

Local boy hopes to make 'Good' on Hollywood's biggest scandal



Jim Mulleague, poses with the cigar, straw hat and corpulence of Fatty Arbuckle, the disgraced silent screen comedy star he plans to portray on film. (Staff photo by Art Emanuel)

A former Detroit area actor is preparing to play the lead in an upcoming movie about the life of Fatty Arbuckle, a silent-film comedy king until his fall from fame following his involvement in a 1921 scandal.

Jim Mulleague, a 1969 graduate of Garden City West High School, said production of the movie — tentatively titled "I.B. Good" — is scheduled to begin next month in New York. Filming will later move to California, said Mulleague, who gained local fame a few years ago with his role in a "Laurel and Hardy"-mimicking comedy duo.

"From what I've seen, it'll be flashbacks," said Mulleague, who said he has so far seen only a rough draft of the script.

"I LIKE IT. It's going to show, of course, the comedy side of him — he was pretty near a genius at that. People have forgotten about it because of what happened to him," said Mulleague, adding that he doesn't have a final contract yet.

On Sept. 5, 1921, the 300-pound Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle and two Hollywood friends were cooling out at a St. Francis Hotel. Arbuckle had just completed simultaneously filming three slapstick comedies.

'I'm not like some people in the business, out to be a superstar . . . I just enjoy what I'm doing and it's kind of nice.'

A party was under way, and an obscure Hollywood starlet named Virginia Rappe was invited to it. Three days after the party, she died of massive internal injuries, including peritonitis and a ruptured bladder.

Arbuckle was charged with murder by a California coroner's jury because Miss Rappe's death was allegedly caused in the commission of a felony — rape.

After three trials, including two ending with deadlocked juries, Ar-

buckle was acquitted in April, 1922. The deliberation took six minutes. Jury members later posed for photographers with Arbuckle, leading to charges of jury-tampering, but all charges were formally closed.

ALTHOUGH HE was acquitted, the scandal ended Arbuckle's Hollywood career.

Mulleague said the movie concerns events following Arbuckle's release from a fictional prison term. He said the film will not deal in depth with the scandal, "only the sketchy things that most people hear."

Arbuckle actually spent the 10 years following the trial in vaudeville, and directing two-reel silent comedies under the name William Goodrich.

In the movie, Mulleague said Arbuckle takes the name "I.B. Good" and journeys around doing good deeds to atone for the scandal.

"It's something like 'The Millionaire,'" said Mulleague, 27, who has experience in industrial films and commercials in addition to Laurel and Hardy stunts with a succession of partners in Las Vegas and California.

Since January, he said his latest entertainment venture features "Mulleague and Company," a four-person comedy team including Laurel and Hardy imitators, an ersatz Charlie Chaplin and a woman "who is exactly Hardy's old film girlfriend," Mulleague said.

The group has been playing at Knott's Berry Farm in California where Mulleague now lives.

"The Millionaire" was a reference to a 20-year old television series featuring an anonymous, extremely wealthy man who made a practice of bestowing million dollar gifts on total strangers.

"I'm not like some people in the business, out to be a superstar," said Mulleague. "I just enjoy what I'm doing and it's kind of nice. Not many people can make a living doing what they like."

Mulleague's mother, Marion Kuola, is also known as Gundella The Witch. She writes a regular Observer column.

Asked if witchcraft had anything to do with his rise, Mulleague said, "You can't help but use something you've known all your life. If you think of something long enough, it'll happen — positive or not."

OU to consider dropping ties in South Africa.

The Oakland University Board of Trustees should "prudently divest" its holdings in companies doing business with South Africa, an ad hoc university committee concluded in a recent report.

Oakland University has \$1.3 million invested in short term investments and stocks in firms doing business with South Africa.

A committee of board members will study the documents and make a recommendation to the full board as soon as possible.

Because of broad business and investment interests represented on the board, the trustees are asking for legal advice on possible conflict of interest problems.

The 10-member ad hoc committee consisted of faculty, administration, students, and alumni. A majority of the committee concurred with the divestiture recommendation contained in the report.

Senior discount sign-up set

The Pontiac Mall, Farmer Jack Supermarket in Southfield and senior citizen centers are on the list of camera locations for the Oakland County senior citizen discount program for April.

Staff of the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency, which administers the program, will be available to take photographs of senior citizens for identification cards through April 30.

The ID cards enable seniors to take advantage of discounts offered by Oakland County merchants ranging from 4 to 25 percent. Merchants interested in

participating in the program may contact Helen Castora at 858-0152. To be eligible, a senior must be 60 years of age or older and a resident of Oakland County.

The locations, times and dates are:

April 23 and 24 — Pontiac Mall, 315 N. Telegraph, Pontiac 10-5 p.m.

April 27 — Farmington Nutrition Site, Mercy Center, 28600 11 Mile Road, Farmington, 10:30-12:30 and 1:30-3:30 p.m.

April 30 — Lakes Area Multi-Purpose Center, 26350 Novi Road, Old Novi Elementary School, Novi, 1-4 p.m.

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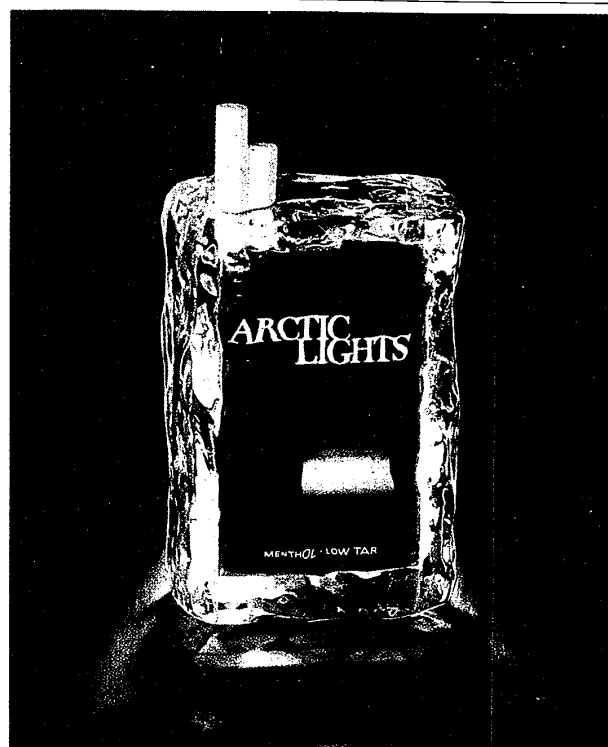
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