want to answer another," says Corey. "[The Hollywood Ten] had tried, taking the First Amendment, and were sent to jail. So, fortunately, [there's] the Fifth Amendment."

On September 21, 1951, Corey appeared before HUAC. He was indignant when he found that his distinguished service in the U.S. Navy was to be ignored. "I had three citations which they didn't want to hear about! They just wanted me to conveniently name the names of people that had already been mentioned by craven people, and to add two names to show that I was a good guy, and then I could go to work."

Corey refused, citing his rights under *both* the Fifth and First Amendments, and told the Committee: "My rights of freedom of

conscious thought, as embodied in the Bill of Rights, are violated by my being summoned and interrogated in front of this hearing. . . I believe that no one can bargain for the key to my brain wherein is stored multitudinous attitudes about life, religion, politics and art."

When he left that hearing room, Corey was on the blacklist (which would eventually include more than 300 people) and no one in radio, TV or films would hire him.

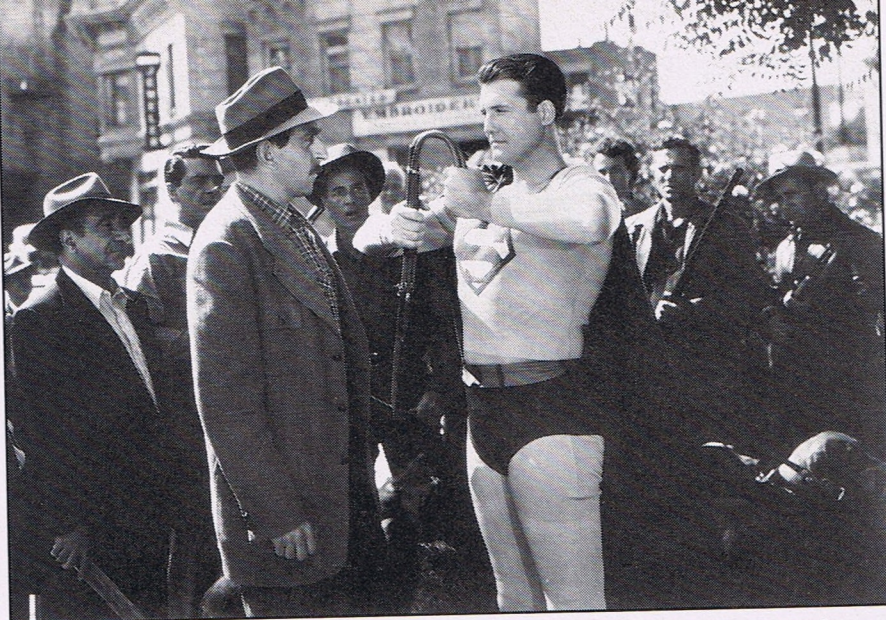
"This blacklist was a terrible kind of conspiracy where the bravest of producers had no choice but to say, 'I can't hire you,'" he notes. "I was offered one job called *Invasion USA* [1952]. Somebody said this would 'give you a chance, Jeff, to prove what a good citizen you are.' It was a *terrible* movie about a purported invasion of this country. And they wanted me as a college professor to make this *j'accuse* speech deploring the vicious enemy. It was just an apology for our involvement in the Korean War. I had too much pride to do a piece of obscenity."

Unable to work at his chosen profession, Corey at age 36 decided to go back to school, enrolling under the G.I. Bill of Rights. "I was before the Committee on a Friday, and on Monday, I was a freshman at UCLA. I would be in these Anthro 1 survey courses, and my picture and my name were in the paper that morning, and kids would come up to me almost surreptitiously and say, 'You've got a lot of guts. Thank you.'"

At first, Corey's main goal in returning to college was to help his family. "I thought I would do it, just for a while, so I could get the government subsidy, \$123. It would help; I had three kids. But to my surprise, I graduated in three-and-a-half years with very good grades."

Corey's degree was in Theatre Arts, but, he says, "because I had been a recognized actor, they didn't know what to do with me."

Devil Photo: Copyright 1941 RKO/Courtesy Tom Weaver



The Man of Steel (George Reeves) teaches hothead Luke Benson (Corey) a lesson in *Superman and the Mole Men*.

So, I took 28 units of anything I wanted, like art history, seminar in aesthetics and a lot of speech therapy. I qualified as a speech therapist. While I was blacklisted, I was doing clinical time, helping cleft-palated children learn to speak. And so I was a good citizen as always."

But, the stigma of the blacklist was never far from Corey and his family. "When my wife became a Brownie den mother," he recalls, "*The Hollywood Reporter* had a nasty column about 'Fifth Amendment Commie Jeff Corey's wife has taken on the role of leader of the Brownie group,' [claiming] that she was about to corrupt people!"

It was also during this period that Corey's career as an acting teacher began. It started with the only kind of acting job Corey could then get—one of his infrequent, unpaid roles on stage in Los Angeles. "Arthur Kennedy had asked me to be in a play at a new theater called The Stage Society.

"Then, somebody suggested, 'Why don't you teach a class?' I wasn't paid for it, [but] I started a class. Hugh O'Brian [*Wyatt Earp*] was in it, and Jack Laird, who later was my producer on *Night Gallery*. Gary Cooper used to sit in on those classes, and Patricia Neal.

"There was a kid in my class who was not a very good actor, so they decided to ask him to leave [The Stage Society]. He asked me if I would start a class. He got a group of people together, and I began to teach. After a couple of months, the phone began to ring, even though I was unlisted. And I started another class and another class."

Corey's new success as a teacher, however, almost unraveled when HUAC began a third set of show business hearings in 1953 and Corey was named once again, this time by actor Lee J. Cobb.

"One class that I had suddenly evaporated," remembers Corey. "One night, only two people came. Then, a

delegation of the class that defected came to see me and they explained that they were afraid to put their careers in jeopardy. And I guess my heart told me what to talk about—I said, 'It breaks my heart that they've got you so frightened. Do you like the class?' And they said, 'We love it!' And I said, 'Look what they're doing to you! You're immobilized, and you're denying yourself something that you like and respect. Damn these people for what they've done to you! They're depriving you of your free choice. It makes me so angry that they've done this to you!' And that was the right thing to say. They all came back."

Acting Coach

Well-known actors and beginners alike continued to study with Corey, and his reputation as an acting teacher and coach grew to the point that by the end of the 1950s, he was finding himself welcomed in that role at the very television and film studios that would still not employ him as an actor. The first small break in the blacklist for Corey didn't occur until 1960 when an agent got him a role on *The Untouchables*.

"The fact that I worked made a big box on the first page of *The Hollywood Reporter*. And I knew exactly what would happen," Corey says. "*The New York Times* called me, and Bob Thomas of UPI called me, and they wanted an interview. And I knew if I granted the interview, I wouldn't work again. But, I granted them the interview, and they asked the questions about the blacklist and what I had been doing. And I told them about the committee, and the way they dealt with you.

"They gave me great coverage, my picture was in the papers. And I was on the blacklist again. But I thought, hell, I don't want to go back to work on this tenuous level, that I've got to be a good boy. I was never a bad boy!"

So, Corey went back to teaching and coaching, and watched as the political climate slowly changed and others began to chip away at the blacklist. Finally, in 1962,

he says, "Joseph Strick did an independent movie of Jean Genet's *The Balcony*, and he hired me. And nobody fell apart."

He would not be completely off the blacklist, though, until a major Hollywood studio employed him as an actor. In that effort, he found an unexpected ally when he was hired to work as a dialogue coach with Pat Boone.

"I liked Pat very much, and Pat liked me a lot," says Corey, adding, "Pat and I never discussed politics. Anyway, I was helping him with a part that he was to do at Fox. Buzz Kulik was going to direct it, and it was a Rod Serling script."

One day, Boone mentioned one of the other roles in the script and "he volunteered that 'You could play this part, Jeff.' So, I said, 'Well, I'm sure I could. There are a lot of parts I could have played in the last 12 years.' He said, 'Oh, I'm going to do something about this!' And a few days later, he came to my house for us to do some work, and he said, 'I did it, I did it, I did it!' Pat had broken through and 20th Century Fox hired me. That was for *Yellow Canary* [1963]. So, thank you, Pat. I always felt that it would be an honest conservative who would get me work."

Shortly after completing work on that film, Corey was hired for *The Outer Limits* episode "O.B.I.T.," about a surveillance machine used by the U.S. government to spy on its own citizens—only to find that it is part of an alien plan to demoralize the country and prepare it for invasion.

In *The Outer Limits: The Official Companion* by David Schow and Jeffrey Frentzen, the episode's writer, Meyer Dolinsky, says the parallels with contemporary events were intentional. "It's a reverse on the HUAC thing. These people, far from helping a free society, are really its worst enemy, in the sense they breed so much hostility and fear that they curiously accomplish the very thing they are trying to prevent. Witch-hunting is the wrong way to go about it."

Corey doesn't know for sure if his casting was a deliberate political statement on the part of the show's makers, but he was aware of the parallels and pleased to have the part. "I had a lot of fun doing that, and I felt very comfortable," he says, and then adds with a smile, "I knew *that* was science fiction. By then, I was getting sophisticated about it!"

In the next couple of years, Corey suddenly found a great deal of film work, including a major role in that brilliant bit of SF paranoia called *Seconds* (1966). Not coincidentally, two of Corey's co-stars, John Randolph and Will Geer, had also been blacklisted. "And we're in one shot together," he says. "We loved that whole idea."

The blacklist days were definitely over.

Perhaps in part because of those 12 missed years, Corey today is still intensely in love with acting and will consider doing just about "any role," he says. "I'm like Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—I'll play the wall! I'll play the Moon!"

Occasionally, he admits, this has led him to take roles that maybe he shouldn't have,

KATHRYN M. DRENNAN, veteran STARLOG correspondent, profiled James Doohan in issue #146.

as in *The Sword and the Sorcerer* (1982). "I didn't know quite what to do with that part," he says. "It was all kind of opaque." So, in an effort "to disguise the performance as much as possible," Corey delivered all his lines in a deep, guttural voice. He succeeded well enough that when he saw the film again recently, "I thought they had dubbed in another actor's voice! But no, it was me all right."

Corey can laugh about these occasional mistakes, because they have in no way diminished his love for acting or the respect he has earned. He remembers what happened when on the set of the 1985 SF film *Creator*. Corey had only a very small role—and some doubts about having accepted it. But then, he met the film's star, Peter O'Toole.

"When I was introduced to him," says Corey, "he bowed from the waist and said, 'I am awed.' That happens sometimes when I get on the set. When I worked briefly with Richard Burton in *The Wild Geese*, Burton told me when he was a kid in Wales, he used to love seeing my work in the black and white movies."

Television Director

Only Corey's brief fling with directing really competed with his love of acting. "I like the kind of grown-up aspect of being a director," he says. "When you're an actor, sometimes you feel as though you're beholden to some sort of authority. But as a director, you're in charge and you can control more things. I like the process very much."

He got his first shot at directing at Universal Studios in 1970 thanks to a former student, producer/director Jerrold Freedman. "Jerry had a wonderful series called *The Psychiatrist*," says Corey, "and he just said he would like me to direct."

While preparing to start work, Corey remembers meeting another novice director working on the series. "Jerry said, 'I want you to meet Steven Spielberg. Someday, he's going to own the studio.' I don't know how the hell [he knew], but that's actually what Jerry said."

Spielberg later joined the ranks of Corey's

Zed the Corsair (Corey) helped fight Roger Corman's *Battle Beyond the Stars*.

Minding the Clouds



Photo: Copyright 1989 Paramount Pictures & Norway Corp.

The role of Plasus in *Star Trek's* "The Cloud Minders" was a character diametrically opposed to the philosophical beliefs of the actor who portrayed him.

Jeff Corey, who played the ruthless high advisor of Ardana, says, "It was a rather heady experience to take on the role and the perceptions of a committed autocrat like Plasus. He was a man utterly indifferent to the condition of the 'have-nots.' He believed that the Troglytes should provide more and more for the select few."

The Troglytes, in this *Trek* episode, were the slaves, forced to dwell and mine in the depths of Ardana while the narrow-minded citizens of the cloud city of Stratos reaped the benefits of the Troglytes' work.

"I remember the story," Corey comments, "and feel, as I did then, that the episode reflected a rather patrician attitude in that this particular community proscribed the very best in art and commodious living for the select few—the elitists"—and thought it proper that the common people should provide maximum sweat and labor for the privileged and endowed aristocracy.

"It was a good script. The story was a metaphor for a condition or state of mind that exists in the best of societies—certain cliques arrogate privilege and power and callously ignore the labors of others."

Various memories spring to mind when Corey thinks back to the filming of "The Cloud Minders" in 1968. "I remember

As Plasus, Corey looked down on the Troglytes—alongside his acting student Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner.

how Fred Freiberger, the line producer [STARLOG #39-40], hovered over the filming," he says. "And I remember how pleasant it was to have an ex-acting student of mine, Jud Taylor, direct."

"I particularly enjoyed playing in the indulgent and luxurious atmosphere of the cloud city palace and its work of art... and, of course, the beautiful women who surrounded Plasus!"

Another one of Corey's acting pupils was Leonard Nimoy. "It was good to see him on the *Star Trek* set every day. We had few scenes together in 'Cloud Minders,' my confrontations were actually more with Bill Shatner. But, I distinctly remember that I was concerned about the strain of the long working hours on Leonard and those hours of [Vulcan] makeup every day. I was very impressed with how stoically he dealt with it."

Corey, who has fond memories of his many movie roles, remains one of *Star Trek's* most distinguished guest stars. And he is grateful for the challenging roles presented him.

"I'm glad there has been such a diversity of roles in my career," he says. "I think I'm one actor who has *not* been pigeonholed or typecast."

—Mark Phillips



Battle Photo: Copyright 1980 New World Pictures

students. "I wanted him to do scenes," Corey recalls, "but he just watched, watched, watched." He afterward repaid the favor by casting Corey in his 1972 made-for-TV horror movie, *Something Evil*.

When *The Psychiatrist* was cancelled, Corey, Freedman and Spielberg were called in by producer Jack Laird to work on the new anthology series, *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*. Spielberg, ended up doing only one segment for the series—and then left owing Corey money. "Steve doesn't know it," Corey says, laughing. "He needed lunch money one day—we were directing in tandem at *Night Gallery*—and I gave him three bucks. I don't hold it against him."

Corey stayed with *Night Gallery* all three
(continued on page 70)

Corey

(continued from page 53)

seasons ('70-73), starring in one segment ("The Dead Man") and directing a total of 10 others, some of which are among the series' very best. The list includes "Certain Shadows on the Wall" with Agnes Moorehead and Grayson Hall; "The Academy" with old friend Pat Boone; "Lindemann's Catch" with Stuart Whitman; and "Deliveries in the Rear" with Cornel Wilde.

He is especially proud of the fact that six of the 10 scripts he directed were written by Serling himself (who only wrote one third of the series' scripts overall). "Rod Serling came on the set several times and told me how much he particularly liked what I had been doing with his pieces," Corey says.

Corey went on to direct for a number of other series including *Police Story*, *Bob Newhart* and *Alias Smith and Jones*. But then in the mid-70s, he says, for some reason, "it suddenly stopped. I don't know why. It was a very pleasant interlude in my life. Now I think, if I had continued to direct, it probably would have worn me out. I mean, you get to be a certain age, you can be in damn good health, but you know, when you direct, boy, you're bone weary every day, and you live like a monk."

Veteran Character

The rewards of acting, he indicates, are more than enough, and if he gets a decent part in a decent script with a good director and co-stars, he's happy. By this standard, he has been pleased with most of his genre films, which also include *The Premonition* (1976), *Curse of the Black Widow* (1977), *Battle Beyond the Stars* (1980), *Conan the Destroyer* (1984) and especially *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970), even though that film wasn't an easy experience.

"Oh, God, that was tough!" he says, describing his role as one of the disfigured human "high priests—we went through that ritual of unmasking ourselves, as an act of contrition, and revealing the ganglia."

The application of the mutant makeup and appliances took, says Corey, "a minimum of between four-and-a-half and five hours a day. First, I had to put the ganglia mask on, then the mask of my own face. It was extremely hot and humid weather then, so I had suggested that they order egg-nogs for us, so we could get some nourishment through a straw. We simply couldn't eat. We would sit around our dressing rooms and try to endure the unbearable discomfort of this mask."

Battle Beyond the Stars was a particular pleasure for Corey because the producer was his friend and former student, Roger Cor-



"O.B.I.T." kept *The Outer Limits* under surveillance. Corey was "comfortable" with the parallels to HUAC.



Outer Limits Photo: ABC/Courtesy David Schow

man (FANGORIA #83). As a young producer/director in the late '50s, Corman had joined Corey's classes to better understand actors, and he soon "began to recruit people in class," remembers Corey, "like [then-students] Jack Nicholson and Bob Towne, to act for him and write for him. He used a lot of people in class."

In television, too, Corey has worked with former students. Most recently, he worked with Jared Martin (STARLOG #141) on the "Eye for an Eye" episode of *War of the Worlds*, the first time they've worked together since Corey cast Martin straight from acting class for his *Night Gallery* episode, "Tell David".

He has also acted side by side with former student Leonard Nimoy, most notably on *Star Trek* (see sidebar), as well as in the films *The Balcony* (a role Nimoy got on Corey's recommendation) and 1971's *Catlow* (a role Corey helped convince Nimoy to take).

Nimoy has often acknowledged Corey's influence on his career, and a fond student-teacher relationship remained through Nimoy's growing success. "When Leonard did [*Vincent*, his one-man show about Vincent Van Gogh], he was at a big theater at the County Museum—and he said his ear was trying to focus to hear the pencil scratches: 'It was Jeff taking notes.'" Corey laughs, and then adds, "I had a lot of notes. They were all very affirmative, but I had many notes to give Lenny."

The tables were turned, just a little, in 1982 when Nimoy got to direct Corey in an episode of *The Powers of Matthew Star*. "I liked the idea of working with Lenny," he says. "He was easy to work with."

Corey has, of course, appeared in shows that haven't featured former students, including an episode of *Faerie Tale Theatre*, "The Boy Who Left Home to Find Out About the Shivers", with Peter (Ghostbusters II) MacNicol (STARLOG

#148); and an episode of *Starman* that he's quite pleased with, co-starring Jane (Lost Horizon) Wyatt, who he describes as "marvelous. She's got that kind of real New England no-nonsense stuff. If she doesn't like a picture or a certain actor or a certain story, she'll just tell you. There's no dissembling. She's really wonderful."

Corey seems happy that he continues to cross paths with the genre. "I've done another film called *The Judas Project*. That's science fiction," he says, noting that the film is set in an alternate present day in which "Christ had never come, and this would be his first coming. He sets out for the first time, and we crucify him."

His only complaint seems to be that he doesn't work as much as he would like to, whatever the genre. At 75, Corey exhibits a remarkable energy and enthusiasm, and if given the choice, he would probably rather be talking to a producer about the next role than to a writer about the past. But if asked, he says he is happy he can look to his past with a certain pride—not only at his career, but at how he conducted himself in front of HUAC and during the years of the blacklist.

"I'm a good person, fortunately. That's why I'm a pretty happy person now," he says. "I've been married 51 years, have six grandchildren. I'm very proud that I behaved well, and didn't make a begging, obsequious fool of myself. [The blacklist] hurt my career. I probably get considerably less in pensions now as a writer and director than I would have, but I'm not bitching about it."

"I think of my kids. They know that I was tested and behaved well, which makes me feel awfully good," says Jeff Corey. "I couldn't have lived if I had just gone against all of my inclinations, everything I ever believed in. I just couldn't be an informer. I know I've got guts, and I know I care so much for my country. I demonstrated it."

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