

# CHINA (1943)-- FILM PRODUCTION NOTES

(Sources: Commentary by Eddy Von Mueller, AFI Resource Guide, Period Articles (Various, Cited by entry in body of text)

(Provide: American Cinematographers Article by Barney Wolf : "Explosions Made to Order" Pre-Production)

- Based upon an unproduced play by Archibald Forbes titled FOURTH BROTHER. Forbes was the pseudonym for John Stuart Dudley
  - Mueller that Dudley was an attorney and sometime actor/playwright. Post war association with actors studio
  - Mueller says both play and film try to counter stereotypes concerning china and the chinese in past of US
- Paramount buys the rights.
  - Screen rights purchased for \$25,000 Dollars
  - Sourced from Pittsburgh Post Gazette (5/15/1942)
    - From text: Paramount has acquired "Fourth Brother", an unproduced play by Archibald Forbes for \$25,000" (From Addenda Column featuring further items about Danny Kaye's LETS FACE IT road tour)
  - Var (5/13/42) 'PAR PAYS 25G FOR UNPRODUCED PLAY— Paramount yesterday purchased 'Fourth Brother' , an unproduced play by Archivald Forbes. Price was around \$25,000. Number or other companies were bidding on it. Its the authors first. Par's original intention was to produce the play on Broadway but because of its timeliness it was decided to skip the idea and rush it into film production. Its a meller about Americans in China"
- Paramount's development of the film initially surrounded it being a vahivlr for Loretta Young
  - Was an ardent supporter of China during WWII
  - Had signed a 3year deal for 2 pictures a year at Paramount
- Loretta Young
  - initially hated the role as written (per a Hedda Hopper item from 10/20/1942 Chicago Tribune Syndication) , but eventually agreed to it
  - Loretta Young Quote from Eavesdropping Book: "I thought it was going to be good... It was a war picture. It was full of action and a bit of vindictiveness... pretty little orphan girls
  - Loretta's Conditions on making the film (pg. 233-234): Before I started that picture, I explained to my agent that I wouldn't do the movie unless a scene that condones suicide was deleted. I don't believe that suicide is the answer to anything. I'm not going to say, "That's the thing to do." Anyway, I got the okay from Buddy De Sylva that the scene would be deleted. They put the scene back in, and I went to see Buddy. He said, "It's only a movie." I said, "I'm sorry. It's not only a movie. If you read some of my fan mail ....they do know it's only a movie,

but they take it very seriously.” He said, “God Damn it. This is not a church. This is a studio.....we’re making pictures to entertain .....” I said, “Perfectly all right with me.....you can recast.....you can do anything you like. But I will not do that scene,” and I walked out of his office. The scene was deleted.”

- Paramount ADVERT Item in Variety (9/16/42) touts announcement to public of Young, Ladd, and Bendix to star in film.
- John Farrow
  - Director coming off the success of Wake Island.
  - October 21 Variety item shows that Farrow enlisted in US Army to begin as soon as he finished China.
    - Had enlisted and served in Royal Canadian Navy until he was invalided due to typhus in Jan. 1942 but was kept on naval
    - His illness, per a Wash. Post Jan 31 1943 item, reportedly put an end to his military service.
- Ladd trajectory on the rise thanks to his two film pairing in '42 with Veronica Lake in This Gun For Hire & The Glass Key
  - Also in Star Spangled Rhythm with Lake though not as a pair
  - Would enlist for the army in January 19, 1943. Days after wrapping China.
  - Honorable Medical Discharge given to Ladd on October 28, 1943

#### Production

- Production begins in Late October 1942 and wraps January 14th, 1943
- Loretta Young on Alan Ladd
  - From EAVSEDROPPING (pg. 234): I found him.....I mean any man who calls for his agent every time he doesn't get his own way.....I found him petulant. I also found him.....I don't remember hearing him laugh, or ever seeing him laugh. Everything that concerned him was very serious. He was married to Sue Carroll. She had been an actress; then she became a political activist and an agent. She was Alan's agent, and the least little thing that would happen, he'd get on the phone and say, "Sue, you better get over here and straighten this out..."
  - Sequence in the rain where Ladd complained (pg. 234-235): "One time on CHINA, there was a rain sequence, and my dressing room was inside the stage, and his dressing room was outside the stage, and he didn't like that. He said, "I'm going to get just as wet as she is; I can get pneumonia just as quick as she can. You better get over here, Sue." Sue came over, and there simply was not room on the stage for the set and the camera and two dressing rooms.... So, anyway, he would not work until Sue got there. Everybody sat. When she finally came, she talked with the assistant director. Later he told me what he said to Alan, "When you get to be as big a star as Loretta Young is, then yours will be the one inside, and maybe your leading lady's will be on the outside, but at this point, there's no choice between Loretta Young and Alan Ladd, although this is your studio.....Anyway, he was disgruntled the whole time, and I think he was mad at me because of it. Sue really was his right hand."
- Casting

- An article in The Worlds News (A Sydney. Australia Paper) from 9/11/1943 details (probably in a publicity capacity) The struggles Paramount went to casting the film outside its 3 white leads
  - Casting experts at Paramount are still recovering from one of the most exhausting talent searches in the studio's history. In just over two months; they interviewed over 600 Chinese, ranging from doll-faced babies to wrinkled patriarchs. Scouts combed the Chinatowns of the Pacific Coast and visited Oriental colonies. THE result is that 30 Chinese are in featured roles for the large-scale war melodrama, "China." The Film co-stars Loretta Young and Alan Ladd. All but three of the principals are Chinese, and director John Farrow's first big task was to find enough qualified English-speaking Chinese actors demanded for the film. Most of the eligible young men were in the armed services, and many other demanded for the film. Most of the eligible young men were in the armed services and many other Chinese players are being used all over Hollywood, not only to portray their own countrymen, but to represent the Japanese enemy. So Paramount had to go far afield from the usual source of talent. At least half of the more important Chinese characters in "China" will be played by persons without previous acting experience. Besides Loretta Young and Ladd. the only other American in the cast.
  - Willam Bendix. There are nine principal Chinese roles, as well as parts for 17 girl university students, and four other Chinese with speaking parts. When local sources failed to yield sufficient talent, scouts inserted newspaper advertisements. Employment agencies, schools, clubs, and the YMCA were contacted.
  - The Worlds News article mentions this about Helena Kuo
    - "The first Chinese cast for & part was Helena Kuo, & young authoress with two best-sellers- "Peach Path" and "I've Come a Long Way"-to her credit. She had never given a thought to acting, but for three years has been touring the US lecturing and writing, Her screen test was so successful that sh'll probably be signed to a contract."

#### Post Production/Reception

- The Canberra Times contains an item from July 3, 1943, which Discusses Mdme. Chiang Kai-shek's praise of the film and Youngs support of Cina during the war.:
  - Paramount's Choice of Loretta Young for the role of Carolyn Brent opposite Alan Ladd in "China," the fim which is being pre-released in Canberra on July 8 for the China Relief Fund, was Inevitable. Miss Young, long active on behalf of China relief, wears the coveted Order of the Plum Bloom, bestowed upon her in the name of the great Chinese generalissimo. Long before Pearl Harbour, even before Hitler sent his panzer divi. siona streaking across the Pollan borders to touch of World War II, the petite Mian Young was waging her own war for China. "Actually this war began when Japan first moved into Manchuria in 1931," she said. "Nothing was done to stop the aggressor then-except by the Chinese themselves-and the world is paying the price now in blood, fire and tears." in

"China." directed by the Australian, John Farrow, who gave us "Wake Island" and "The Commandos Strike at Dawn." Miss Young has the part of an American teacher aiding the Chinese cause against the Japanese. Alan Ladd and William Bendix, an American oil man, pitch in to help her evacuate a group of girl students when Japanese troops advance on their little university town. More than 800 Chinese players were used, both as principals and extra in making this stirring picture of a heroic people's fight for freedom. Miss Young, whose husband is Lt. Col. Thomas H. Lewis, of the US Army, posed for posters used by United China Relief in its campaign for funds to buy water buffaloes for its soldiers' rehabilitation plan. She is a member of the China Legion and heads a number of committees active in aiding China. Recently the actress received an official invitation from the China Information Committee at Chungking to visit China after the war as a guest of the government. Arthur Beaumont, famous California artist and illustrator was commissioned by Paramount Films to do a series of paintings based on "China". Above the artist's impression of one of the pictures thrill highlights. Beaumont, who is noted for his paintings of ships, has just completed a series of battleship portraits for the United States Navy."

#### Commentary Notes-

- Prod began late October of 42 and wrapped January 14, 1943
- Farrow had flair for tracking shots
- Ladd had been in 3 Ladd films the year the film began production. Good traction
- Mueller tells that the play film is based on was written by John Stuart Dudley. Dudley would go under the pseudonym of Forbes
  - attorney and sometime actor/playwright. Post war association with actors studio
  - Fourth Brother
  - Mueller says both play and film try to counter stereotypes concerning China and the Chinese in past of US
- Exteriors shot in and around Los Angeles and Phoenix, Iverson Ranch in Hollywood
  - Outside Mesa and Apache Trail in Arizona
- Only one of two films Young made about the war, the other being Ladies Courageous
- Loretta Young found herself at odds with Sue Carroll (Ladd agents) or how Ladd was treated compared to others on the film