

# An Open Letter to Richard M. Roberts

## (and his loyal sycophantic friends)

Regarding the Silent Comedy Mafia forum thread entitled "John Wayne NOT in CAREFUL PLEASE with Lloyd Hamilton," I would like to clarify some of Mr. Roberts glaring inaccuracies, as well as rebut his inaccurate points and respond to his obvious "cyber-bullying." I would have posted this on same forum used by Mr. Roberts to post his comments, however, Mr. Roberts has made it a point to post on a closed forum, thereby preventing those who disagree with him from posting comments that may provide information contrary to Mr. Roberts's self-appointed gospel; which, of course, allows Mr. Roberts to appear correct and knowledgeable.

(Mr. Roberts's comments regarding the contents of my website can be found at:

<http://www.silentcomedymafia.com/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=627&sid=e81a36501d79b0464d6b564f3e78f463> providing he does not delete them.)

Mr. Roberts is insistent that John Wayne not only is not, but **could** not appear in the Lloyd "Ham" Hamilton silent comedy *Careful Please*. Mr. Roberts states: (please note I have not attempted to correct any of Mr. Roberts's spelling or grammatical errors. I will leave that to his own overworked editors.)

*"Lets just say we're putting a myth to bed before it spreads: I was glancing over at the other minor silent comedy newsgroup this morning and saw someone getting all hot and bothered that they had "discovered" John Wayne as an extra in CAREFUL PLEASE starring Lloyd Hamilton. John Wayne once reminisced in an interview that he had done bit parts in several Hamilton comedies when he was starting out, and that has led this person to look at CAREFUL PLEASE on the Looser than Loose DVD and determined that it is the Duke in several freeze frames from the looser Than Loose Transfer..."*

Apparently Mr. Roberts has deemed the other silent comedy newsgroup to be a "minor" forum (SilentComedians.com <http://www.silentcomedians.com/forum/index.php> ), and therefore somehow inferior to his forum. Considering that at least one well respected and established author uses this forum, I would hardly call it a "minor" newsgroup.

Mr. Roberts goes on to say, *"as the owner of the razor-sharp original Bell and Howell Show-at-Home printdown that the rather middling dupe of CAREFUL PLEASE that Dave Stevenson used for his LTL video transfer was made from, I pulled the print and looked at it carefully in slow motion, and I hate to say I disagree that it is John Wayne in that scene."*

Congratulations to Mr. Roberts for owning the "razor-sharp original Bell and Howell Show-at-Home printdown" (which he later states was **the** print that all DVD prints have been made from). Unfortunately, Mr. Roberts fails to post any screen shots from his "razor-sharp" print to substantiate his claim. We have nothing but his word to go by. Mr. Roberts does offer to sell interested parties a copy of his print, but without posting proof that his copy is indeed "razor-sharp" and therefore superior to all other existing prints and DVDs, we again have nothing to substantiate his claim. Nothing but his unsubstantiated word. His unsubstantiated opinion.

Mr. Roberts continues his comments by saying, *"The last problem is the timing. CAREFUL PLEASE was released February 7, 1926, which means it went into production no later than December, 1925, and could have certainly been produced earlier. Wayne was at USC at the time, and did not even get into the movies until Tom Mix got him a summer job as a prop man at Fox in the late Spring/Summer of 1926. CAREFUL PLEASE is just a hair early to be one of the Hamilton comedies Wayne had a bit or extra role in, especially when he remembered doing the Hamilton comedies after he was already at Fox."*

Lloyd "Ham" Hamilton biographer Anthony Balducci stated in an email that was forwarded to me, that Hamilton's comedy shorts were usually in production for one or two months prior to their release. Since Careful Please was released February 7, 1926, production likely started during December 1925, **and probably not before that**. Mr. Roberts correctly states that John Wayne was still at USC during that time, but he is incorrect in his statement that Wayne "did not even get into the movies until Tom Mix got him a summer job as a propman at Fox in the late Spring/Summer of 1926." If Mr. Roberts had bothered to do his homework before offering this statement, he would have known that John Wayne appeared in at least two films **before** working at Fox or on Mix's Great K&A Train Robbery. Those films are *Bardeley's the Magnificent* and *Brown of Harvard*, both produced at MGM before production commenced on K&A.

Throughout Mr. Roberts's comments, he continues to hammer home his belief that Wayne could not have appeared in Careful Please. Roberts states: *"The facts are this. Wayne recalled first meeting John Ford on the set of MOTHER MACHREE while Wayne was working as a propman handling geese in the picture. MOTHER MACHREE's principal photography and production dates are from August 24 to October 14, 1926. CAREFUL PLEASE was shot sometime in November-December 1925. It is absolutely impossible that Wayne could have been in a Lloyd Hamilton picture nearly a year before he met Ford if he was introduced to Hamilton by Ford. ...*

*"In the two interviews in which John Wayne ever mentioned Lloyd Hamilton, he mentioned that he had bit roles in Hamilton's comedies AFTER he began working at Fox as a propman. In the interview she quotes Wayne as saying "I finally got bit parts in a few other films. Ham Hamilton was the director of those films. He was a friend of Ford's and the latter asked Hamilton to give me a chance at acting if he had any bit parts to cast me in". ...*

*"Wayne did not meet Ford until after he began working at Fox which is indeed after he began working with Tom Mix as a propman, which easily puts the timeline into the last half of 1926, putting CAREFUL PLEASE way chronologically out of reach with its late 1925 production and its early February 1926 release date (Interestingly, she does not list CAREFUL PLEASE or any of Hamilton's 1926 releases in her list of potential candidates for a Wayne appearance in a Hamilton comedy). John Wayne's memory regarding chronology and his career in interviews was usually pretty on target, so there is no reason to doubt his memory in the order of events, and even referring to Hamilton as Director rather than Producer doesn't mean much as Hamilton was the star comedian with his own unit at Educational, with certainly a large degree of control over his films no matter who was listed as the Director. ...*

*"I can add my own testimony as I met and spoke with Mr. Wayne several times in my life. I'm 6'8" tall, and when standing he came up reasonably close to eye-contact level. He was definitely around 6' 4" tall."*

This is nothing more than theory posited by Mr. Roberts. I have another theory that not only makes sense regarding when Wayne met Ford and when Ford told Hamilton to put Wayne in front of the camera, but also readily explains away Mr. Roberts's theory. John Wayne himself said, "I finally got bit parts in a few other films. Ham Hamilton was the director of those films. He was a friend of Ford's and the latter asked Hamilton to give me a chance at acting, if he had any bit parts, to cast me in!" (as quoted in *The Great Cowboy Stars of Movies and Television* by Lee O. Miller, 1979).

We know that Wayne worked at other studios before (and during) his time at Fox. **WHAT IF** he was working on a film set, and was seen by Hamilton, and if Hamilton knew Ford, he may have mentioned to Ford something like, "I saw this kid on a set, he looks like he may look good on camera too"; and **WHAT IF** Ford then told Hamilton, "Well, then put him in front of the camera as an extra in a few of your shorts if you can find room for him, and let's see how he looks." **WHAT IF** later Ford, or Hamilton mentioned this to Wayne. This would fit perfectly with Wayne and Ford's accounts of meeting on *Mother Machree* (as Ford would not have met Wayne at the time of this possible conversation), and it would also fit Wayne's statement that Ford had asked Hamilton to put him in front of the camera if Hamilton could find room for him. Wayne may have also been noticed by Borzage and Mix, both of whom knew Ford, and they too may have mentioned Wayne to Ford (all before *Mother Machree*) and these comments to Ford by these different people **MAY** have influenced Ford to give Wayne a shot on *Mother Machree*. While I admit this is pure conjecture on my part, Mr. Roberts's theory is also, at best, pure conjecture.

Some, like Mr. Roberts, have relied on the words of John Ford when attempting to discern just exactly when Wayne and Ford met, and they use those words to determine if Wayne worked on any films prior to *Mother Machree* (and thus ignoring factual information in the process). It must be understood that John Ford was not always forthright and honest when it came to certain "facts." We know that Ford gave himself credit for "discovering" John Wayne, but we also know that Wayne worked on other films before Ford had met him. We also know that Ford gave himself credit for a lot of things that he did not do, for example, "discovering" Monument Valley. Ford had not been there prior to *Stagecoach* in 1939, but we know that Wayne was there in 1929 herding horses into Monument Valley for the production of *Lone Star Ranger* (which, according to Wayne, he also appeared in as an extra - as did Ward Bond). So it is conceivable that Ford's "discovery" of John Wayne was actually prompted by comments made by many others who had seen and worked with Wayne prior to *Mother Machree*, especially in light of the films Wayne is known to have worked on prior to *Mother Machree*.

And please allow me a bit of skepticism here regarding your claim to have "met and spoke with Mr. Wayne several times" in your life, Mr. Roberts. Perhaps I am being overly kind, but you really do not look (at least in the photos I have seen of you) to be old enough to have met and spoken with Mr. Wayne several times in your life. I would hazard a guess that if you did meet with him, you were at best a young teenager, and not likely 6'8" tall at that time. I could be wrong, of course, but this is my observation.

Mr. Roberts attempts to discredit (albeit unknowingly) the theory I have posited by stating, *"And one more correction, Lloyd Hamilton and John Ford were not close friends. Checking again with my buddy Scott Eyman, who wrote the premiere book on John Ford, PRINT THE LEGEND, just as he is now writing what will most likely be the premiere book on John Wayne, in all of the voluminous correspondence, family papers, and et al he went through in researching that book, Lloyd Hamilton's name did not come up once. At the same time, in researching Lloyd Hamilton, which I have been doing for over thirty years, in all of the papers, photos, personal correspondence et al I have gone through and or have in my personal collection, not one mention of John Ford."*

Perhaps I missed something, but I don't believe anyone anywhere has stated that Lloyd Hamilton and John Ford were "close friends." John Wayne stated that Hamilton was "a friend of Ford's." He did not say "close friend." Be that as it may, however, Mr. Roberts's statement that in all the "voluminous correspondence, family papers, et al [sic]" of John Ford, and in "all of the papers, photos, personal correspondence, et al" of Lloyd Hamilton, neither mention each other. Mr. Roberts intimation here is that Ford and Hamilton likely did not know each other at all. If this is true, Mr. Roberts, are saying that John Wayne lied? That he was clearly mistaken? Interesting since you also claim that John Wayne's memory was usually *"pretty on target"* and that *"there is no reason to doubt his memory"*.

In all of this Mr. Roberts, you put forth a lot of theory and opinion to disprove the idea that John Wayne appeared in Careful Please, when all you really had to do was provide screen shots from your "razor-sharp" print of Careful Please. Doing so would remove all doubt and give your position a rock-solid foundation. And yet you have not done this. Instead you simply go on and on talking up your theory and opinion, bolstered with unfounded theories and opinions, and outright untruths. Miss Reid posted her screen shots to support her theory, why don't you? Perhaps you are unable or unwilling? Perhaps you would rather provide those screen shots for a price. One would think a self-anointed "film historian" and self-proclaimed "expert" such as yourself would need to make some money somehow. I suppose this is as good a method as any.

Not only does Mr. Roberts fail to provide documented evidence to support his faulty theory, but he goes on to personally attack Miss Reid. He states: *"Ms. Elly Reid (the person who makes the claim to have spotted Wayne in the film and is making the posts on the other group) first complains that she is not allowed to rebut me on the silent comedy mafia newsgroup to begin with. Oh well, I am not allowed to rebut her on that other minor silent comedy newsgroup either, we all have our crosses to bear..."*

Mr. Roberts goes on to put forth several sarcastic comments such as Miss Reid was *"told by God as Gospel Truth and the Ghost of John Wayne who visited her in the wee hours of the night and told her that he definitely appeared in CAREFUL PLEASE?"* and, Miss Reid's belief that John Wayne appears in Careful Please as *"CAREFUL PLEASE craziness"*. Saying that her opinion is nothing more than *"the hopes and meanderings of an obsessed Wayne fan with weak film history chops hoping to make a name for herself"* and *Let me see if I can get the message out in a more diplomatic form: 'She's Dreamin', the Duke Ain't There!'"* Mr. Roberts goes on to make a feeble attempt to support his verbal bullying by further discrediting Miss Reid by saying: *"Now Ms. Reid is considering the possibility that John Wayne copied his*

*walk from Lloyd Hamilton? Okay, now we're talking big time clueless Wayne scholarship here. Has she ever heard of Yakima Canutt?"*

It amazes me that Mr. Roberts is claiming that he is a *"film historian and collector of some reput [sic]"* as well as a researcher engaged in helping his "buddy Scott Eyeman" (nice name dropping there, Mr. Roberts) by *"supplying him with research material for his new book, which will likely be THE definitive book ever written on John Wayne."* That Mr. Roberts is a film historian is not something I can refute. Of course I cannot prove it either since the only references I can find regarding his role as a film historian come straight from him. His comment about Yakima Canutt clearly shows his lack of knowledge. Harry Carey, Jr., a close friend of John Wayne for many years, has repeatedly stated that it was Paul Fix who taught Wayne how to walk. Other long time friends have gone on record saying that it was Wayne himself who invented the walk. Others have said that it was Yakima Canutt who taught Wayne his distinctive walk. In other words, there are many theories. Mr. Roberts, however, seems to indicate that he possesses the truth about this. Perhaps (as Mr. Roberts has claimed about Miss Reid) the ghost of John Wayne visited him in the wee hours and imparted this special knowledge to him.

Mr. Roberts claims to be a collector of some repute. Of course, ill repute is still repute, and if Mr. Roberts is helping Scott Eyeman (again we have only Mr. Roberts word on this) to research *"THE definitive book"* on John Wayne, well, after experiencing Mr. Roberts complete lack of knowledge regarding John Wayne, as well as his non-existent research skills, both clearly evidenced in the repeated errors and faulty conclusions put forth in his slew of comments, clearly Mr. Eyeman would do well to reject anything Mr. Roberts says. Especially if he wants his book to be definitive. Miss Reid, on the other hand, is not just a member of the John Wayne Fan Club. She is the owner of a massive collection of John Wayne material (as am I), material I would venture that not many people, including Mr. Roberts, have ever seen. She has been researching John Wayne for many years, and I for one, value her research and opinions regarding John Wayne. Mr. Roberts would do well to listen to Miss Reid, however, in doing so Mr. Roberts would have to admit that he does not know everything. Something that Mr. Roberts clearly could never admit to.

Contrary to Mr. Roberts statement that his opinion is *"actually an informed opinion based on close visual inspection of the only surviving original print"* of Careful Please, is simply nothing more than a self-aggrandizing statement. The simple fact that Mr. Roberts puts forth his opinion (as Miss Reid does), but does not provide visual evidence of his opinion (as Miss Reid did) shows me that Mr. Roberts is doing nothing more than spouting words. Mr. Roberts has always had the opportunity to rebut anything on my website via the contact form on my website. Yet he has not done so. Why? Because bullies require an audience and can never go toe-to-toe with someone who is both willing and able to stand up to them. Instead Mr. Roberts decided to attack Miss Reid behind a closed door in a forum that does not accept any new registrants, and where Miss Reid was unable to defend herself publically. Bully for you Mr. Roberts. What a man you are. And in case my use of sarcasm escapes you here, let me put this a little more *"diplomatically"* to you. You, Mr. Roberts, are a 6'8", 300+ pound coward. No more and no less.

If you should like to rebut or respond, please feel free to do so. My website (and it is mine, and not Miss Reid's) does have a contact form. Any comments you would like to make will be posted on my website. If you care to rebut, I invite it. If you care to respond, I invite it. And even if you would simply like to throw a temper tantrum, rest assured I will post that as well. You see, Mr. Roberts, I am not a female, your favorite target. And although I am likely older than you, and I am not 6'8", and I do not weigh in excess of 300 pounds, to quote John Wayne, "on my worst day I could beat the hell out of you." So, if you have the intestinal fortitude (which I doubt) put on your big boy pants and go toe-to-toe with me. I welcome it.

Sincerely,  
Bob Tuttle

Owner of The New Frontier website, <http://dukefanclub.weebly.com>