

because I got to do journalistic things, but in reverse. When I would call to find out things like where Francis The Talking Mule is buried, they would think that I was nuts. But when you print it people say, 'That's interesting.' So the difference between a writer and a crackpot is a paycheck.

GR: How do you feel about your fame coming from primarily one scene, Divine eating shit?

JW: It worked beyond my wildest imagination. I'm the Dr. Joyce Brothers of dog shit. I get a little weary because I've told the story so many times. It's one thing that always will be with me, and I'm proud of that scene. You can't calculate what happened; it just happened. When I first thought of it, I thought it certainly was an outrageous thing. But I hardly thought that 15 years later I would be still talking about it.

GR: How do you write?

JW: All I need is a pad of paper and a pen. I don't type. My typist doesn't use a word processor. This book was written in the old-fashioned sense of writing a book. I write every day from 7 a.m. to noon and I do my business in the afternoon. I keep notes and do a lot of drafts on tons of legal pads. I can write almost anywhere as long as there is no one in the house.

GR: Who is your favorite writer?

JW: Grace Metalious. She's my idol. She wrote the first dirty book I ever read, *Peyton Place*. She made a lot of money, blew it all on Cadillacs and extended stays at the Plaza Hotel and drank herself to death. That's who I might emulate, my New Year's Resolution.

GR: Did you feel funny about visiting the White House (he was invited by a Nixon aide/exploitation flick fan), knowing that the Heagans would pay to burn your films?

JW: In a way, it *We*" perfect because it was so ironic. Big deal if I was invited to the Carter White House. But you would hardly put my films with the Reagan administration. I thought it was better in a way because it was more ridiculous and made me feel patriotic. Only in America could this kind of thing ever happen. They gave me Reagan cufflinks, which I had to get because nobody would have believed it had happened. But I had no qualms going over there because of his politics. I thought that was more of a reason to go because it was so crazy. I had to pass an FBI security clearance, which makes me wonder since I had visited some of the Manson people.

GR: Have you met other writers on the book tour?

JW: I haven't met many but last week at a book fair in New Jersey, I posed for a picture with Julie and David Eisenhower. I can't wait to see the picture. I think it'll be like that picture of John Wayne Gacy (mass murderer) and Rosalynn Carter.

GR: A few years ago you had problems with a videotape company that decided not to release your movies after committing to do so.

JW: Right, that worked out better because Media Home Entertainment was going to

release them and had an ad campaign all ready that went 'Let's put trash back in the home, where it belongs.' I heard a couple of things about what happened. One, the company wanted to change its image. But I also heard that a salesman watched the film and refused to sell it, so they dumped it. And because of the publicity, Continental came along and actually gave us a better deal. Whenever you're repressed, generally, in the long run it helps. I still sometimes get hassled in video stores. You can't find *Pink Flamingos* in that many video stores. There's even a list that video shops send to other video shops saying that if you don't want to ask for trouble, don't show these 10 movies. And *Pink Flamingos* is one of them, because in court it looks obscene. When you're sitting there in a courtroom, the jury can't laugh; they're afraid they will be arrested. So there's stunned silence.

GR: How did you get (former teen idol) Tab Hunter to star in *Polyester*?

JW: I called him and said, 'There are two things you should probably know. One, it's not a union film.' He said that didn't matter. 'And two, your leading lady is a man.' And he laughed. Luckily, he hadn't seen *Pink Flamingos*. Later he did see it, and I asked, 'Tab, now tell me the truth, if you had seen it would you have made *Polyester*?' And he didn't say yes. He sort of hedged.

GR: Why would people go out of their way to see sites like the Patty Hearst shootout?

JW: Everybody in a way would like to see stuff but most feel too ghoulish to really go in person. But why? If you're an avid newspaper reader, once you follow a story like that, you never forget. I'm even more interested when the story has died out - where the people are now, how that one moment of notoriety will be with them forever and how they deal with their lives afterward if they're alive. And if not, how the people who were around them deal with it.

GR: Will you ever be accepted by Hollywood?

JW: It once almost did happen with a studio. It got a few levels up with a yes. But then what always happens is the main producer screens one of my films and that's the end. It gets me in the door and keeps me out. My films are not a great resume to someone in authority in Hollywood. They get the appointment for me. U's the ultimate catch-22 situation. I get there because of it, and they say no because of it.

GR: Why are you interested in social misfits?

JW: The people who scare some people don't scare me because they're interested in things the same way that I am. I can tell. I'm not scared when I teach in jail because I understand hate and rage. But I am scared in shopping malls because I don't understand why everyone wants to be like everybody else. Shopping malls make me very nervous only because I can't identify with anyone there.

GR: Now that the book has been published, are you resuming your film career? JW: I have a new film project and signed a development deal with an independent investor in New York. She likes it. The third draft has been turned in. She says she has the backers for it. We're working on a budget and going to shoot it this spring. So this looks like it's going to happen. But I know that "yes's" sometimes crumble as the starting date appears. But I don't think it will.

It's an incredibly ambitious film for its budget. The people I work with always ask, 'Why can't you make a movie with three people and one set?' which I never do. I haven't cast it yet. It's sort of a musical, about white trash kids and hillbilly parents and their quest for mental health.

CHOICE EXCERPTS FROM CRACKPOT:

On Pia Zadora, superstar:

"Pia Zadora is my kind of movie star. She's got balls. You either love her or hate her - Indifference is hard to imagine ... She's shorter than Elizabeth Taylor, cuter than Alvin the Chipmunk, richer than Cher, more publicized than Isa Isa and has a better hairdo than Farrah."

On teaching a film course to prisoners in Baltimore:

"I introduced the film with my standard spiel about trying to make the trashiest film in the world and then the lights dimmed. As the credits rolled, it dawned on me that I was locked in a section of the jail with 20 men society has branded as dangerous criminals and there wasn't a guard in sight. Oh, well, I thought, they seem like nice kids to me; anybody can have a bad day I suppose."

On why Waters loves 'he National Enquirer:

"Sometimes the Enquirer tackles a real social issue: 'Expert Claims Cabbage Patch Dolls Can Be Possessed By the Devil' was one howler scoop. The accompanying photo showed 'famed psychic researcher Ed Warren' holding up a crucifix at a Cabbage Patch doll sitting over its crib. And you think these stories don't influence people? My cleaning lady, Rosa, who is so filled with great tales that Studs Terrel should marry her, recently confided her fear of Cabbage Patch dolls to me: 'I heard about this woman who had one, and the doll tore up her china closet. The lady came downstairs, and her glasses were all broken. The dog started speaking in tongues and told her it was because she didn't wrap up the doll at Christmas.'"