

Response To: Studio's Notes on Final 1<sup>ST</sup> Draft

SCRIPT NOTES - "THE STUNT MAN"

FROM: DICK RUSH

The following represents opinions expressed during a series of meetings between Peter Guber, Rob Lovenheim, Dick Rush and Bill Castle, during which the revised first draft of "Stunt Man" was read aloud and a series of changes were suggested to us. The following list is compiled from my notes and those made in Lovenheim's script, and my reaction to the suggestions are included here.

Page 1

The buzzard scene: My recollection is that after discussion this scene was acceptable to all. However, BL script shows a note saying, "Eliminate scene or change dialogue."

If this is still in contention, I reject the suggestion on the following basis: it became apparent that because the first twelve pages of the script bombarded the audience with such incredible rapid-fire action, (a police chase, fight with the lineman, encounter with the Duesenberg, explosion on the beach, rescue of the old lady), we were in danger of misleading the audience into thinking they were seeing "Batman." And so we opened the picture with a sense of allegory in order to create the right frame of mind for the audience and to set up what will evolve as the basic theme for the film:

Man's universal panic and paranoia, born out of an inability to control his own destiny, to even understand the ground rules by which he is supposed to play. In his fretful search for meaning, he accepts ritual, invents purpose, creates enemies to test his strength against. Cameron's nightmare adventure is like the nightmare uncertainty of our lives. Try as we may to avoid the thought, there is always the strong suspicion we're

playing with a stacked deck. This is the delicate fabric from which our reality is cut and why it is sometimes difficult to distinguish truth from illusion.

Isn't Cameron like that buzzard, trying to escape one danger by flying into a greater one? Isn't the pilot of the helicopter like Cameron, assuming the bird was trying to kill him? Aren't the random events of our lives like pinballs bouncing in the machine, we try to control them with body English and silent prayers -- in the hopes of winning another free game?

Let me clarify the story structure here as we begin. It will help our mutual understanding of intentions. On the surface, the film will be played as a taut, straight line, action-adventure-suspense melodrama with the emphasis on startling action. It will be told in subjective reality; that is, more or less from the point of view of our central character, Cameron. He must be present in every scene. It is against the rules to give the audience information which Cameron does not have. Therefore, the audience viewpoint will be similar to his.

The basic line is - a man on the run - the fugitive - will he escape? Will he survive? Will his sanctuary become his deathtrap in the end?

The second and more unique suspense line deals with: who is our hero? What is his crime? By introducing an unidentified hero, building sympathy for him and speculation about him, we put the audience in an interesting vise.

Running beneath the surface is a substructure which includes: the love story; the progression of stunts Cameron performs; Eli's problems in telling his "anti-war story."

Throughout we deal with the theme of illusion and reality, where old turns to young, good to bad, danger to safety, before our eyes every minute. Is Eli an ally or enemy? Is Nina in love with Cameron, unfaithful, worthwhile, part of the enemy camp? Is Cameron himself a good guy or a bad guy? What of Raymond? And so on. There is nothing mystical. Only the way you view things based on the information you've got.

Also, be aware that Eli's film is a World War One picture. Ours is a contemporary film about a man on the run who cannot judge the danger around him. Even though the subjects are different - the theme will turn out to be the same.

Pages 2 & 3

Policeman and waitress in car, and police converging on the diner: It was suggested that for clarity the screenplay should indicate that the police car is hidden in the forest and that the policemen in the diner reveal by their actions they are there officially, as though to make an arrest.

Since this is the way the action would be staged, I have no objection to making these changes in the screenplay.

BL's script says, in relationship to establishing the first police car, "What does this have to do with the action?" The answer is self-evident -- you find out on page 6.

Pages 3, 4 & 5

Int. Diner: BL's script note says: "Focus more on Cameron."

It is our intention to introduce Cameron and his awareness of the police one page earlier, which will create tension earlier and make him a witness to most of the other action, including Nina on the TV set.

Page 6

BL's script note says that the action between Frieda and Gordon in the police car is intrusive and stops the action and should be played as background action.

This is a matter of timing and pace. The screenplay already indicates that we never leave Cameron's face and that the sequence is all in voice-over.

Page 8

It was indicated that it should be clear Cameron's path is blocked by the telephone lineman, forcing him into combat.

This is the way the scene would play, therefore there is no problem in elaborating the description, (except the mild risk of overwriting which will not appear on the screen).

Page 10

Burt's line: "Sure, fella, you drive!" is indicated as being confusing.

It's supposed to be, to Cameron and, therefore, to us. However, I won't waste strong feelings on it, since it may change a dozen times before it gets onto film.

Page 11

It was requested that the script indicate when Cameron on the bridge faces Eli in the helicopter, that he has been trapped for the moment with no chance to run.

Okay.

Page 13

It was suggested that Cameron see Raymond for the first time on the beach where they are filming the explosion and that from behind Raymond is mistaken for Burt, who Cameron recently encountered in the car.

It's not a bad touch depending, of course, on the physical circumstances of shooting, casting, etc. A matter probably best reserved for production rather than adding to the complexity of the screenplay.

Page 16

We have agreed to answer the question, "What happened to Burt's body," by indicating in Eli's speech that, "It was probably caught in the current and lost."

Page 17

The note, "Why is she an old lady?," I believe has been covered to everyone's satisfaction in discussions. However, there is apparently still something that disturbs Peter and Bob about this meeting between Cameron and Nina. It was, therefore, suggested that the old lady we first see not be posing as a tourist, but be part of the cast of the picture company.

The answer is it spoils the fun somewhat. As we know, this film is a study of illusion and reality, not in the metaphysical sense the book suggested, thank God, but in the very practical sense that there are many sides to the things we see and believe, all of which are part of reality, depending upon where you are standing. Throughout the story there will be many surprises -- all of which are logically explained after the surprise, not before. The old lady turns out to be the young star of the film, who, we discover, must play several ages in Eli's picture and who, we learn a page later, has been trying out her

makeup and characterization by walking around and asking for autographs. I don't believe the suggested substitution will work. However, I am enchanted, as the audience will be, with the uniqueness and charm of this sequence, and I may amplify her later speech about the makeup test.

Page 22

BL note says, "Make clear that Eli has saved Cameron from Jake."

The dialogue and events, I think, would inescapably lead one to that conclusion. However, I would be willing to add Cameron saying, "Thanks a lot," to shed further light. (I am also adding a description on page 19 of Cameron's reaction to Jake, for the sake of clarifying that action.)

Page 22

There was a specific objection to Jake's line, "I might even include Kodaks," as being out of character.

Answer: Depends on the actor.

Pages 23 & 24

Covers what we call getting Cameron "through the looking glass" into Eli's world. We had discussed keeping Jake present in the background to increase the sense of imminent jeopardy for Cameron, and so cut down his choices. This seems valid. Although it does not show up in the notes, we are reworking the dialogue on these pages for a bit more punch and clarity. This will also cover the notes in BL's script, "Make clear crew is in on secret and will keep quiet."

Page 28

It has been expressed that Cameron should not get laid at the end of the Denise scene or should be more reluctant.

It seems to me the least we can do for him at this point. However, I can reassure you that the scene as written will be played so that if he appears any more reluctant, he will be suspected of being a fag.

Page 28

BL note says, "Good place for further exposition for movie-within-the-movie."

A staggering, mind-boggling, exhausting amount of discussion has been had on "clarifying the picture-within-the-picture," and the subject will occur again in the notes on many, many occasions.

My position on it is as follows: We have built in an opportunity to do many fantastic and dazzling scenes in Eli's picture because they are being shot out of context and, therefore, do not need the careful structural buildup that they would need if they occurred in our screenplay instead of his. This will make the film tremendously exciting! Further, remember there is no way that an audience can become totally involved with Eli's characters in terms of suspense because they are not "real," they are only in his movie. We need only be concerned with the audience's involvement with our characters.

We do not want to first describe his film in detail, and then afterward show sequences from it throughout our picture, since this would be dull. However, we do want to understand cumulatively, by the time our picture is over, what Eli's film is about and, generally, how the scenes we see him shooting fit in to his film. This we have very carefully built in. He is shooting a picture about an American flyer in World War One, who is shot down behind the enemy lines and hidden by an Austrian girl, with whom he falls in love. His patriotism is stronger than his love and so he attempts to escape and rejoin the fight, leaving the seeds of future wars in her belly.

The product of this union, their son, is later killed in World War Two. Now, in the present, as a lonely old woman, she is left with nothing meaningful but the memory of that single brief encounter of her youth -- deprived of all by man's ritual madness, his paranoiac fear, his necessity for inventing enemies. (Remember, the theme of Eli's picture is the same as the theme of ours, and is the root of Cameron's problem.) I do not care to limit Eli's picture to a chase with the Duesenberg. I will take certain care to relate some scenes in his picture to others in chronology and location for the sake of clarity. To go further than this will be damaging to the texture and structure of our film, whose box office we must count on, not Eli's.

Objection has been raised to the joke which the crew plays on Eli as he is doing pickup shots on the previously observed explosion sequence. The swelling balloon on the finger gag.

I feel the moment is perfectly timed and very revealing of relationships within the company. That surface veneer of clowning to hide the pressure, panic and fatigue, particularly at this moment of distress over the death of a crewman. And under the joke, the tenderness of the crew towards Eli, "something to cheer up the chief." However, the legend on the balloon might be improved if we come up with a funnier gag. Chances are, we will, however I consider this one functional in the meantime.

#### Pages 29 thru 35

The scene where Chuck briefs Cameron on the first stunt: There were several comments. First, "Make the continuity clear at the beginning of the sequence.

Previously, Eli has yelled, "Where's Chuck?" We then cut to a shot of Chuck in the new location where we will play the scene. It's a very simple, familiar device, which we use throughout the film from

time to time -- a bit more stylish than establishing new locations in a long shot.

The second comment is, "Make clear this is a run-through, without cameras, just a rehearsal." It seems clear to me as the events unfold: Chuck's first line being, "Have you done any stunt work?," and Cameron's answer, "Not really," and then Chuck's showing him how to put on knee pads, then testing his physical dexterity by jumping. And then taking him up on the roof and teaching him body rolls and describing how the stunt will be laid out. There might be something awkward in the stage directions, that I'm missing, but I don't see how it could be clarified any further short of using subtitles.

It is suggested that we mention "Cameron is still wearing the uniform in this scene which he had on in the previous scene."

Answer: At the time we discussed it, I agreed. However, on reflection, I believe he would have changed his clothes before this rehearsal so as not to damage the uniform. Also, seeing him in a different outfit will establish that some time has passed since the previous scene, which in this case is appropriate.

It was requested that we identify the building described on page 30 as the municipal building so that we know it is the same one they are climbing on later on in the scene.

Okay by me, so long as this change does not involve additional screenplay credit.

It is requested that this rooftop stunt "be related in some way to other scenes in Eli's picture in terms of continuity." In this case, I don't mind giving Chuck a line of dialogue indicating that the character Cameron is playing will be captured on this rooftop and

thrown into a mental hospital -- thereby relating it to the madhouse scene.

Cameron's line (Page 32), "Give me a chance, will ya?" meets with objection. I believe his attitude is correct here. It is important to him to remain in this sanctuary from the police and he is smart and aggressive enough to do something about it.

Chuck's use of the word "gag" as a synonym for "stunt" raises objection. I repeat, this is well researched and any stunt man would use the word in this context. I believe it is understandable to an audience that gag means a stunt, even though they have not heard the usage before. And, I think for Cameron to ask for a definition would go against the grain of a guy who's trying to appear knowledgeable, and would tend to lower his apparent I.Q. to beneath the minimum required for literacy.

On page 33, two of Cameron's lines are objected to as being too self-assured. On the first one, I agree; on the second one, I don't.

#### Page 36

A note about "making the madhouse scene in the continuity of Eli's film."

Answer: We have agreed to take care of this, previously, with a line on the roof.

#### Page 37

Raymond has a line which uses the word "erection." The comment is, "Not necessary." I agree it's not necessary, but it's a funny line and a good character line for Raymond, therefore it should be retained -- unless it creates a Code problem, which it definitely will not.

Page 38

The idea of the kids on the sandpile being photographed raises an objection. Although, the idea of the kids playing their game in the background does not raise an objection. Not correct. If the kid scene is to be used at all, it is much more interesting to have Eli spontaneously have the scene photographed. It reveals a great deal about the way he works and about current filmmaking and lends a vitality to the sequence. This entire scene, however, will be reworked into a more interesting character scene for Eli, less pompous and more quixotic. It will clearly develop his problem, that of giving meaning to the picture he is shooting, and will develop our theme of paranoia and ritual at a clear verbal level that will pay off for us throughout the film and particularly at the end. It will clarify the underlying statement of our film, (which happens to be the same as his).

Page 40

Eli expresses a profound thought in colloquial terms using the words "kitties" and "nippies." The comment in the notes reads, "Vulgar and improper." The answer to that is, I don't think this qualifies as hard core. I can only remind you that in "French Connection," Gene Hackman's buddy says, "Let's go have a drink," at which point Gene Hackman makes a masturbating motion with his hand and says, "Drink this." Our meager attempts of "kitties" and "nippies" pale by comparison.

Page 42

During the dinner sequence: Cameron's line about "you peacemongers" is described as, "Too glib, too controlled, too at ease." I agree the line can be improved.

Page 44

Notes point out that Cameron uses the word "grunt" in reference to himself, thereby possibly revealing he is an army man to Jake. I agree that he should not.

Page 45

The matron running in and saying, "Miss Franklin, Miss Franklin, your TV commercial is on!" is described as seeming "too gratuitous." I kind of like it as a punctuation to the scene, unless for some reason it doesn't play well on the stage.

Page 45

Cameron on the steps: There seems to be a problem with the dialogue and with the stage direction. I am willing to indicate that "the station wagon is returning" in some way and also to add to Nina's line, "It wouldn't have been three hours," the additional phrase, "if we had waited," which I believe was the suggestion.

Page 46

The scene between Nina and Cameron on the steps is described as not having the correct values as yet. Also the comment, "There doesn't seem any motivation for his going along with her, rather than walking away." The question is asked, "Why does he pull her to the tower?" and the suggestion that "What's a pal for?" is an out of character line for Cameron.

Answer: I am very fond of this scene. It is unique, revealing, economical, multi-leveled and mood-provoking. Specifics: He goes with her because he is enchanted with her and she is coming on to him. He pulls her to the tower because he wants to be alone with her and she has expressed interest in the tower. He says, "What's a pal for?" because he's a somewhat awkward kid and the line appeals to Larry's, Bill's and my taste.

Page 47

In the bell tower, the notes indicate that we should clarify that we are on the same roof he rehearsed on earlier that day, and that the crew is setting up a shot somewhere below.

Answer: Okay.

Page 48

Nina raises her finger into the spotlight and hollers, "Light this, Eli!" The comment is: "Doesn't work."

Answer: This will be a joyful, triumphant, boisterous, memorable moment on film. I adore Nina for doing it, and I adore Larry for writing it. However, in an atmosphere of contriteness and conciliation, I will agree to add the word "church" before the word "doorway" later in the page, as requested.

Page 49

A comment: "Eli's lines not right here" applies to his broken speech, "Mary, Mary, quite contrary, took a tour and lost her cherry."

Answer: The picture will not live or die on these lines. However, they have exactly the silly, piquant, perverse quality which is Eli. His tendency to rhyme when clowning used a couple of times in the screenplay, is a classic schizophrenic symptom, which is subtly correct in building up the illusion that he is a killer. And, most important, they'll play well.

Page 50

Once again there are a couple of comments about Eli's speeches. Unfortunately, it crystallizes a genuine difference of opinion, since I consider these two speeches of Eli's the most finely honed and

perfected pieces of dialogue in the entire film. In all seriousness, for me to alter this dialogue would be an act of betrayal to the studio for which I have undertaken this obligation, a serious breach of my own taste and judgment upon which you must rely in order to protect your investment.

Page 53

During the first big stunt, a note requests that we "make it clear, when the scene is ended in the madhouse, he was captured by Germans in the awning. Then, when he falls into the whorehouse, which is now replacing the madhouse, the surprise will be justified."

Answer: Yes, we previously agreed to add a line on the roof during the rehearsal.

Page 55

There was a good deal of discussion on the whorehouse sequence. There are no notes on it in the BL screenplay and I have none on my recorder. Is my recollection correct, that we reached agreement on this sequence accomplishing its goals in its present form? Eli's desire to disarm his audience - a juxtaposition of violence and sex as in "Psycho"? The thematic statement about men being the same under their symbolic uniforms? If so, good.

The BL script requests a comment from Cameron about how the script was changed without letting him know.

Answer: In one half page of dialogue Cameron already says, "Why didn't you tell me about the awning? I could've been killed." He further says, "Why didn't you tell me, afraid I'd chicken out?" I don't know how to make it any clearer.

Pages 58 thru 61

The porny scene: The comment on page 61 is, "We object to the whole scene." My notes indicate the comment: "stands out as the major example of what is objected to in the screenplay."

Answer: We will accomplish two very important things with this sequence. First, we have played a major dialogue confrontation between Eli and Cameron which deals with Eli's curiosity and speculation about Cameron's crime. It takes the form of a series of anecdotes exchanged between them, always starting with, "I knew a guy," builds and focuses the audience's suspense on the question of Cameron's crime and establishes the difference between the men's viewpoints. We have chosen to play this dialogue against a unique and provocative background. One that is only glimpsed, and not revealingly, during the dialogue.

The second accomplishment of the scene is more important, in that it graphically deals with man's ritual beliefs and ability to deceive himself. Cameron becomes upset at Nina's presence in this bawdy surrounding. He accuses Eli of running a pig sty and storms out. Sam, the enlightened intellectual, says he's "beginning to hate that crazy, uptight bastard." When Eli suggests that the girl in the rowboat looks like Sam's daughter, Sam becomes outraged and uptight and guilty of exactly the same narrowness as he accused Cameron of. Eli has made his point well, "We're just as crazy and uptight as he is, only we like to make movies about it." I suggest your objection to the scene is just as uptight and inappropriate as Sam's and Cameron's. An automatic, conditioned response to the idea that it's a porny scene.

Please remember, you gave me a novel, over one third of which was detailed, self-indulgent descriptions of the making of pornography. I believe we wisely eliminated this theme from the material, but in

this briefly glimpsed, tasteful and appropriate sequence, manage to suggest a hint of that flavor. This sequence is natural to the circumstances and characters, and deals thematically with the whole texture of ritual, paranoia, illusion-reality, our secret thoughts, fears and preoccupations. I have a passing acquaintance with public standards of decency and with the policy of this company, and in our zeal to champion both, let's not lose sight of what is on the written page and the requirements of good drama. There is nothing in this sequence that would violate a GP rating. I do, however, feel that a clarification of Eli's final point to Sam should be made in order to be certain we understand that he is as much a victim of ritual and conditioning as Cameron is.

Page 62

Note referring to the gag comments of Gabe and Raymond in the projection room says, "Get rid of this."

Answer: Would you consider purification by fire adequate?

Pages 64 thru 67

The airplane stunt: Starting in the projection room, a couple of notes indicate the desire to clarify the way in which the sequence fits into Eli's picture. Another note requests "a more interesting, imaginative approach to the stunt, more modern and believable."

Answer: The sequence fits early in Eli's picture since it is the scene in which the American flyer is shot down over the enemy lines, as is apparent from the film we see and the stunt we see. This could also be mentioned in the projection room.

A few other changes we intend to make in the projection room are a clarification of the argument between Eli and Sam, as to why Eli needs a more outrageous version of the scene, how that ties in with

his philosophy of creating chaos, disarming the audience to get past their defenses; also we will further clarify why he picked World War One as his setting to show how man substitutes ritual for morality, how his paranoia leads him into war. But these are for thematic clarity.

Let me again explain, the real gimmick of the scene is for Eli to suggest something that sounds bad, that sounds silly, that won't work. And then, to see him execute the scene so that it works brilliantly. He mentions something as outrageous as "dancing the Charleston on the wing." Then, in the execution, we'll have an absolutely logical, believable series of events which place our hero on the wing of the plane and, imbued with that crazy bravado and esprit de corps that develops between men who challenge death together, one little event leads to another until a man is actually doing the Charleston on the wing of the plane. Very charming! Very exciting! Very original! I can't think of anything more imaginative, (as the note requests). As a matter of fact, I expect it to be one of the most exciting and memorable action sequences I've ever seen. I don't mean to seem arbitrary, but it is impossible to unlearn the hard lessons I've been taught through doing countless action sequences. If your fears are that this sequence is so demanding, it may not come off, I can respect that view and only answer, "Try it, you'll like it."

Page 68

At the beginning of the love scene, Nina's opening line evokes the comment: "Unnecessary," in the BL script. It is a charming, original line, very meaningful, in the mouth of this illusive dream girl. It profoundly links Eli's verbalized point to the reality of people in our film: that she, like those little girls behind the fence, instinctively regards herself the prize that goes to the

winner in combat. They love being the prize and are stimulated by the heroics. (Remember the "nipples" and "kitties"?) This tendency to overreact to any line in the script that hints of sexuality is very dangerous. May I remind you that in "Hospital" George Scott does a 9-minute monologue about his inability to get an erection. Once again our paltry efforts are paled by comparison. In case you've forgotten, the line in question is: "That's twice for me today. Now and when I watched you do the stunt."

Page 68

The note requesting that the plot of Eli's story be told earlier might be an advantage if we can work it out, perhaps in the sandpile "king of the mountain" scene.

Page 68

Note about extending this exposition of Eli's film to indicate a confusion in Cameron's mind, he begins to think that he is portraying the American flyer. Nina corrects him by pointing out that Raymond is. It's an okay idea. Except that it could only be accomplished if the exposition remains here in this sequence, rather than moving it earlier as requested above.

Page 71

Note in the BL script indicates, "The love scene fails to accomplish its goal, of showing the nature of their relationship -- she needs him for sex, he thinks it's genuine admiration."

Answer: I'm confused because that is not its goal, nor the nature of their relationship, any more than it would be the nature of the relationship of two lions mating in the jungle. They are attracted by each other, they are turned on by each other. Additionally, these two being human as well as animal stimulate each other's romantic fantasies. At this moment, they are for the first time, on page 70,

fulfilling the romantic ritual of making love and enjoying it. He has won her with his heroics. The problem in the scene is, he has become jealous over her admiration and submissiveness to Eli, and it struck me as marvelously original and realistic that he should show his irritation by teasing her with the alarm clock and using it as a symbol of Eli impotently shouting at them while he made love to her. A hell of a good scene.

Page 71

Where she takes sleeping pills and he discusses it with her: is valuable in planting this as a danger for her that will pay off later. However, in the cutting we may lose it. It's more than a page.

Pages 75 & 76

The Denise sequence: A note indicates that "the values of the scene are correct, but the content is not. Use the frame of the scene to better explain the theme of the movie-within-the-movie. Make it believable." A further note on page 76 indicates "too much glibness in Denise's lines."

Answer: Regarding the movie-within-the-movie, all I can say is, Oy vey! Regarding the glibness, Denise is a glib, witty girl. We may cut a couple of early lines in the scene for the sake of brevity. Unfortunately the lines that have been circled are rather vital, since this is where she tells Cameron that Nina has been sleeping with Eli.

Page 80

We get to the comment about the graveyard sequence: "The movie-within-the-movie is totally unbelievable. It is ludicrous, confusing, unrelated."

Answer: Yeah, but how do you like it for length? Ferguson could whip up a snappy campaign and we'll spin it off in multiples as an action flick.

Amplifying this from my notes, the objection starts in the rehearsal sequence on page 74: the bear-and-the-girl bronze is apparently the offender. Later, in the graveyard scene, note says, "The structure is okay, but the scene, no." Specifically, "Don't believe the context of the old lady putting things on the grave." I suspect we're back to the bear-and-the-girl bronze.

Answer: I think it's quite appropriate that the old lady should bring these faded, tarnished objects, so treasured in her memory to her lover's grave. It is consistent with Eli's style to show the other side of things, to make what one might think would be comic into something moving and beautiful. If the old lady's performance is brilliant and moves the audience to tears, the sequence will stand out as a virtuoso cadenza in the film. If her performance fails, the scene will be a disaster. If I was not certain that I was capable of making the scene moving and beautiful, it should be damned obvious that I would not have turned in the screenplay. I am not suicidal, yet!

#### Page 80

Cameron's third stunt bears the comment: "Good scene, but how does it fit in? Use same action in different situation." Another note suggests we somehow explain how this stunt is connected to other action in Eli's picture to get a clear idea of his storyline.

Answer: During the stunt, he would still be wearing his English uniform. In chronology it will fit in, shortly after his plane crashes behind enemy lines. He is on the run and unexpectedly caught in some heavy action while hiding in a barn. It would not be

difficult to give Chuck a line of explanation about this to him before the stunt, however you will find it is the kind of thing you later want to cut out of the film. In an action film, when a man is on the run, it takes very little explanation. If an audience sees the man in the middle of action running for his life, they are likely to assume he got caught in the action.

Page 83

Here, the script bears the memorable legend: "We must care for both Nina and Cameron to make this scene work. Right now it falls flat, because we have no earlier established empathy."

Answer: (And I thought poor Cameron had problems.) Alas, once again, we are undone. This note found its unfortunate way to one of the most perfectly executed scenes in the screenplay: moving, revealing, built on the subtlety and nuance of character and relationship, devastatingly dramatic. It has brightness, wit and total reality. Now, however, in examining additional notes, it appears that the only remaining unanswered comments were a request to describe Nina's emotions before she says her exit line on page 82; and a question about Cameron's line, "Yeah," on page 83. I'm unclear at this point as to your real feelings.

Page 84

The restaurant/parent sequence: Script note requests that the stage direction be clarified to indicate Cameron has arrived at the restaurant looking for Nina and her parents.

Answer: Gladly.

Further notes indicate that the character of the father seems too glib.

Answer: He seems to me to have just the right folksy, middle American, corny charm to be a refreshing breath of reality. As we discussed, this scene takes us away from the movie world and puts us in touch with the outside world, a welcome contrast. It defines Nina's character as no speeches about her childhood could and, most important, it strongly develops a crucial bond in the love story between Nina and Cameron through a unique event.

There is a note about moving the scene earlier in the film. On contemplating this, I believe it must stay where it is. However, when pages are trimmed in the earlier section, the scene will fall somewhat earlier.

Important note:

These suggestions are apparently because of a general feeling that the relationship between Cameron and Nina should be developed more strongly earlier in the film. Several comments have related to this.

Answer: It is important to understand that the bond between Nina and Cameron will become one of the prime drives and motivating forces of the film from the moment of their first encounter. This need not be done through expository dialogue, but will transpire because of circumstances and feelings. Recall in "Ryan's Daughter," from the instant that boy stepped out of the coach and stood silhouetted on the hill, his cape flapping, he and the girl were tied to each other by an unbreakable cord of piano wire stretched tautly between them, throughout the film and to the instant of his death, and even beyond. The things spoken between them were very few. I have never made a film that was not first and foremost a love story. I do love scenes real good. There should be no concern.

Page 90

There is an objection to Cameron putting Nina's hand on his groin.

Answer: The idea is extremely good. "Touch me, honey, I'm for real." Identifying himself with his sexuality in a teasing way, putting his background in evangelism in the perspective of a healthy, sensual enjoyment. I assume that, once again, my taste is being questioned, and find this ludicrous and intolerable in view of my past record. It is incumbent upon you to know your people, and to assume that if the scene were to play with prurience, I would alter it to where he grabbed her hand and barely moved it in his direction before she yanked it away, accomplishing the same purpose. And, in turn, if this was awkward, I would find another way to play the effect. Together we shall protect the world from evil! But you needn't waste time protecting it from me.

Page 91

The BL script contains a note, "What has happened to sense of peril, where is story going, why is Cameron staying?"

Answer: On page 91 Cameron encounters Henry, who threatens to call the police and inform them that Burt was killed. This call would expose Cameron as a fraud and put him in great jeopardy. I believe that in the execution of the scene the effect has gone astray because of the following: when Henry further informs Cameron that Eli is a madman who was trying to capture Burt's death on film, it is such a startling piece of information that we forget the jeopardy which immediately preceded it, (Cameron's dilemma with the police), and are left in remembering only Cameron's dilemma with Eli, (that of possibly becoming his next victim). I agree that this scene should be reworked to strengthen the emphasis on the jeopardy to Cameron from the police, were Henry to expose him.

Additional note: It is suggested that we establish Nina's age and the fact that this is her first picture somewhere in the early part of the screenplay. I agree.

Page 98

The screening room dailies: BL note says, "Show piece of film that will refer to the movie-within-the-movie." Additional notes indicate this means connect missing links in Eli's film continuity, Duesenberg chase footage, etc.

Answer: I think we've covered our feelings on this in previous notes. One might do a scene running her into the farmhouse where the next attic scene will take place, thus getting a sense of continuity.

Page 99

Note says; "Scene unnecessary. Do we have to see parents shocked at this point? Seems futile."

Answer: This is a very groovy sequence. It implants strong speculation with the audience on the subject of Eli's malevolence. Rather important to accepting him as a potential murderer by the end of the film. It puts a beautiful dramatic roadblock in the path of Nina. It, in an unspoken way, tells a great deal about the relationship between parents and children, false values, the acceptance of ritual, and it sets up the next sequence.

Page 101

BL note: "Movie-within-the-movie is now totally complex, confusing and unbelievable."

Answer: In this scene we see Eli use Nina's shame to get an acting performance from her, again suggesting Eli's ruthlessness. In terms of the relation of the scene to Eli's picture, we clearly indicated in the graveyard scene that upon her son's death she had received a

medal from Hitler and that he said her son had helped to create a thousand years of peace. In this sequence we see her getting the medal and the same line is repeated. In terms of clarity it seems somewhat flawless. However, it's quite possible that you simply don't like these scenes in Eli's picture, and to that you are certainly entitled. I do think they will turn out to be very effective and unique and moving.

Page 102

A further note about the previous sequence, "What does this have to do with picture?"

Answer: I have just explained what it has to do with Eli's picture. If the question is what does it have to do with our picture, let me repeat: if Eli makes his point about false purpose, false causes, ritual moralities, paranoia, then it becomes unnecessary for us to make the same points in a didactic, expository way, (since his theme is the same as our theme and Cameron's problem is the universal problem that he is describing in his film). This is what allows us to tell our story in terms of straight action-melodrama and keep it suspenseful and exciting.

Page 104

The blackmail scene (in the projection room): Note indicates, "Eli should mention he has only one day left to shoot."

Answer: That's okay.

Page 105

Note requests more feeling of external peril.

Answer: Yes, the man in the projection room could refer to the roadblocks having the town bottled up and knowing that Cameron must be here.

Page 105

There are objections to Eli's dialogue.

Answer: Chances are, it will be improved slightly. However, probably more in the direction of the quixotic style we are giving Eli, rather than in the direction of straighter melodrama. I can't be sure it will serve your purpose.

Page 106

Objection to Cameron's speech about the bouncing Betty boobytrap. We do like this moment, although, we expect it will be shorter.

Page 108

There are comments about the dialogue that takes place during the bedroom scene between Cameron and Nina where he announces Eli is trying to kill him. Also, comments about additional peril; the clock running down, etc.

Answer: We intend to rework this scene in the following way: the opening dialogue between the two of them in bed is too long and repetitious, Cameron's speech is too long and can be improved. He does already indicate "time is running out" by telling her he may not do the stunt and he may leave tonight. But, there might be additional jeopardy added by her suggesting he go to the police and his not being able to.

Page 111

Chuck is briefing Cameron on the Duesenberg stunt. They don't like the reference to "big brass balls."

Answer: It is a classic stunt man phrase. It is something we use in clever ways as a reference point, including a payoff at the end. I'm

very fond of it, assuming an actor doesn't muff it, it will play quite well.

Page 113

The question mark, "Wouldn't he think Eli was turning him in?" - refers to Chuck's information about Eli being at the police station.

Answer: In this context, I don't think that he would. Eli has a great deal of contact with the police for permits, etc. However, we undoubtedly would play an undercurrent in this scene when Chuck asks Cameron to go with him to the police station, of uneasiness and evasion on Cameron's part.

Page 114

Two notes; one about making clear the purpose of Eli's visit to the police station to get Raymond released. This refers to dialogue going up the steps.

Answer: I disagree. This would destroy the surprise of the scene when we see it happen. However, I think it is important to clarify the stage direction at the beginning of the sequence and indicate that Cameron and Chuck are waiting behind while Eli, Nina, and Gabe enter the station.

Page 114

It says "The fag romp here doesn't work. Idea's good, the setup isn't."

Answer: It's difficult to deal with that comment because that sequence is a favorite of almost everybody who's read the screenplay, including the writer, director, producer and executive producer. I find it extremely effective and theatrical, and so much the better because the theatricality in this case is justified by what we know about Eli and the clowning relationship between Gabe and Raymond. It

plays a beautiful contrast to the next moment where Eli 'cracks' for the first time in the screenplay and we see a heavy, manic, emotional reaction from him.

Page 118

This manic scene of Eli's (between he and Nina.) Comment is: "Eli dialogue overwritten."

Answer: Maybe you're right. I'm quite critical of these things because I have to execute the scenes. Seems to me as though it would play, but c'est la vie.

Pages 118 thru 127

A critical turning point of the film, the moment we've been waiting for -- where we find out who Cameron is and what his crime is. It is a serious crime: injuring a policeman while escaping. A crime which evokes the wrath of the federal police and which bears grave penalties. But it was a crime committed in passion and confusion, a crime committed by a man who, like one million others, was sent to fight and then returned to find we had changed our minds about the nobility of his enterprise. A man who was torn and disoriented, as we all are, by values we don't quite understand. And, like most actions performed in passion and confusion, there is a pathetic awkwardness and absurdity about them -- one that makes us love and understand the man because his stupidity is not unlike our own.

Our object was to create a scene in which the relating of Cameron's crime would transform Nina's groundless terrors into uncontrollable laughter over the absurdity of her own fear; that would put a momentary clear perspective on things of importance, (relationships and feelings, as opposed to the fantasies to which we dedicate ourselves); that would bind Nina to Cameron by an unbreakable bond; and, that would bind the audience with the same link. We feel

certain we have accomplished these things in the sequence. However, the note on page 122 indicates, "The scene completely doesn't work, totally wrong, laughable."

Answer: Where do you catch the Wilshire bus?

The scene has a slightly greater level of reality and of visual invention, but otherwise is not really dissimilar to the master's oral scene in "Getting Straight."

I'm really deeply sorry that his scene distresses you, but this is the very essence of the picture that I want to make. I worked long and hard on it and I strongly believe in it. And sadly, I feel that even if you were to compromise your view, we would still somehow be left lacking that mutual enthusiasm and support so essential to pull off the kind of smash hit we all want.

Page 128

The garage sequence where Nina and Cameron encounter the cop. Objection to "Nina's style" and "the scene as being overly glib." This is when she is acting the actress, "Miss Franklin, star of the picture," to intimidate the cop.

Answer: Might be trimmed a bit.

Page 129

"Nina-Cameron relationship needs more definition."

I think this relates to the getting-into-the-trunk and formulating-the-new-escape-plan, dialogue.

Answer: It will get a normal cleanup on the polish job.

Page 131

The final sequence with the Duesenberg: A comment, "Make clear how this fits within movie-in-movie. Also specify that closeups with Raymond will be done later in a tank of water."

Answer: I agree with the second comment. The first one we should be fairly clear about by now, since we have described the sequence from the very beginning as the end of Eli's picture, (with a question mark connected to it as to whether his hero dies or lives.)

Page 138

After Cameron's escape in the car, he gestures to the underwater camera behind him: The note says, "Won't this ruin Eli's shot?"

Answer: I don't think we should really care. We are concerned with whether Cameron lives or dies at this point. Although I understand, (in your capacity as studio executive), a healthy preoccupation with that kind of question, and I appreciate it.

Page 141

When Chuck replies to Cameron with the highest compliment he can pay, "I can't hear ya, they're clangin' too loud." The note says, "Poor joke."

Answer: Wrong.

Page 142

There are a great number of comments, some of them relate to the clarity of what must have happened between Nina and Eli when she was taken out of the trunk.

Answer: We have agreed on a few phrase insertions that would crystallize this clarity.

Other comments refer to Nina's motivation, "An actress doing her work, or is she in love with him?" "The turnabout on Nina's part, running to him is totally unexplained."

Answer: She is both. First one, then the other. True love overcomes her practicality and she runs to Cameron. I can't imagine a final clench needing any further explanation.

Page 143

The note asks for additional clarity on what Eli's motives were for putting him through the stunt.

Answer: I agree that a few changes and additional lines will greatly clarify Eli's purpose in relation to the theme of the entire picture. One thing that will be a great help in this is the rewrite we plan to do on the earlier "king of the mountain" sequence and dinner sequence, thereby establishing certain premises which we can touch off with only a word or two here in the ending.

They comment about not liking Nina calling him "Lucky."

Answer: Okay, but why?

An additional note requesting reinforcement of the information that the truckful of German soldiers is a change in plans on the final stunt.

Answer: We did that.

-----

Regarding general criticisms at the end of the screenplay:

- 1) Glibness of dialogue.

- 2) Relationship between Nina and Cameron to build better and more evenly.
- 3) Clarity and simplification of the movie-within-the-movie.
- 4) Explanation of Cameron's crime.
- 5) The credibility of scenes with Nina's parents as a device to bring Nina and Cameron together.

Answer: We have covered most of these in previous comments, with the exception that, I must say at this point after reviewing the notes and absorbing their cumulative effect, and estimating the various change of values they would impose upon the film, my conclusion is:

The script must be shortened and there certainly are sequences that will be and should be improved, most specifically a hard rewrite on what we call the complex, that section during the dinner and the sandpile sequences, which lays out the thematic values of the film, both Eli's and ours, by inference.

Aside from these things, this is basically the picture I plan to make. I do understand if Columbia's desire at this point is to turn out something which is closer to a simple, straight line, action-melodrama, there is a good market for them. That was never in the cards for this particular story. Although it holds that hard line of action-melodrama on the surface, underneath it is still a complex, fascinating story of values and illusion and reality, hopefully all disguised under that more entertaining label, as I'm confident they will be.

When we made our three-picture agreement, it was not with the idea that I would turn out a production line of Chevies for Columbia, but with the understanding that I would turn out Ferraris, special

pictures of very high potential. You assured me then of the enthusiasm and support I would have as a filmmaker and creator. Certainly times have changed, but one thing hasn't -- it is still the 'special picture' that can become a blockbuster, and that is still the business that I am in. It is with respect and friendship that I realize you must deal with your company's problems in your way, and I'm sure you understand I must perform within the limits of my own knowledge and talents. To do anything less would be to betray your confidence and the investment the studio has made in me.