Wallace in Los Angeles

By Philip Day

Just before the black man came into the room, I was thinking: Hollywood ... Hollywood ... Hollywood ... was George Wallace lost his way?

Why would be open campaign headquarters with the signs saying, "Why be afraid of a black man?" Would you have that? Would Hubert Humphrey have put his headquarters in Compton? Would Woodrow Wilson have set up camp in San Marino? Then why does Wallace in Hollywood? Why does he search light outside in the light rain? Was this a movie premiere? A year-end sale at a car lot instead of the opening of headquarters of a man who claims to represent common people? And the punch — why must it be champagne? Where was the sense of sacrifice?

I thought of the night in the 1950s when I met Wallace briefly — only the shaking of hands and the posing for a picture taken by one of his bodyguards — in El Monte Legion Stadium. He had come to gather signatures to get on the California primary ballot and to gain financial support. The crowd of mostly transplant Southerners seemed almost religious in their support of Wallace. When the baskets were passed around the huge dusty stadium, the audience members dug deep into their pockets for money.

This night, about eight years later, when the basket was passed about by a young woman, there were many shrugs, expressions of empty pockets, and reluctant donations. Wallace did not come that night to his room with the piles of brochures. The People posters, and red and white and blue table and wall decorations. He was campaigning elsewhere, but his photographic and artistic likenesses were spread everywhere. I looked at his picture on the cover of some of his campaign literature. I opened a leaflet from a table of campaign materials. On one page was a picture of Wallace, in his wheelchair, driving a boat on an Alabama lake. Also pasted on the page were four items for sale. They bore line drawings of the governor. They were: a high chrome finish Zippo lighter, $6.75; a stain finish chrome table lighter, $13.95; a brush finish stainless steel money clip, $8.25; and a high chrome retractable tape measure, $3.95.

On the back page was an order blank for these four items, and two more: the original George Wallace Wrist Watch for $22.50, and George Wallace rug, $15. George Wallace Watch, "Trust The People" watch. This is Wallace's signature watch. "Let's Put It All Together" is printed on a watch band, and "Happy Birthday, Wallace," USA, Wallace for President. I put the leaflet in my pocket and went across the room. The band was fast dancing with a man whom I suspected had a wooden leg. I wore a "Wallace Labor Action" t-shirt. I snatched two more brochures off the long refreshment table, chatted briefly with one of the hostesses, turned, and looked across the room to the black man. He was being welcomed and his back was slapped by a queue of hands.

A man and a woman walked toward the door. The man had a bottle of champagne tucked under his coat. Others had made the same idea. I went over to the father of the little girl who had woundingly sung a sentimental favorite earlier. I passed a man wearing a "Jews For Wallace" button. I complimented the father on his daughter's performance. He said he had been singing for nine months and added, "She's a Wallace girl. She likes Wallace all right." (Continued to Page 18)

The Queen is dead!

Burr Jerger

I took The Queen Mary to Europe in 1969, had briefly recognized her guts today as she lies enshrined in the Long Beach Harbor. Age promoters have a way of diminishing a hull, and intensifying memories.

It had been stormy in late February. The North Atlantic was viciously rough. The Captain cut her usual speed of 31 knots by half. My fear kicked into the motions. I didn't like the wind conditions. The rain. Today there isn't a shudder. For all purposes the Queen is dead! Long live the Queen of Long Beach!

Gone is the fabulous indoor swimming pool. English phone booths are spotted around the decks, but they contain American phones. Remaining statuary make up a high-priced Hyatt House Hotel. Hyatt House. With a hotel sales office, personnel at all the commercialism of an ugly American hotel. Yet the faint suggestions of a once beautiful ship remain.

The typical dining rooms are gone too, with the badly cooked British menus. Now there are four specialty restaurants named after Lord Nelson, Lady Hamilton and Winston Churchill, presumably serving their favorite dishes. Where is the look? Or was it in Nelson? Hamilton, as we all know, feuded upon his Lordship. The newest fashionable in Captain, whoever he was!

The great planked decks are the same, the rows of white lifeboats. The three towering funnels have been replaced but the new ones seem as legitimately red as the others. I spent some time in the three-story main lounge, which still had most of its bronze photograph decor.

I felt a nostalgia above, a sickness below where Jacques Cocteau had imposed a fish museum on the promoters. If they had let the Queen alone and showed her as she was, a real historical phenomenon, they might not be in the financial peril they seem to be in today. The American tourist might pretend a little more reality to one that was jazzed up.

Yet there is something thrilling about seeing the once 0,000-ton, 10,000-foot lady lying there in her Long Beach berth, ready to stay. The country concessions sell American candy, a chocolate dipped banana being the main treat. The wax museum royalty, however, are as realistic as the historical ones. And Stan Laurel even seems slightly out of place in a bathtub, holding a model of the Queen.

I enjoyed The Queen Mary Story where the tour begins because I learned a little history about the old gal. She was known as Job 543 in her Scottish shipyards. Her metamorphosis from time was less (the keel) to launching, took six years. Queen Mary christened her namesake with a bottle of Australian champagne. After that she held the Atlantic sprint record for 14 years!

Now she has joined the Long Beach community of the aged. Her colon has been flushed out while 7 million tourists have swarmed over her like maggots in the four years she has lain at rest — three times the number of fare-paying passengers who paid over 4 million to steam almost 4 million miles. But apparently, promoters, 7 million are enough.

I didn't like seeing one of my uncle's severed leg on the huge, 10-ton anchors standing outside. Something like your uncle's severed foot. Three of his massive propellers had been excised, and that was it. Of his internal organs had been ripped out to make way for cargo. I would like to remember her, she was like an old friend. Peace they should have let her. Her natural death, not rape. New life should have been tried again. Embalming never became anyone, not even a Queen!
Judge Crater Terror as autobiography

The Autobiography of Judge Crater is not a play about the mysterious magician who wandered away while seeking a pack of cigarettes; rather, it is a work about New York City. The impresario for the evening is a life-sized rat who dances about as a cherubic symbol of fear and brutality, the nexus of New York life. The characters, the set and the music move always on the edge of murder and exploitation. Ed Gordon's realistic-abstruse work gravitates back and forth between the computerized brutality of thug-run Manhattan and the nihilistic fantasy of Nazi Germany. Through all of this one can hear the whispers of the dying Kitty Genoves, though the author has not written her into the play.

The point, and it ties up with the title, is merely that if a man does something bizarre enough he will be remembered. Cut to a small Jewish family in mid-town Manhattan. The son, played amusingly by Joe Deneer, is feeding his life-sized rat. This in a city where Puerto Ricans and blacks are bitten by the hundreds every day while the suburban liberals flee to the island or Connecticut for evening inspiration. Malachi Throne is a bit uneven as Maury, the father who is waiting for his wife to return in the midst of a hacking and snuffing epidemic. He warns to it in the scenes with William Lanteau who is superb as Uncle Otto, an aging German of nebulous background who gratuitously espouses revolutionary slogans. Lanteau has the crucial role in the play, a blind man, tapping about on the stage, carrying chunks of bloody meat, advising the young and ultimately revealing himself as... but we'll save that for the performance.

Also excellent is Mary McCasker as Debby, a young social worker who has SLO delusions. She is especially musical, rhythmic and lively played against the gravitas of Throne's father and the darkness of Uncle Otto.

What catches you in this play, though it does have difficulty balancing between reality and fantasy, is the raw power of the symbols: the rat meat, the woman who has lost a leg and is not looking for it (played hilariously by Nora Meierbauer), the "knowledgeable" man without sight, the magical rat, and the hapless cops who romp about like prancing cream of wheat brains on the trail of a missing cat.

The acting is far above average, the sets are properly shadowed and the theme, though painful, is well worth seeking out.

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Changing Signals

The Company Theater announces that SIGNALS, the new hit play about being male in America, will be opening there April 23. SIGNALS has been running at the Synthaxis Theatre since March 2. Its limited run is scheduled to close on April 3, but due to popular demand, performances were extended to April 10.

Now the show will be moving to the larger Company Theater for a five-week run, performing on Sundays at 3:00 and 7:00, through May 23. The Company Theater is located at 1635 S. La Cienega, near Pico: 247-5154.

William Lanteau as Otto attacking Malachi Throne as Nanny in the "Autobiography of Judge Crater"