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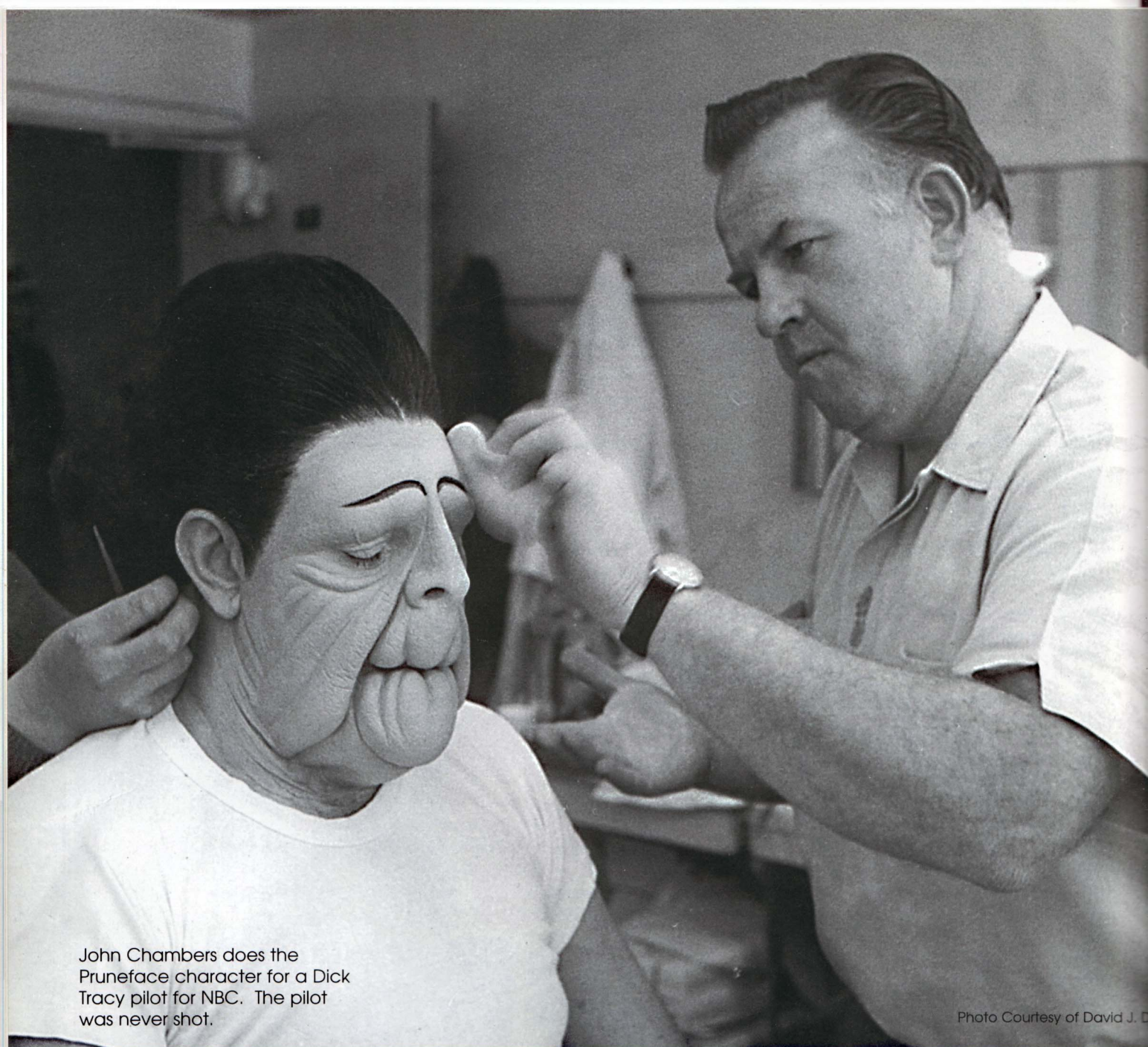
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John Chambers does the Pruneface character for a Dick Tracy pilot for NBC. The pilot was never shot.

Photo Courtesy of David J. D.

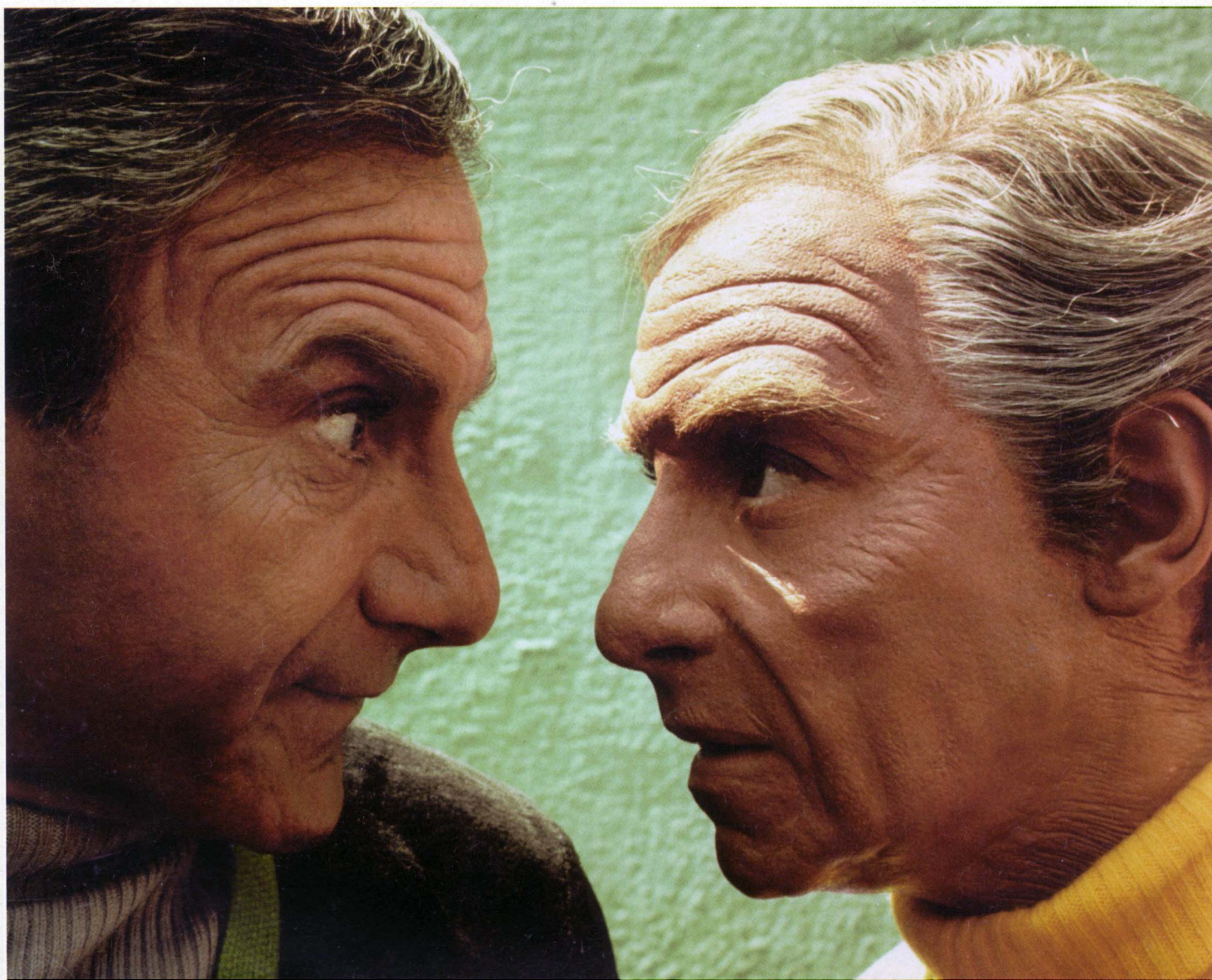
## *A Tribute To* **John Chambers**

**I**t's been a decade and a half since John Chambers worked in the film industry. He may have left, but the influence of his work is still firmly in place. What has also remained is the respect and admiration of his peers and coworkers. Many of the top professionals today were inspired in their youth by his creations. This Tribute is not only for John. It's also for the up and coming generation of makeup artists. That his work will not be forgotten. So that they will be inspired, too.









WHILE JOHN CHAMBERS was in the Army he learned to be a dental technician. Then after mastering that skill, moved on to prosthetic restoration. It was here John learned of the many, many techniques and materials, he would later bring to our profession.

After excelling in the medical industry, Hollywood caught his eye. John saw how he could contribute his skill to make-up artistry.

In 1953, he wrote a letter to the NBC make-up department in California.

The rest, as they say, is history, and rather than my continuing on, I

would prefer to let those who helped John make history be the tellers of it.

The following are words from those who worked with John, and/or those who have been inspired by him and his work.

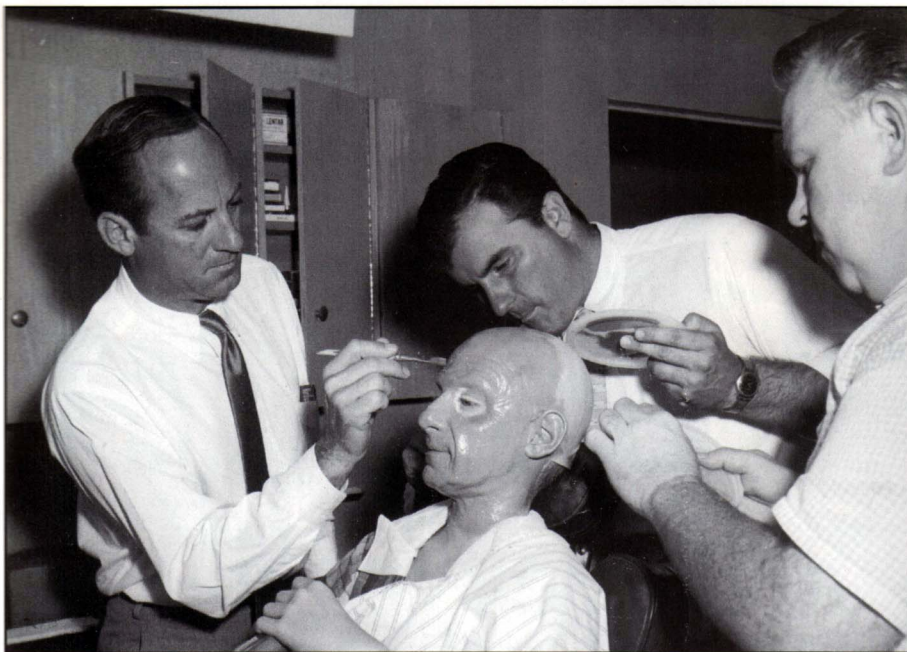
## Claude Thompson

NBC Make-up Dept. Head

At that time Fred Williams was the department head [at NBC] and I was his assistant. John sent us a letter from Chicago, and we looked at what he was doing with the veterans. He was doing [prosthetic restoration on] eyes and ears, and all types of prosthetics, full

facials and all that. We knew he would be a great benefit for the makeup profession. So we brought him out from Chicago. He started working with us for a while, for many years. He has always been such a great asset. Everyone knows his great artistic talent. But other than that, he's a wonderful human being. He's helped everyone who's asked. He deserves all his awards. Basically, that's how we feel about him. He's a marvelous guy. The union wouldn't let him in for a long time. I'm sure they're real glad now that they did. In those days we were just starting to get the network and cable came and brought some big variety shows. These guys came over from





**Left:** (l-r) Dan Striepeke, Frank Griffin and John Chambers apply a Dr. Smith make-up to Billy Mummy (seated) for *Lost in Space*.

**Far left:** Billy in the final makeup with the real Dr. Smith (Jonathan Harris).

**Below:** Publicity shot of Dr. Smith amazed at Chambers' heads.

Photo Courtesy of David J. Dillon

the studios and they worked on more stars in one day with us than they did for maybe a year at the studios. They were doing extras and bits and all that. So it was a great training ground. Television was the greatest for enjoyment, too. John was a talent, no question about it. Right from the very beginning he showed what he could do. Then he got so good that he moved on to Universal to work on films, then later to Fox for *Planet of the Apes*.

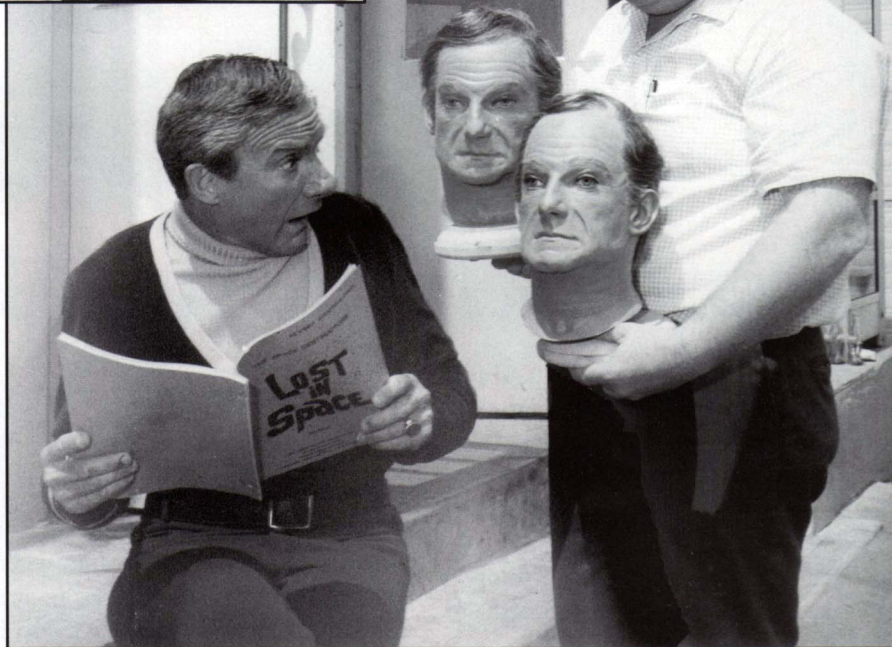
Johnny is just Johnny. He's got the talent and he does the job.

## Dana Nye

President of Ben Nye Cosmetics

I met John after my dad hired him to run the lab for *Planet of the Apes*. I will always remember John's big grin and the encouragement that he gave freely to me when I was just starting my career. He loved to tell a story, and he was very eager to share his craft with those around him.

He didn't take himself too seriously, even though he was running the largest prosthetic makeup lab in the history of filmmaking. He is one of the nicest and most generous people I have ever worked with in the business.



## Fred C. Blau, Jr.

President of Reel Creations

I owe my life to John Chambers. I had been working for Tom Burman on a Wolper Productions project called *Primal Man*. During hiatus prior to the last episode I was working for John Chambers on another project at Universal called *Neanderthal Man* doing the same exact makeups as on *Primal Man*. I was anticipating a call soon from Tom Burman to go back to *Primal Man* and when the call came from John. He told me, "I know the other show is more money (about a

third more than what I was making at Universal) but I need you here..." I told John that if anybody else had asked, I wouldn't hesitate to go back to the Wolper project, mainly because of the money. I'll never regret my decision, because shortly thereafter the Wolper plane went down and all those aboard perished. I personally knew 25 of the 33 people on board.

John was the first makeup artist to budget a feature motion picture for \$1,000,000 - *Planet of the Apes*.

John had a few classifications about the people he dealt with:

*Meat Ball* - Those who couldn't afford to buy a thing, had no credit and





had to borrow from others to pay previous lenders back, usually with no pay-back.

*Lunch Bucket* - Those who paid for everything they had on credit, living from paycheck to paycheck.

*Lunch Bucket With A Gold-Plated Handle* - Same as above except they could afford it.

*Top Banana* - Paid for everything in cash, with savings and investments to back it up.

I thank John, who was a big part of my make-up career and one of my main mentors. He took the time to teach me my trade, which has made me so successful. I wouldn't trade my career for anything, especially the wonderful experiences with the Truly Great John Chambers.

## Michael Westmore

Oscar Winner

*Star Trek* make-up supervisor

John Chambers has been a guiding light in my life since the first day we met in 1961. He literally took my under his wing and taught me skills, techniques,

compassion and sharing.

I love you, John and Joan.

## Howard Berger

KNB EFX Group, Inc.

I remember my father taking me to see *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* when I was a kid. I sat there in awe, amazed at the fantastic sight before my eyes. It was mind-boggling.

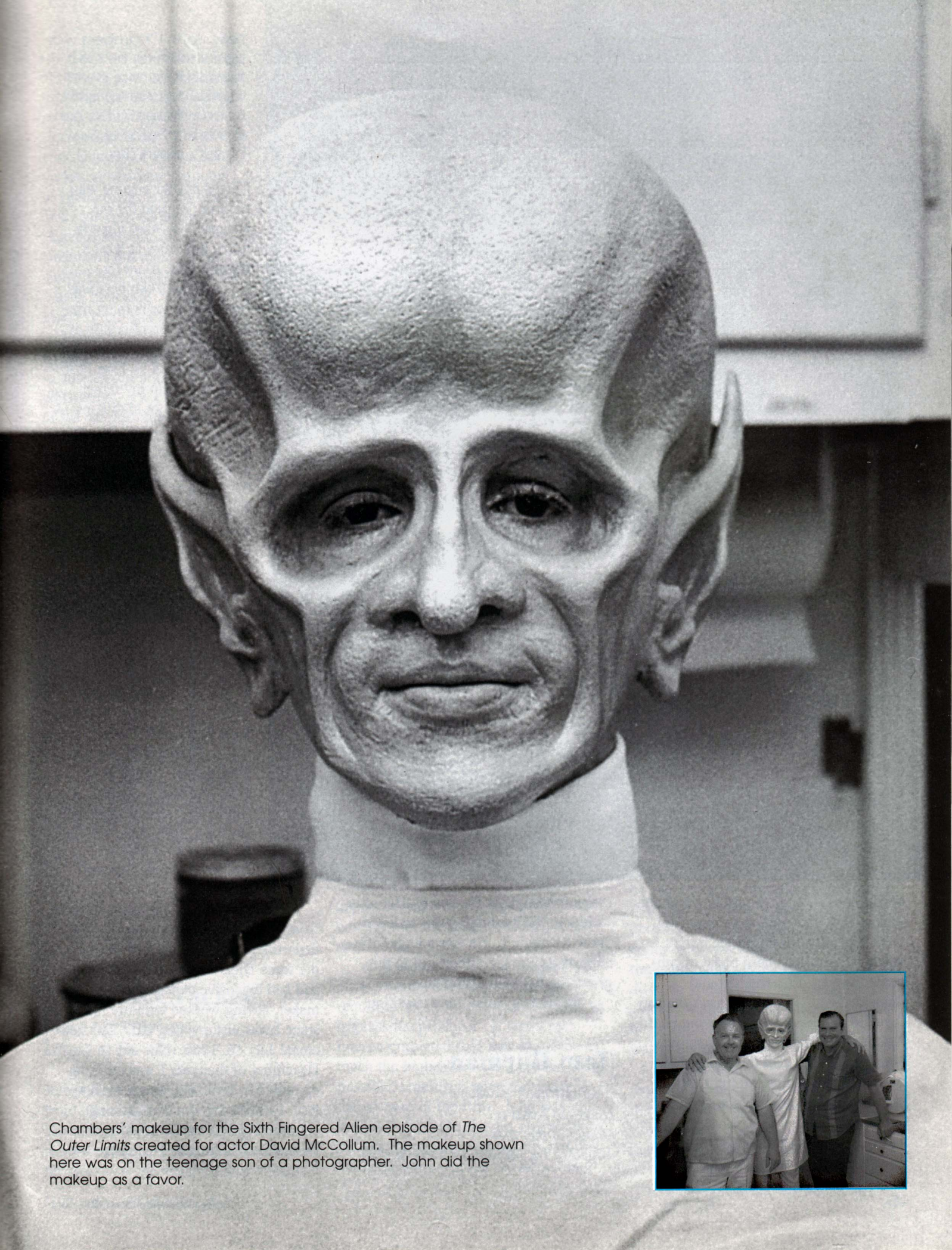
My father gathered all the information he could find on how these makeups were created. I studied photos for hours upon hours. I kept seeing one makeup artist in the photos: a great big man with black-rimmed glasses, slicked back hair and a cigarette hinged to his lower lip. He was John Chambers, the man behind all the makeups that I loved so much. At that point, I knew I wanted to grow up to be a makeup artist.

I referenced the photos of John Chambers in his lab and tried to figure out what everything was and what he was doing with it. After getting paid for mowing six lawns in my neighbor-

hood in the San Fernando Valley, I was off to Frends Beauty Supply to purchase what I figured I would need to create an ape makeup on myself. I bought alginate for the face cast, plaster to pour it up and make molds, clay for the sculpture, some wood tools, latex, paint, crape hair and makeup supplies. I was ready to go. After several attempts to cast my own face, I finally did it. Once the plaster had set, I was ready to begin sculpting. It was time to break out those photos again and pinpoint everything I could see about those makeups that made them great.

Finally, the sculpture was completed, then the mold. Now it was time to run it in rubber. There was one photo of John and Tom Burman that I had with them pouring rubber into the negatives, then placing the positives. I understood the principal of this, but was not using the correct material. A week later when my slip latex finally dried, I popped the molds and pulled out my first appliance. Since it was solid rubber, it was thick, dense and heavy. I thought, "Geez, how did they get the makeups to move so well when they were like this?" Oh well, I figured





Chambers' makeup for the Sixth Fingered Alien episode of *The Outer Limits* created for actor David McCollum. The makeup shown here was on the teenage son of a photographer. John did the makeup as a favor.







Photo Courtesy of David J. Dillon

**Left:** John Chambers was best known for his creatures, but he was a well rounded make-up artist, as can be see in the hundreds of photos of his beauty make-ups.

This is not for anyone who has ever worked for me, because they have already heard this story at least a dozen times, if not more...

John Chambers was responsible for helping me attain my apprenticeship at 20th Century Fox Studios. I had been hired by Don Post Studios to help my father sculpt a 15 foot high King Kong. John Chambers was working at the time in partnership with Don Post and his then partner Vern Langdon. John Chambers had engineered and designed the gorilla for a wax museum. I told John of my passion to become a makeup artist. It was the combination of John's and Irving Pringle's telephone calls recommending me to Ben Nye Sr., the department head of Fox's makeup department, that got me an appointment to be interviewed.

Needless to say, the gracious Mr. Ben Nye Sr. gave me the job. Bruce Hutchinson had just finished and Wes Dawn had been there for one year. I was in absolute heaven, a dream come true.

The reason I was hired was to learn from and eventually take over the job of department lab tech, Dick Smith (not the same Dick Smith we all know). I had had extensive experience as a prop maker, having worked with my father since I was just a young kid. This happened July 16, 1966. One day in December of that year I was cleaning up after Mr. Nye following a makeup test. I overheard him complaining about a film Fox would be doing that he and Dick were not prepared to take

once I applied it, all would be great and look exactly like the ones in the film.

I looked at myself in the mirror covered in a heavy, hard piece of rubber, covered with crepe hair and thought, "Well, maybe this isn't the way they did it." Back to the drawing board. Although the makeup, of course, was horrible (I believe all the photos have been destroyed) it taught me a lot. I still have the photos of John and cherish them.

If it were not for John Chambers and all the inspirational work he had

created throughout the years, a lot of us would not be here doing this today. I know I wouldn't. He was a huge influence on a little kid and is still to this grown up fellow makeup guy.

Thank you, John, for everything.

## Tom Burman

The Burman Studios  
Make-up Artist on  
*Planet of the Apes*,  
*Island of Dr. Moreau* and *Primal Man*



on. Fox wanted Bud Westmore because he had more appliance experience, having done *The List of Adrian Messenger*. I was new and reluctant to enter a conversation between two journeymen, much less my boss. But I interrupted anyway: "Excuse me, but John Chambers did most of that work." Ben looked at me for a beat, then said, "So call him!" I did, and he came in and got a script on Friday. Monday morning John pulled in and parked in front of the department. He climbed out of his car with the script under his arm. He saw me and waved for me to hurry and join him at his car. Curiously I stood before him, noticing his anxiety. He stuttered a bit as he said, "Tommy, I'm going to win an Academy Award." I looked into his watering eyes as he continued, "and you're gonna be with me, boy." He pulled the screenplay out from under his arm and handed it to me. It read *Planet of the Apes*. I had a sense we were about to make history. Although I was behind the curtain when John won the Academy Award, it was one of the highlights of my life and the beginnings of a thankful and successful career.

## Mike McCracken

Make-up Artist on  
*Island of Dr. Moreau*

John Chambers stands out distinctively from other makeup artists. When I started with John it was my first exposure to makeup. I kind of assumed that his work was the standard that existed.

*Makeup Artist* ■ Feb/Mar '97



John Chambers and Tom Burman doing a head cast.

I assumed that this same high level of expertise and concern was typical. Of course, over the years I realized it just isn't.

One characteristic that he had was always doing a better job than was required. His concern was not really to impress the producer. It was a very intense craftsmanship that was done to reach the highest level of craftsmanship possible, regardless what the requirements were of the film. John was unique in that what he did was really to the *nth* degree possible in terms of the craftsmanship. And at the same time,

he was really an expert organizer of available time and money. Sometimes a person overdoes something and they completely miscalculate how much time and money is actually available to do it, so you're working around the clock. With John we worked an eight-hour day, and it was never late. That was really neat.

He was always very appreciative of anybody's input that elevated the product. He wasn't jealous. John had extraordinary manual dexterity, so no matter what a person did, John could always go in and improve it, without



**Right, Below and Facing Page:**  
Actor Robert Culp is made up as an Asian Warlord for the television series *I Spy*.

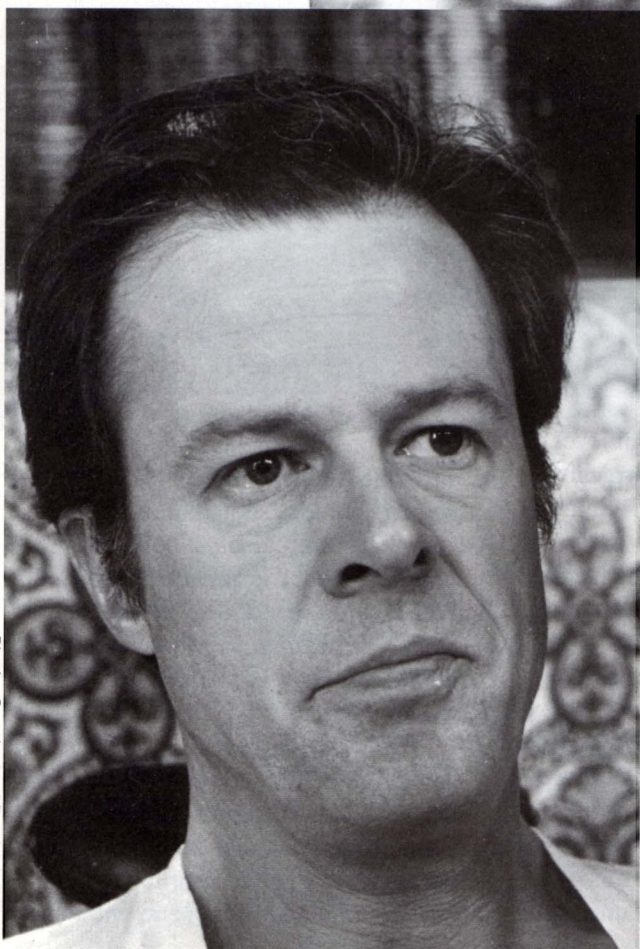
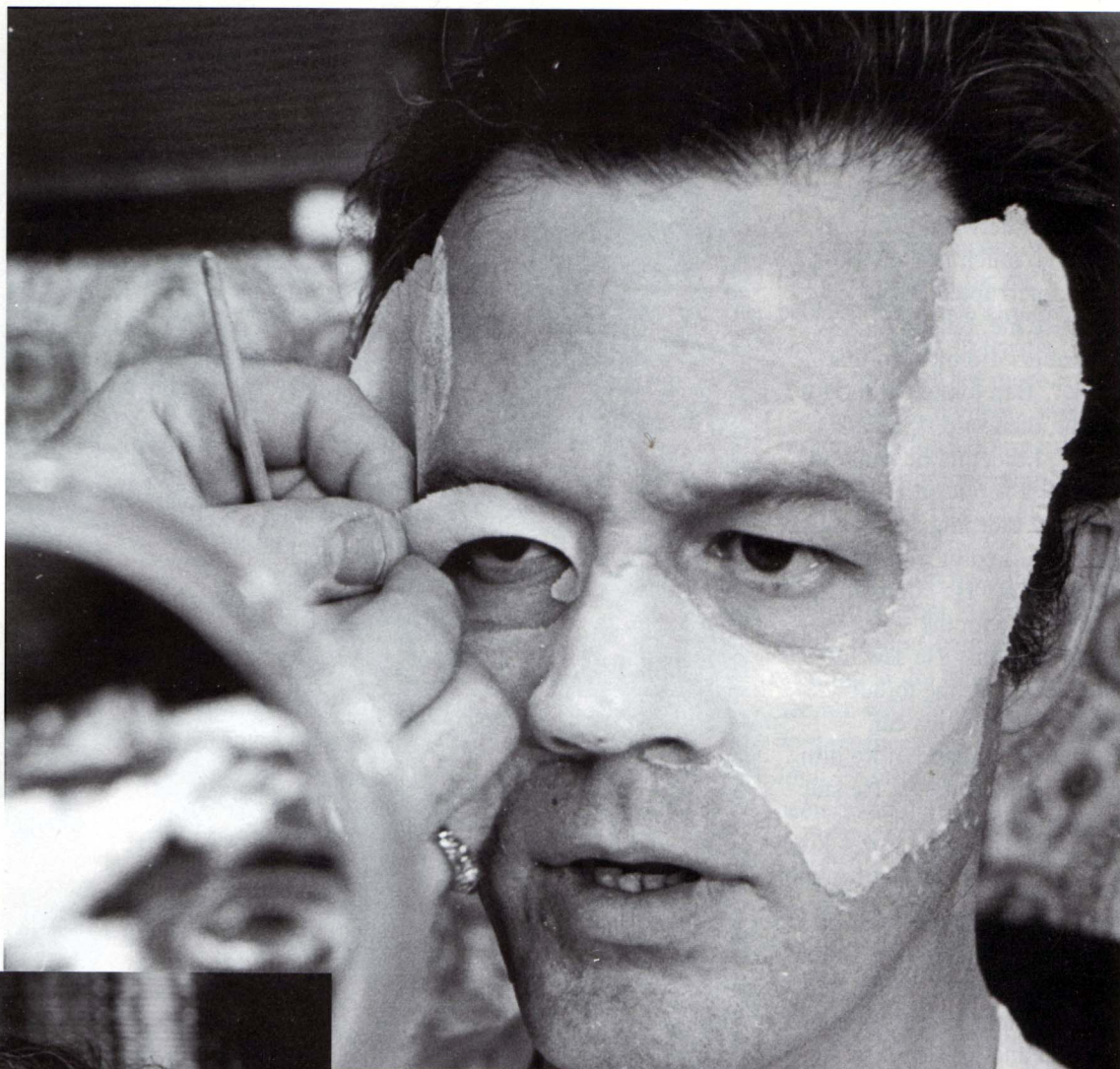


Photo Courtesy of David J. Dillon

changing the thought behind it. I think that gave everybody a feeling of confidence that they could do their best. If the best wasn't quite good enough, John could pick up the slack on it. That created a relaxed atmosphere where everything wasn't hinging on the individual worker's abilities or input.

## Matthew Mungle

Oscar Winner

My initial introduction to John Chambers was when I saw *Planet of the Apes*. I was born and raised in Oklahoma, so you can well imagine my intense fascination with the process of creating such futuristic ape-like characters. I was so inspired by this particular film series, and especially with John Chambers' masterful special effects make-up, that I decided right then and there to follow in his footsteps.

John Chambers continues to be a motivational tool in my own career. I truly believe that he's a genius who established a major precedent in special effects makeup.

## Dick Smith

Oscar Winner

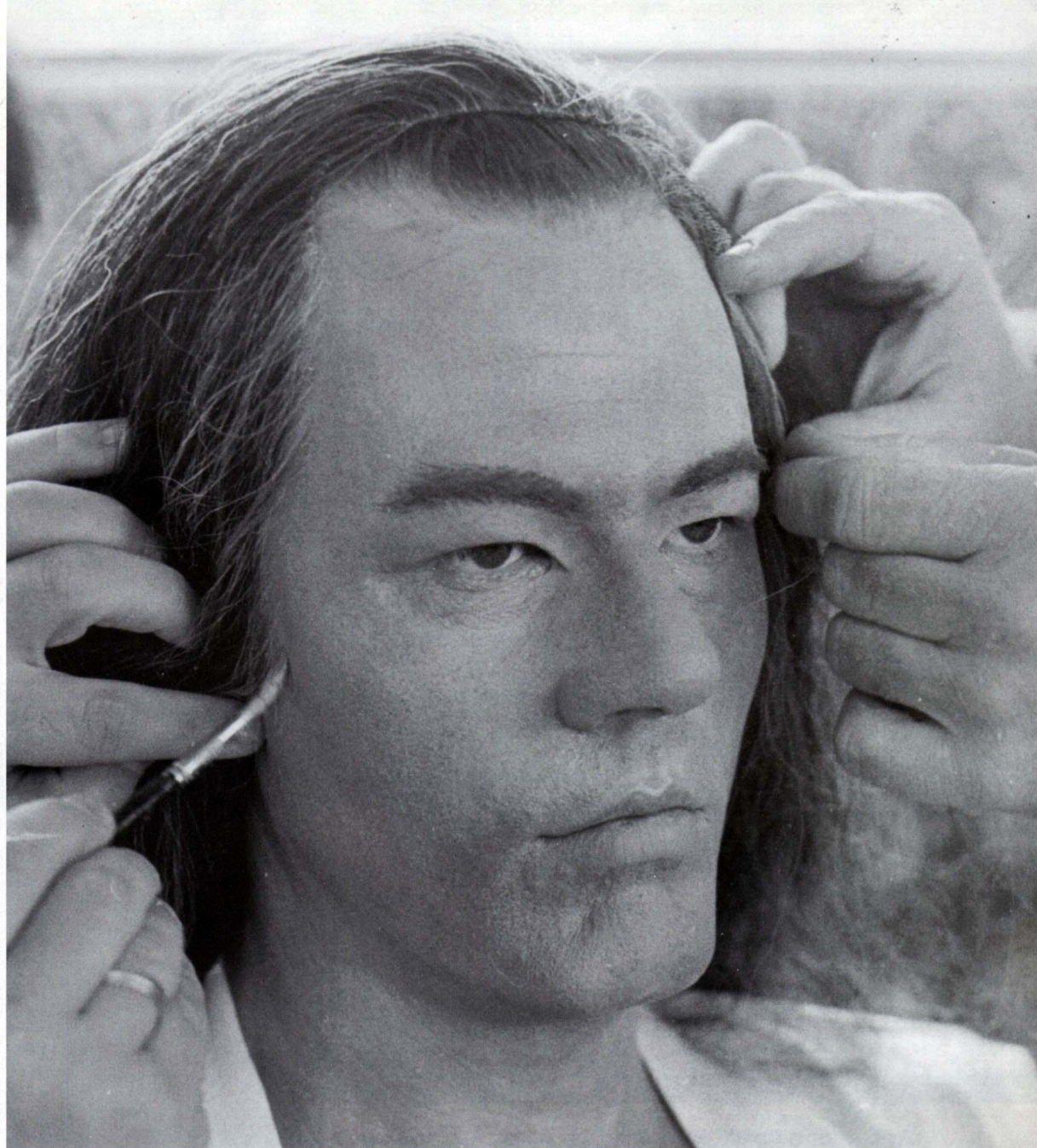


I've always said that I've taught myself and that is mostly true. But I have also learned a lot from other artists, and continue to do so. If you ask me from whom I have learned the most, it was Johnny Chambers.

So what did I learn from Johnny? First let me explain that Johnny and I were contemporaries in the business, he in the West and I in the East. Hollywood was always doing more exciting things than New York. On my trips to Los Angeles, I would always visit Johnny and my other friends and see what was new.

Johnny shared with me his idea of adding matting agents to adhesives (he used Attagel 40 in spirit gum) and the use of thickening agents (Cab-O-Sil) and pre-painting appliances (*Planet of the Apes*). He also matted an early medical adhesive to apply chopped hair beards that led to my matting 355. Both he and George Bau sold plastic formulations for building up scar tissue on the skin (Johnny's had the catchy name "Scar-em"). I used John's to make my first bleeding effect appliance for *The Sentinel*. I also learned the principles of making a full-head appliance mold (how to key the core to the negatives) from Johnny. Years ago he started adding cement adhesives to gypsums to strengthen his molds. It wasn't until *Altered States* that I found how valuable that innovation was.

I learned something from Johnny that was more important than all the great info I received. It was his attitude about materials. You didn't have to take them as they were. If they were not good enough for your job, you could



learn what's in them and change and improve them. Or look for a better product. This quest for the right material is now a key part of this effects era.

Johnny's other great contribution to our art and our livelihoods was his tremendous work in *Planet of the Apes* and his other films. That we are in this busy period of creative makeup is due in part to the success of that film and the message it proclaimed: makeup effects meant bucks at the box office.

Johnny retired early from the makeup scene. It's too bad because he would have brought still more to our art, but what he did will be long remembered.

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**Above and Right:** Fred Astaire as Alfred E. Neuman

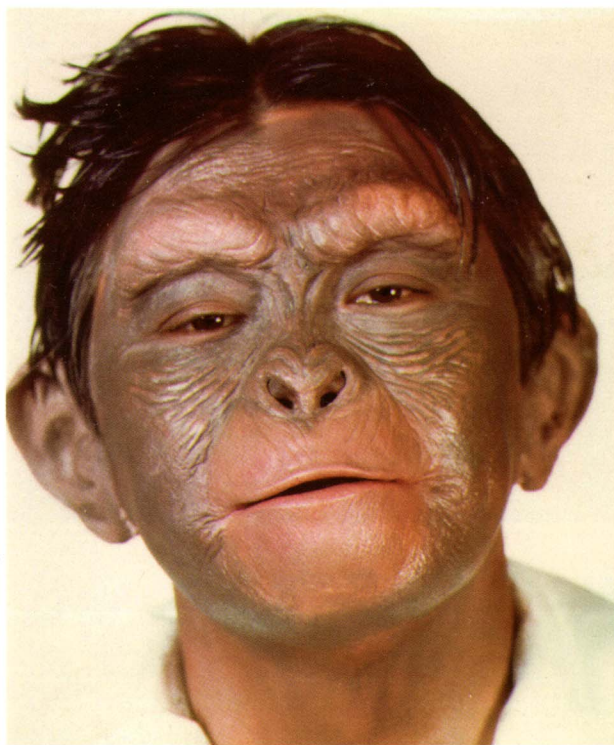
## Alan Friedman

I had been at Valley College. The advanced makeup course was from Michael Westmore, teaching evenings. Either I was the most annoying, the most precocious or asked the most questions -- I invited myself along when he and Marvin would do makeup jobs. Michael was very instrumental in introducing me to John Chambers. Everyone had their hand in refining my makeup ability and technique. There are influences of all those people in my work to this day. John was always very helpful, always very encouraging. He would let me come and bend his ear at the Universal lab or his house, whether or not there was a project going.

One afternoon we were upstairs in the lab. There were usually three or four projects going at once. The things he had out on the counter didn't appear to have anything to do







Johns first test for *Planet of the Apes*. His notes on the back of the photo say: First try - POOR!

with the job he was doing, whether it was pouring rubber or making molds, whatever he was concocting at the time. People were coming in and talking to him, and the phone was ringing. At some point I got his attention and asked him, "These ingredients don't appear to go into what you are making. What are you doing with all of these things? And he said, "They have nothing to do with what I am making." The look on my face was, "Why?" He said, "I'll be glad to tell you. You've come in here, you've spent some time, asked me questions. I'll tell you anything you want to know. This stuff is out on the table for those people who come in here and while they are visiting, copy this information down like they're getting a secret formula. If they take their secret formula that they've stolen, and try to concoct whatever

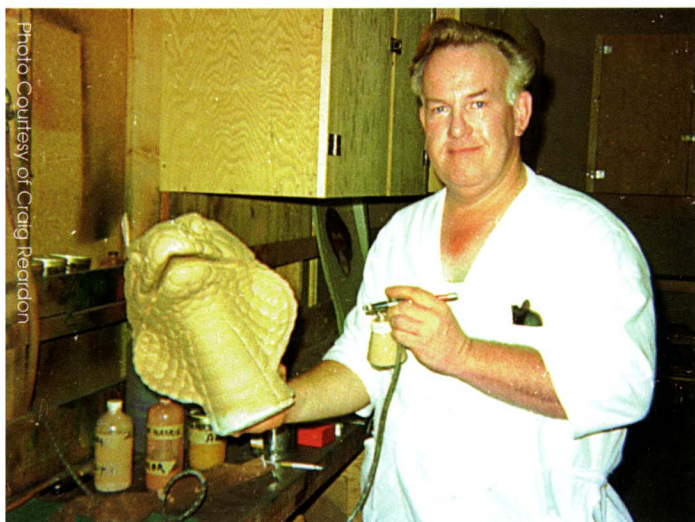


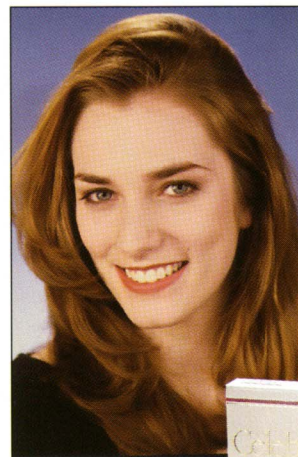
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Photo Courtesy of David J. Dillon

it is they think I'm making, they get cottage cheese, sour cream, scrambled eggs -- they are not going to make this rubber or silicone formula by putting these things in it. But if they don't ask, they're going to have a disaster on their hands." He was all for helping people, telling them anything they wanted to know, always very generous. he said "I'd be glad to give it to you, but don't try to take something from me. "

## Josephine Turner

Wig Maker for *Planet of the Apes*

I worked with John Chambers and Dan Striepeke on *Hawaii* for Emile LaVigne. I made all the wigs for it. John came in and looked at one of the wigs and said, "Who made this?" I was all scared, thinking he didn't like it. And he said, "This is the best wig I've ever seen." Danny and John got me into the union, because I was having a hard time getting in. John's a great makeup man.

## Make-up Artist on *Planet of the Apes*

There were two very important people in my life who helped me when I came out to Hollywood -- the first one was Perc Westmore and the second is John Chambers.

I believe the first time I met John, was when he was working on *List of Adrian Messenger* with Bud Westmore over at Universal. I was fascinated with his work, because before I worked with Perc Westmore at the House of Westmore on Sunset Boulevard. Perc and I were running the makeup school. It was the only makeup school in Hollywood in those days.

John asked, "What are you doing on the weekend?" I said nothing. At that time John had many side jobs. All the makeup artists needed something. Almost every weekend I worked for



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## Werner Keppler

Ken Chase and Maurice Evans







**Above:** Tom Burman lends his face to test a gorilla appliance.

him in the garage pumping out the stuff.

We built a close relationship. He treated me almost like I was his son. I owe this man so much.

## Ken Chase

Make-up Artist on *Planet of the Apes*

John Chambers' impact on my life is immeasurable, starting from the time I asked him to teach me to make molds so I could create my own appliances. I was forever calling John on the phone and going to his Burbank lab. No mat-

ter how busy he was, John always took the time to answer my questions and more importantly, offer encouragement.

I wasn't the only one John helped. There were many of us he invited into his lab during a time that other studio makeup lab doors were closed tight and the work going on behind them was secretive. John not only shared his vast wealth of knowledge, but inspired and challenged all who worked under him. There was no B.S. with John. If you could demonstrate you had talent and cared about the work, he would stand behind you unconditionally, regardless of your status.

I can think of no better example

than his assigning me the character, Dr. Zaius, played by Maurice Evans [*Planet of the Apes*]. At the time I wasn't even a member of [IATSE Local] 706, only a lowly permit, or as we were disparagingly referred to in those days, a "thirty-day wonder." And here I was making up one of the most important stars of the film. It was very courageous for John to take a chance on newcomers. I can't express how much I respect him for the help he offered to so many of us just starting out in the profession. The bottom line with John was not who you were or who your relatives were, it was the work you produced.

Much can be said about John's extraordinary skills as a makeup artist, but I'll leave that to others. More significant to me are those other aspects of his persona, loyalty, generosity, kindness and a great sense of humor.

There isn't a decent character makeup I've done in the past twenty-five years that doesn't, to some degree, have John Chambers' imprint. I'm very lucky to have had such a great friend and mentor.

## Michael Smithson

I've met numerous effects artist who cite *Planet of the Apes* as being their first "spark," their first influence in choosing a career in makeup. (I am definitely one.)

Mr. Chambers' artistry and technical expertise has paved the way for countless professionals working in the industry today. The body of work John Chambers has given us is a constant source of creative inspiration. Thank you, John.

## Maurice Stein

President of Cinema Secrets  
Make-up Artist on *Planet of the Apes*

I consider myself fortunate to have been part of John's make-up special effects team on the *Planet of the Apes* film series. I never realized the cult follow-



**Right:** John Chambers is the only makeup artist to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

ing these films until years later (almost 30 years later to be exact) when I opened the doors to my own facility, Cinema Secrets.

John Chambers was a gem! A true professional and master of his art! One couldn't help but be influenced by his pure creative genius. Believe me, I was no exception. Whether on or off the set, John was one of the greats among the greatest. Working became an exciting adventure when you had Chambers heading the team. All I can say is, "John, thank YOU for continuing to my inspiration!"

## Rick Baker

3 Time Oscar Winner

When I was a kid and first became interested in makeup effects, John

continued on page 44

Photo Courtesy of Priscilla Mandolin



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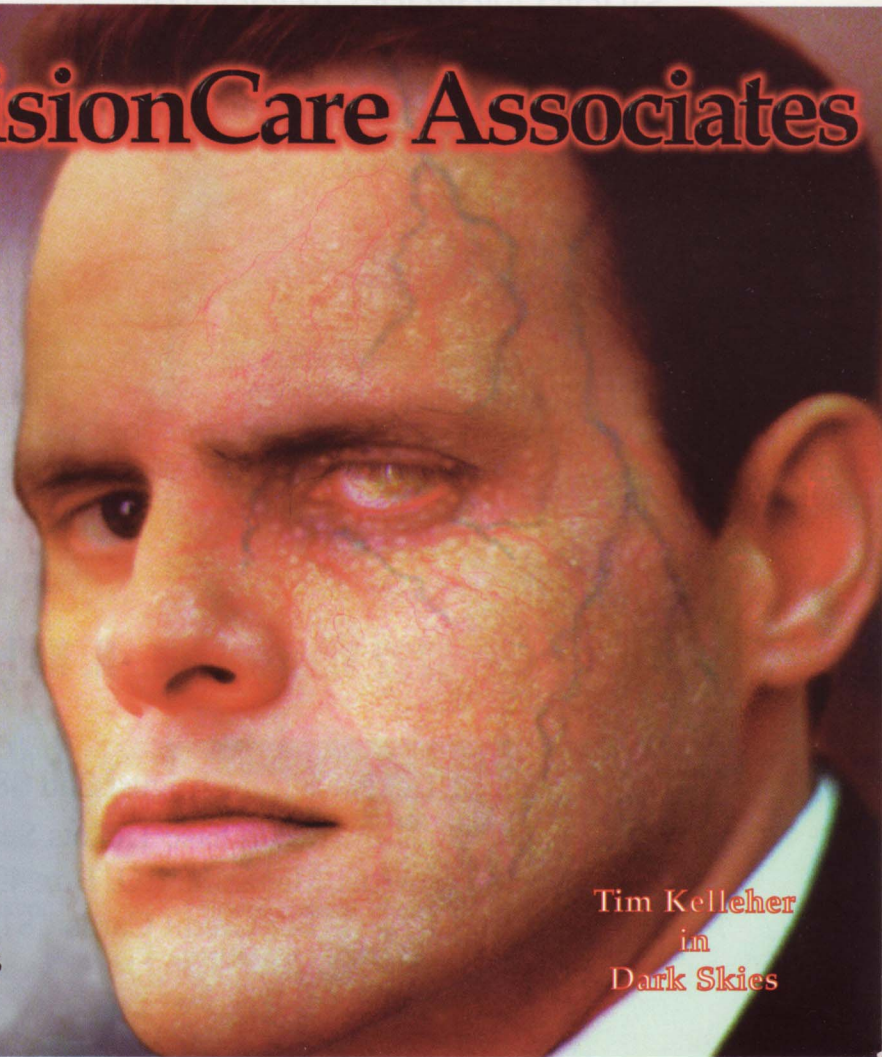
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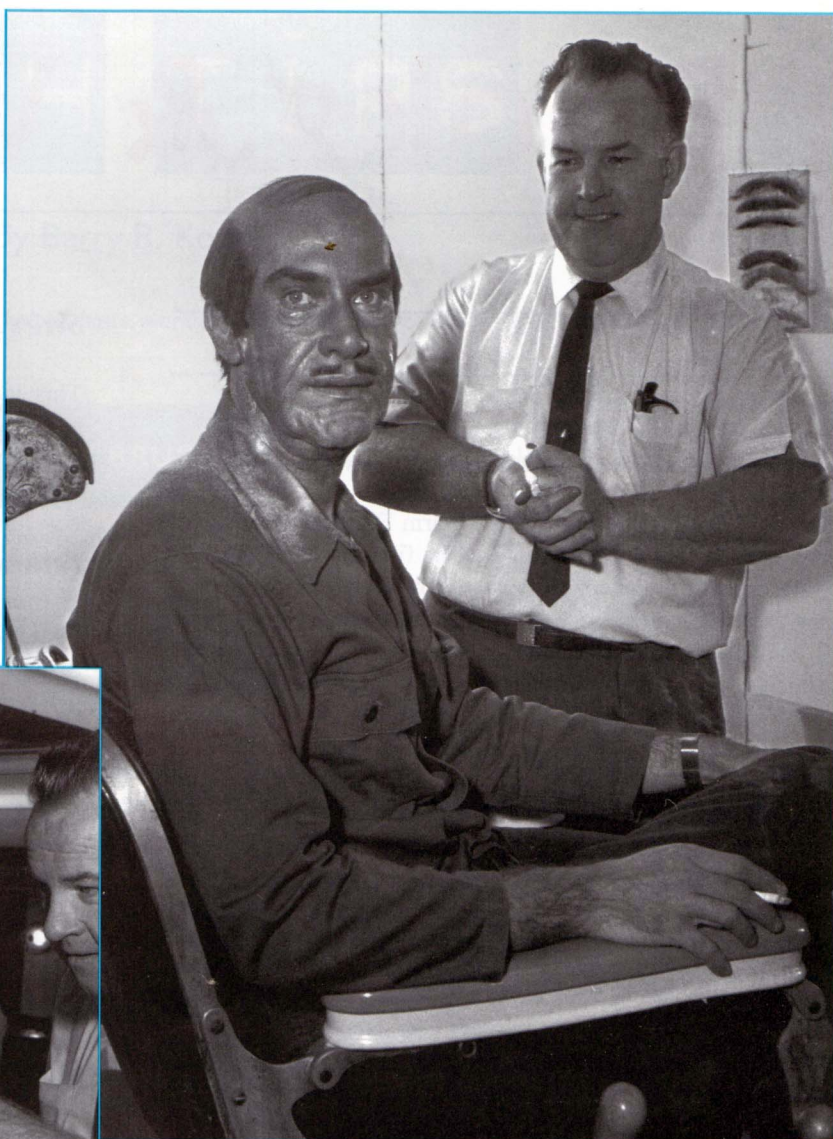
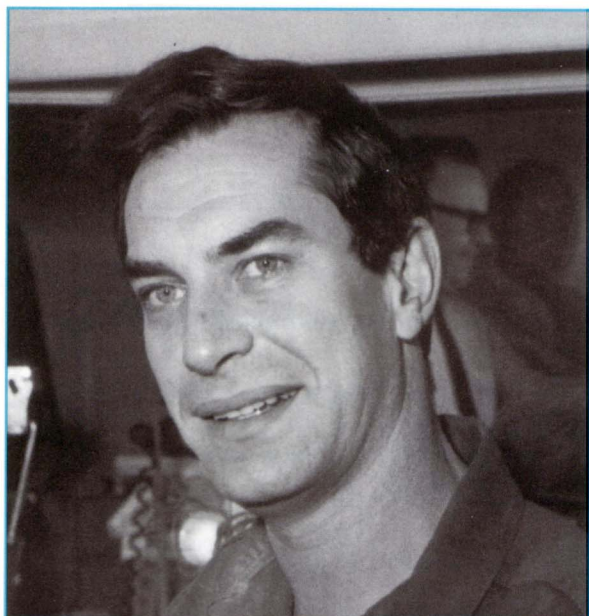
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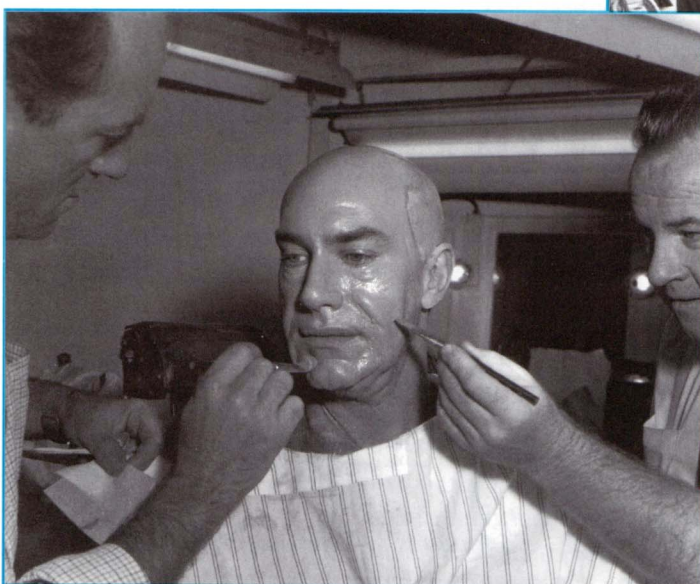


**Tim Kelleher**  
in  
**Dark Skies**





**Above and Facing Page:** Chambers' makeup on Martin Landau in the television series *Mission*



*Continued from page 35*

Chambers was just about the only Hollywood makeup guy who did this kind of work. In those days it was Dick Smith on the east coast and John Chambers in Hollywood. I, like everyone, was influenced by Chambers' work. I think I first read about him in *Famous Monsters* in an article by Vern Langdon called "The Ghost Makeup Artist." It talked about him creating the foam rubber appliance work that a lot of other people got credit for like he Sixth Finger makeup on David McCallum on the *Outer Limits* episode. This was always one of my favorites.

I had the opportunity to watch Dick Smith apply his *Little Big Man* makeup on Dustin Hoffman. They were shoot-

ing at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Westwood. A man came up to Dick and said, "I know a makeup guy." He had a picture of John with Dr. Zaius in *Planet of the Apes*. We asked how he knew John, and he said, "John made my nose." It wasn't until Dick and I looked closely that we could see the man was wearing a prosthetic nose.

The first time I met John was on the set of *Schlock*, John Landis's first film. Landis started out as a mail boy at Fox and used to visit John in his lab. In one scene Chambers played a captain of the National Guard, and I played one of the many National Guardsmen. I would talk to him and ask technical advice.

John Chambers was one of the real pioneers of what a lot of us call makeup effects. He invented a lot of the techniques that started it all. *Planet of the Apes* alone was probably responsible for half the makeup artists in the industry now that do appliances. I think everybody in this field today owes a lot to him.

I'll never forget the first photo I saw from *Planet of the Apes*. It was in *Life Magazine* on the last page. It was of Dr. Zaius. I was totally amazed, impressed, inspired and hooked on make-up.



## Tony Gardner

Alterian Studios, Inc.

I grew up outside of Cleveland, Ohio, where all thing makeup-related were considered part of the lunatic fringe. I still vividly remember going to the local theater as a kid to see a *Planet of the Apes* film for its first showing in theaters. I was excited that it was actually playing in our small town. I never went home that day.

I was so blown away by what I saw and was so excited that I spent the entire day at the theater, sneaking into show after show. I had never seen a movie more than once, so convincing my parents to let me stay was a bit of a hassle. I had to prove to them that lunch and dinner weren't a necessary part of my day.

It was a day that cemented in my mind forever what I wanted to do: Makeup! My very first appliance makeup (with actual foam latex) was a chimp makeup. I made hands, feet, a costume, the whole bit. Being isolated where I was, I had no one to share my exciting discovery with. But once I moved to California, I found that John Chambers and his visionary design style had influenced almost every one of my peers. To somehow be involved in a *Planet of the Apes* project was always my dream as a kid, and I found out that I wasn't the only one.

Thank you, John Chambers for your influence and inspiration. It's taken me far.

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Thanks to all the make-up artists who contributed their stories and kind words for John. It's not hard to see the mark John Chambers and his work has left on the make-up community.

John said to me recently that the "new guys" today had far surpassed the work he has done. I don't think John realized how



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Photo Courtesy of David J. Dillon

much his influence is still with us. Hopefully he does now.

John Chambers has retired and left the entertainment industry. Although he is proud of his work, that is in the past for him now. He

requests young people send their letters to the make-up artists who are working in the field currently. He just wishes to live his life quietly.

MA