

*A unique inside look at what it was like to be a successful child performer in the 1960's and 70's, and how the experience influenced his adult life.*

**MY NAME IS BUDDY:  
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A FORMER CHILD STAR,  
WHO NOBODY REMEMBERS.**

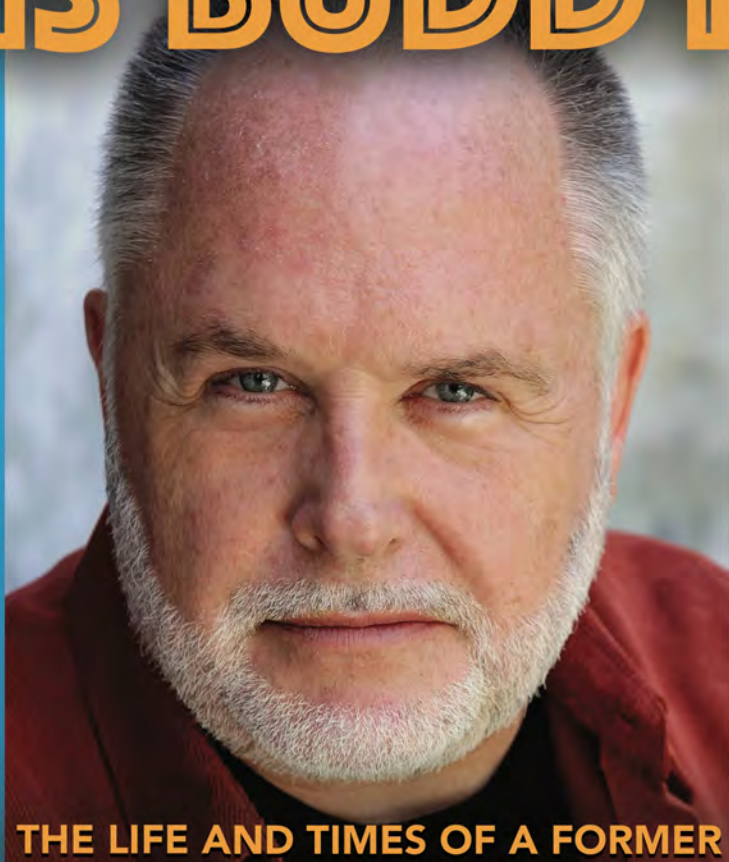
By Stephen Gustafson

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Names of specific individuals and companies have either been altered or eliminated out of respect for their privacy. It was not the writer's intent to disparage or denigrate anyone mentioned in this memoir. The goal was to remain truthful to the events and to those who were a part of them.

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## “MACBETH”

The next step in my career path came very quickly. It turned out that one of the cast members in ‘On Borrowed Time’ heard about a production in need of a young boy for a role at The American Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford CT. The Theatre was first formed in the early 1950s and was considered highly prestigious, with many big-name actors gracing its stage. In this instance, it was to be “MACBETH” under the direction of the Theatre’s former artistic director John Houseman. The man is a legend in the industry, so I won’t attempt to provide his biography here. Just look him up on the web.

A phone call from Sam to the Theatre in Stratford clinched an audition, and off we went to see what would happen. The Theatre was about a forty-minute drive from our home in Newington and was visible from the Highway even though it sat back quite a bit on the property. It was a grand structure emulating its sister venue in London, England, and I can remember feeling awe-struck and intimidated by it as we drove up.

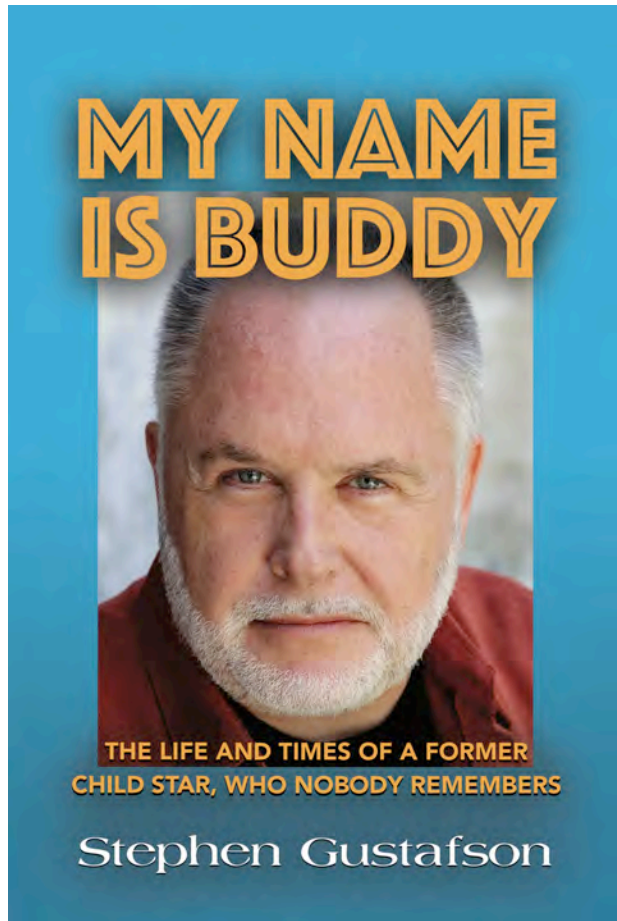
I was reading for the role of ‘Young MacDuff’ who, along with his Mother Lady MacDuff, is assassinated by MacBeth’s henchmen. I don’t recall much about the actual audition except for the strangeness of the wording but somehow managed to impress them and was quickly cast in the role. Rehearsals began immediately, and we opened in mid-September. One unique aspect of this Theatre was the Q&A that was held with the audience after each performance. My participation was unplanned, but Mr. Houseman discovered very quickly that the audience was tremendously interested in making sure I was okay, due to the violent nature of the attack. It took only two performances before I was included in the Q&A to relieve the patrons that all was well with Young MacDuff.

*\*TRIVIA: The henchman who stabbed me twice daily during the performance was a New York actor named Richard Castellano. Five years later, Richard would play the role of 'Clemenza' in the "THE GODFATHER."*

Unknown forces were clearly at work regarding the remarkable opportunities I'd been presented with, and things were about to take another leap as a full-blown professional career in New York now loomed on the horizon.

The actress who played Lady MacDuff suggested to my parents that the time might be right for me to get an Agent in NY since my career was starting to get some real traction. So, after discussing it between themselves, my folks sat me down to find out what I thought about it. I was having a great time with everything that was happening, but they wanted to be sure it was something that 'I' wanted rather than just doing it to please them. I said that as long as they were okay with it, so was I; besides, we all agreed we had to see just how far things would go. Based on all the feedback we were getting from other performers and the overwhelming audience response, we felt like we needed to see what might happen. For all we knew, it might turn out that this was all just a 'flash in the pan.' A legitimate NY Agency would undoubtedly prove to be the best judge of talent and future career opportunities if I really had something marketable.

A decision was made to reach out to the biggest, and best children's Agency NY had to offer to see if there was any interest in representing me. If we were going to do this, then we might as well shoot for the top. There was no sense in wasting time. If a professional career was to materialize, then this would be the best way to determine whether the path was worth pursuing or not. It would be a considerable commitment for my parents because it would require regular trips to Manhattan, which meant a driving time of over four hours round trip. A long way to go for what usually amounted to about 30 minutes of waiting and auditioning time.



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