

LITTLE DICKIE JONES



by Ronnie D. Foster

As an accomplished athlete and professional rodeo star at the age of four, Little Dickie Jones was billed as “The World’s Youngest Trick Rider and Trick Roper.” Richard Percy Jones was born in 1927, the son of a newspaper printer for the McKinney Daily Courier-Gazette. In 1932 with his mother, LaVerne, acting as manager and stage mother, Dickie was a featured performer at the Dallas Centennial Rodeo, alongside cowboy movie star Hoot Gibson. Hoot was so amazed at the little fellow’s performance that he gave him a job in his traveling rodeo show and suggested to LaVerne, that if she brought him to Hollywood, the little cowboy could be in one of his movies.

LaVerne took the cowboy film star’s advice, went to Hollywood, and within a matter of about two years, Little Dickie Jones was receiving costar billing alongside some of the most famous movie stars ever. For example, guests for his ninth birthday party, held at the famous Brown Derby Restaurant in Hollywood, included such famous celebrities as Hoot Gibson, Buck Jones, Ken Maynard, George O’Brian and Judy Garland.

Starring mostly in westerns where his horse-riding skills were featured, he did his own stunts and in later years refused a stunt man and staged his own fight scenes. According to his fellow actors and stunt people, at five-foot seven, Little Dickie was one tough cowboy. He enjoyed the dangerous part of acting so much that he appeared in many films as an uncredited stunt man.

As his acting and singing abilities improved he would appear in a variety of major motion pictures, including “Stella Dallas” (1937), “Young Mr. Lincoln” (1939), “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” (1939), “Destry Rides Again” (1939) and a few “Our Gang” films. With his good looks, pleasant personality, nice voice and great energy, Little Dickie Jones was a director’s dream actor.

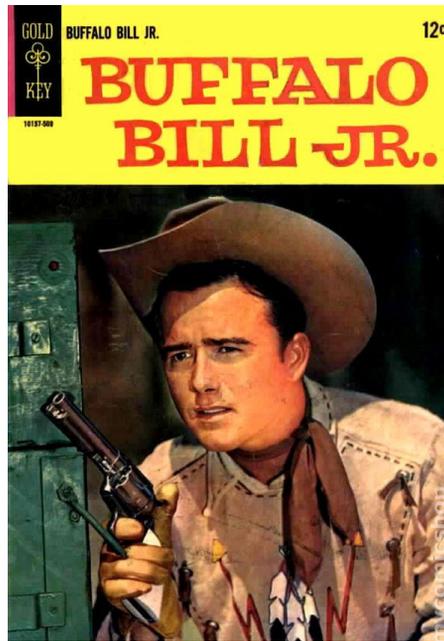
By 1938, Dickie was 10 years old and already a veteran actor, having appeared in 40 motion pictures. However, the biggest starring role of his career would be one where he is not even seen on screen. In 1939, out of more than 200 actors, mostly adults, auditioning for the voice of Pinocchio, he was personally interviewed, auditioned and chosen by the great Walt Disney himself. “Pinocchio” would win two Oscars for its soundtrack and Walt Disney’s second animated movie would go on to be a major classic and is still popular today.

In the 1950s and ‘60s he appeared in many TV shows as Dick Jones, including the first episode of “The Beverly Hillbillies”. Many of Dickie’s films are available online and are very fun to watch. He appeared often in “The Lone Ranger”, “Hopalong

Cassidy”, and played the lead role in the “Buffalo Bill Jr.” series.

Dick Jones was greatly admired by his fellow artists, according to this actor: “What a great guy he was, how much fun he was to work with. “The Range Rider” (1951) and “Buffalo Bill Jr.” (1955). He was a good fight routine man. We had a lot of fun tearing the sets apart. He did all of his own fights. He was dependable. He didn’t phony it up by looking back to where he was gonna go and staggering to it, getting down on one knee when he took a fall. He did it like a true athlete. He worked it out. When he was gonna go back over a table, he knew where the table was, and he went over it just like you would actually do it.”

Dick Jones never forgot his early days in North Texas and visited McKinney quite often while his father was still alive. He would appear in more than 100 films and television shows. Jones' last acting role was in the 1965 movie, “Requiem For a Gunfighter”. He then started a very successful real estate business and passed away in 2014. •



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