

The ups, downs, crazy adventures, and funny observations of a professional screenwriter who worked in Hollywood for more than 15 years. If you ever thought about writing a screenplay, this story's for you.

Hollywoodaholic: Confessions of a Screenwriter

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/156.html?s=pdf>

HOLLYWOODAHOLIC

Confessions of a Screenwriter

By

Alfred Wayne Carter

Copyright 1998 by Alfred Wayne Carter

Table of Contents

Preface

The Yellow Brick Bug	1
California Here I ... Don't Come	9
New Kid in Town	13
Playboy of the Western World	21
Blowing My Bile Along the Nile	25
Beach Boy (Under a Fog)	29
Love, Fear and Other Distractions	36
Two Weeks at War ... First Strike	43
Empty Calories	47
Summer Play	49
Send in the Clouds	53
Raining Up	61
Escape From Beyond	66
The Big Time	71
Birth of a Neurotic	76
Nothing Succeeds, Like Recess	78
Plumming the Pits	84
Getting My Kicks From Route 66	88
Second Wind	94
Psychic Interlude	100
The Dice Man	107

A Christmas Story	111
Craps	119
Scripts and Bloods	123
Slow Poison	126
Hollywoodaholic	130
Born at a Bris	139
Toying With Denial	144
Last Hurrahs	153
Letting Go	162
Crop Circles, Truth & Other Distractions	166
Snapping Out of It	176
Deadhead for a Day	181
Shocking Aunt Doris	187
The Path of Least Resistance	190
Say Good-bye to Hollywood	197
Soft Landing	201
Teacher, Teacher	208
Applause	213

Epilogue

Preface

In the summer of 1977 at 22 years old I packed up everything I owned into my 1969 Firebird and drove from Miami to Los Angeles with \$1,200 cash. I had two 3' high ESS speakers weighing 80 pounds each in the back seat, a 13" portable Hitachi color TV in the passenger seat, 300 record albums, a trunk full of blue jeans and T-shirts and a portable electric Corona typewriter. The car was so heavy the back end dragged and scraped rear metal bumper driving out of the parking lot. The first stop on my journey was the mechanic's garage to have \$100 worth of air shocks put in. That left me \$1,100. But I wasn't worried. As I waved good-bye to the close friends I had made at college and the two years after working on a syndicated disco dance TV series, I reminded them I was finally keeping my promise to become a famous screenwriter in Hollywood, and that I would almost certainly be a millionaire by the time I was 24.

Sixteen years later, my wife and I drove out of Los Angeles with all we could carry in a '87 Honda Accord, leaving behind two storage units of furniture, books, stereos and mementos. We only had \$7,500 between us and the deed to a cheap lot in Cape Coral, Florida, but I was just as excited about finally getting out of California as I had been going in.

Something and everything happened in that span of time, which convinced me The Eagles were right on the mark when they sang (in The Sad Café), "I don't why fortune smiles on some, and let's the rest go free." I had found my dream as a screenwriter in Hollywood and lived the life in the fast lane and made what some may consider a small fortune and then spent it just as easily thinking there would always be more, but also believing that what I had was never enough. And just as I had told my friends in Miami for years that I was really going to L.A., I spent as many years promising my new friends and my family that I would someday get out.

It wasn't easy. There is an addiction in our culture rooted in the appeal of something which goes beyond all the promises and enticements or cigarettes or alcohol or drugs, and which is so much a part of the psyche of America that our country would cease to be America without it.

The following letters detail the passage of an innocent through the glory and madness of that addiction and out again. It's a story we all willingly share in and contribute to every time we place our interests in the lives of celebrities, or dream about 'making it' in Hollywood.

Hollywood has us all.

It had me.

And why not?

Reality is greatly overrated.

THE YELLOW BRICK BUG

When I was five years old growing up in Maryland I was curious about how big and important things like rockets worked and I wanted to be a scientist. By the time I was eleven I realized that scientists, when confronted with even the most basic questions about the mysteries of life (like where a thought comes from) did not have the answers, so I decided to become a writer and make them up. Those speculations first appeared in science fiction stories I wrote throughout my teens in pale imitation of my newfound heroes; Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft, Ray Bradbury and Rod Serling. Along with Marvel comic books, I collected rejection slips from every fantasy magazine in New York City until a publication called *Creepy* magazine finally printed one of my stories in their fan section. That, and a couple of rave reviews (and good grades) for Super 8 movies I made in school to avoid writing decidedly non-fantasy term papers were all the encouragement I needed. At fifteen, I filmed my first 20-minute science fiction epic complete with a Pink Floyd soundtrack (*Meddle*) and called it *One Step Beyond the Outer Twilight Limits Zone* in honor of the television series which inspired me. When scouting for a college later on, I wanted to go somewhere that would enable me to combine my interest in writing with making films. I chose the University of Miami in Florida because the communications department had a good intern program and, I decided, there was no reason why I couldn't make movies, chase girls AND get a tan.

From that moment on my fate was sealed because, as it turns out, that was the same kind of thinking that had created a place called Hollywood in the first place.

The journey begins with an excerpt from a letter during my sophomore year to my hippie artist sister in Maryland after she had been married for one month.

September 10, 1974

Dear Sharon and Marty,

... Speaking of TV, the pressure is on. Next Tuesday I have to do a five-minute news show for television direction. Now, directing alone is not that bad; just calling the shots and cues and making sure the show gets off on time, plus punching in a one minute commercial. But the instructor doesn't leave it at that. We have to get the copy (script), get some talent (anchorman), provide music (record), provide supers (titles) and then direct the bloody thing. Needless to say, I'm shitting bricks about the whole thing. However, I have resolved to write my own copy and get a friend to be the talent. I'm going to do the "Bad News" - a show of just bad news. The background will be black and the anchorman will wear black with only one light on his face so that the only thing that will show up on the screen is his face.

As far as scriptwriting, I've turned in my first 40 pages to my screenwriting teacher (Paul Nagel) and am anxiously awaiting his reaction.

October 29, 1974

Dear Sharon and Marty,

... I got my completed first draft back from my teacher. He compared it to stuff by the Marx Brothers and Mel Brooks. It's only when you first finish a rough draft, though, that you realize you haven't really started. I have to make a lot of radical structural changes, etc. I'm going to start writing a script about my experiences as a foreign exchange student in Peru, because I have a potential reader/director.

I got a one-day job working with a film crew on Biscayne Bay filming a commercial to be run nationally. That should be pretty interesting. I only got about \$3 per hour (If I was in the union, it would be about \$8.) I got to get up around 6 a.m., though.

January 26, 1975

Dear Sharon & Marty,

... I guess I'm going to crack down and do some booking this week. I haven't really done much writing either. My teacher wants me to temporarily shelve my script and work on character development in another simpler story and some other areas that I need to develop. Don't know what I'll be doing at Channel 10 (Miami ABC-TV affiliate intern position) this week, but I hope something comes up worth writing about.

February 21, 1975

Dear Sharon & Marty,

God, what a week this has been. I am the busiest I think I've ever been. I haven't had five free minutes. I started working news at Channel 10 last week to make up more

intern time. The first night there I answered the phones. I got one flying saucer report, one report of a social security check that bounced and someone telling me that four bombs have been planted at the Miami Beach Convention Hall. I never heard the follow up report on that. They've got me writing a few news stories for the 11 p.m. news, but nothing big yet, mostly 15 second spots. At least I'm getting some journalistic experience. Next week I hope to get out with some film crews.

I went to the premiere last night of *Shampoo*. I got some passes from the Mass Communications office. It was great (not the movie); free champagne - I was zilched before I even went in to see the film. Warren Beatty was there. He's been down here all week promoting the film. They had a shampoo contest on the student union patio and he showed up there. A lot of celebrities appear on *A.M. Miami* at Channel 10, so I'm going to start checking that out. Maybe get someone to read my script, which I just finished rewriting.

March 26, 1974

Dear Patti and Sharon and Marty,

... I went to TV workshop today and there were no performers, so I took a stab at improvisation with some other guys in front of the cameras. I was commentator Joe Breath O'Pine of the University of Miami Profundity Session. I don't know if we were any good, but I enjoyed myself. It's the first time I ever got on the other side of the TV camera.

(Banacek Script)

CUT TO - THE LIVING ROOM STREWN WITH THE DEAD BODIES OF THE REPORTERS. BANACEK WIPES THE TRICKLE OF BLOOD FROM HIS LIP AS HE GLANCES OVER THE DEAD BODIES, THEN TURNS TO HIS CHAUFFEUR.

BANACEK (Continuing)

Which reminds me of an old Polish proverb...
"You can defend against karate from China
with judo from Japan, but it won't help you
against a crowbar from Sears."

BANACEK REMOVES HIS SUNGLASSES, PUTS THEM IN HIS BREAST POCKET, PICKS HIS EAR, AND CASUALLY WALKS INTO THE GLARING LIGHT OF THE OPEN DOOR. HIS CHAUFFEUR RUNS TO JOIN HIM, AND AS THEY CLOSE THE DOOR BEHIND THEM, EVERYTHING GOES BLACK.

March 17, 1975

Dear Sharon and Marty,

... I'm working on a new script by request of my teacher. The premise may sound strikingly familiar to you - a young married couple, photographer and artist - but that is where the familiarity ends. It's a character study about the new demands society places on success and fulfillment, which contribute to alter the couple's personality and destroy their relationship. It's very 'heavy,' so to speak. It plays on the theme that society has made it so that it is very hard to just "survive" and be happy, but the pressure is on to achieve, achieve. My teacher apparently approves. he thinks it's excellent so far and says I should be able to sell it to movies or TV. Well, we'll see about that.

I've been really depressed lately about not going out with girls at all, and basically having no relationship with any girls at all. I'm beginning to think I'm compensating for this through work at Channel 10. Maybe if I was going out with a girl, I wouldn't be so ambitious to succeed and I would be content raking my way through life. I hate to think of myself as a "loner." Maybe I'll figure things out, eventually.

April 18, 1975

... School's ending soon. Another party here tomorrow. All these bloody parties but nothing ever happens except everybody gets bombed. We're all in the same boat, but I'd prefer to swim ashore.

September 2, 1975

... I now live in an apartment about two blocks from the heart of Coconut Grove, the hippest area in all Miami. The change is incredible. My social life has improved 300 percent. I've been on several dates. I party somewhere almost every night. I'm keeping up with my work but not writing as much as I planned. I don't know if this pseudo-wildlife style I've been living reflects the true me, but for a while it is a blast and probably an extremely valuable experience for rounding out my personality. I'm far from the proverbial Playboy, in fact, I think I'd rather find one girl for a while, but it's lifting to be able to circulate around with a variety of choices. I'm really the same person, but I think I'm just going through a "release" period (Preparing for California?).

I landed a real coup internship. I'm the first intern to work with Marcus Productions, a sort of one man, lucrative commercial production company. I travel

around with Steve Marcus in his 450 SL Mercedes while he talks on his car phone going to ad agencies. He made \$250,000 his first year and just sold a syndicated show called *Disco '76* to 150 stations around the country. We don't go into production until November. Marcus says when he goes out to L.A. in a couple weeks he'll open some holes for me to possibly get some work. If this works out, I'll hang around here for another six months after I graduate just to make some bucks.

November 4, 1975

...Thursday after class I had my script *Pay the Devil His Do* printed (10 copies). There was a Cuban guy running the school press in the administration building who was out to make a few bucks for himself and did it under the table for \$27. I sent one copy already off to the copyright office. This is my first script I completed a last draft on and the professor said it was ready to sell. Because of the shift in comedy styles, it might sell me more as a writer-for-hire rather than a script by itself. Meanwhile, I have to get some release forms before I can mail the bloody thing out.

I'm not looking forward to "'Ol' 21 and especially not looking forward to graduating. I know for a fact that I won't have as much just plain carefree times when I graduate. I'm not worried about jobs or anything like that, it's just the ramifications of irresponsibility are greater when you've graduated. I don't know, maybe things won't be any different.

December 6, 1975

...Tentatively, I'm going to be an extra (crowd scene) in a major Hollywood movie

they're filming down here at the Orange Bowl called *Black Sunday*. The disco series shoots in January. California in late March sounds good. It's going to be quite a step. The initial period is really going to be hell trying to find an apartment and roommate at the same time as getting work. But I'm definitely getting psyched and nothing could stop me from leaving short of the perfect girl (not even that).

January 26, 1976

...Tomorrow we're doing another pilot for *Disco '76* with K.C. and the Sunshine Band up in Ft. Lauderdale. I should begin to save some money next month, but for the moment I'm perfectly satisfied to be making enough to get by. I'm having a pretty good time with all my friends here, and basically this is a working vacation until April. I'm going to have to re-psyche myself for California because it will be quite a sacrifice the way jobs go these days. But if I stayed I'd still be making that mistake I abhor, which is settling for something secure rather than aiming for what you really want.

Sharon and Marty pursued their own dream and moved out to Hawaii in April.

CALIFORNIA HERE I... DON'T COME

May 27, 1976

Hello Island Dwellers!

...I'm staying for the time being. I've decided that what's really important is spending one last semester with my school friends and my other friends. So December it will be (to move). December is the best time because competition is less and new pilots are going into production in California (also earthquake probability is greatest this summer). I have good feelings about that decision and anticipate a lot of good times next fall before I split.

August 13, 1976

Finished my another draft of my first 'commercial' script *Pay the Devil His Do*, but I've got no money to have more copies printed. Bummer. I've even got about nine producers lined up to read it.

The word I've got is that the disco series has been sold and we go into full production in November. Good news in that I'll finally clean up in the bucks as associate producer. Bad news is the threat of another delay for California trip by three or four months. I suppose the experience and title will be valuable, though, in California. It's got me working new plans: We'll finish in February or March; I'll have lots of \$ saved; I'll go to Europe for a while; come back and move to California at the beginning of the summer;

then buzz out to Hawaii to see you people.

Just got confirmation on series on phone. I don't know whether to be elated or disappointed. Really want to get in gear because I'm getting restless. I've been here at this address almost exactly one year now. Making too many friends and getting too complacent, and I want to GO.

September 22, 1976

Aaaaagh. 35 commercials in 8 weeks! I can't believe it. I'm booked through February. It's great, though. Naturally I'm buying albums again like there's no tomorrow and I installed a phone in my bedroom. I got my script bound and have already sent it to six producers. I'm still queasy, though. Things are getting too good here. I'm making connections, getting more money, gaining more power with the director/producer Marcus. If I don't leave soon, I may be too crucial to spare and that frightens me. We're really growing. The series means national recognition and there's talk of a feature film after that. I'm getting locked, and without tasting the unknown of California. I don't want to look back and think how I would have done out there, and yet (maybe) everything WILL come to me if I stay here. I'm still going to get out for a while I hope next fall.

November 8, 1976

...Throwing a big party for my birthday at the pool Saturday. Twenty-two seems old - it's like a solid foot into the twenties. I'd like to spend a couple more years at 21. I can say that I am truly having a good time these days. Something to do, someplace to go every night. Got a whole shitload of chicks' phone numbers (I will probably have four

different dates this week). I gotta go out and get a little black book. Discovered another fashion school nearby. Stocked.

Talked Marcus into paying me more money. I actually sent some cash North (I want to have about two grand for the trip, Hawaii and California settling). Only got \$1,200 to go, ha ha. When I say I'll be out there before next summer, don't doubt me.

Yes, I'm definitely leaving Florida and I've got nothing but good feelings about doing it. It's a stepping stone and I should always treat it as such. Money I could be making is not as great a consideration as the stuff I want to write, do. I'm going to hit the variety show circuit in Hollywood first. The writing on those shows sucks.

Guess you heard about Mom and Dad's new house going up in Cape Coral, Florida. Very nice area. Seems quiet, but it's not just a bunch of old people. Actually, it's similar to our old Maryland neighborhood, only surrounded by water.

December 27, 1976

...Just got through listening to the new Eagles album (ecstasy) *Hotel California*. It's an excellent preview of coming attractions. The true personality of the West coast.

We start shooting *Disco '77* finally, after a year waiting. That's great because I can leave on time.

The thing that completely eased and altered my feelings was what I did right after Friday (getting fired and re-hired by Marcus). Got in my car and went to Titusville to see Terry (friend in the Navy) and spend Christmas. Went to his father's ranch, went horseback riding, then ate, and some friends came over. Went to a party and to the woods and over to Orlando. I had an excellent time. I left Sunday to come back. The thing I

realized was how good the people are there and how good a time you have because of it. I wouldn't mind pushing a broom if I lived with those type people. So fuck the Disco show, I don't really need it. The world won't fall apart if my plans are crapped by not going all the way through with Disco. I'll go through with it, even go to California and try some plans there. But I'll always know that, even without achieving things or working in certain endeavors, I can really enjoy life. I'm really proud of knowing that, and friendships are more appreciated (and easier to make). So, I move ever closer to figuring out what I'm supposed to do with myself (and not being too concerned).

My itinerary for trip (so far) is Gainesville (Evie), Atlanta (Linda, Vince, Debbie), Maryland (the folks), New York (Jessie), Detroit (Dave C.), Chicago (Melanie), New Mexico (forget her name), San Diego (dump junk), San Francisco, (Dennis), Maui (you guys), Los Angeles. I'll probably get in a few more stops along the line.

The ups, downs, crazy adventures, and funny observations of a professional screenwriter who worked in Hollywood for more than 15 years. If you ever thought about writing a screenplay, this story's for you.

Hollywoodaholic: Confessions of a Screenwriter

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/156.html?s=pdf>