

Fans don't forget Dr. Seuss

LA JOLLA, Calif. (AP) — Theodor Geisel, who delights children of all ages under the pen name Dr. Seuss, would have preferred that his 85th birthday Thursday passed unnoticed. But the mail brings hundreds of reminders daily.

"It's a beating. They come in by the hundreds, by the thousands from every school in the country, or so it seems," he said of the birthday greetings.

"I try to answer most of them. They're all special efforts. They usually make a school project out of it."

Geisel, who lives in La Jolla, planned a quiet celebration.

Theatres increase admission prices

VANCOUVER (CP) — Famous Players increased movie prices by 25 cents Wednesday in response to the provincial government's new tax on motion pictures shown in theatres.

The government has said it will treat the leasing arrangements between theatres and movie distributors the same as the rental agreements between video stores and their customers. There will be a six-per-cent tax on the lease.

Similar taxes are charged on all leasing agreements in the province, such as car, boat and aircraft rentals and computer or office equipment leases.

George Mah, president of the Motion Picture Theatre Association of British Columbia, said lawyers have advised the tax might be challenged.

It is possible the theatres could argue they do not lease movies, but pay for "right of performance," Mah said.

Theatres and theatre companies normally pay a fee for films based on a percentage of gross revenues from the films, Mah said.

Often the fee is not completely calculated until after a film's run. A more successful film would cost a theatre more than a bad one.

Fees generally run from 30 to 50 per cent of the gross.

British Columbians spend about \$50 million a year going to movies. A tax of six per cent of 50 per cent of that gross would bring the province \$1.5 million a year.

Douglas Isman, manager of Westcoast Theatres Service Ltd., which obtains films for independent theatres, said the new tax could be a critical one in smyl; towns, already facing strong competition from video rental stores.

Gillian Howard of Famous Players in Toronto issued a news release that said the price increase is in response to the new provincial tax.

Howard said the new prices are \$5.25 for single admissions Monday to Thursday and \$6.75 at other times.

ALIENTATED MOVIEDOM'S POWER BROKERS

Puttnam hit Hollywood highs, lows

by INA WARREN
The Canadian Press

On Oscar night 1982, a professorial-looking Englishman was brought backstage by actress Loretta Young to face the media.

His name was David Puttnam and he had just turned Hollywood upside down by winning the best-picture Oscar for producing the British movie Chariots of Fire.

Yet even before Puttnam set foot in the media pit that night, the scuttlebutt had begun.

A prominent Los Angeles journalist announced to the international press corps that an Academy board member told her Chariots of Fire had emerged the winner only because the vote was evenly split between Reds and On Golden Pond.

Producer Puttnam was enjoying his moment of glory, but to Hollywood and its loyal media, he was the spoiler.

The man they wanted to win was home-town boy Warren Beatty and when the charismatic actor came backstage with his best-director Oscar for Reds, he was worshipfully treated as the dethroned prince.

Five years later, Beatty's name was to figure high on the short list of Hollywood power brokers who toppled Puttnam from his plum \$3-million-a-year job as head of Columbia Pictures. The list also included Bill Murray, Bill Cosby, Canadian-born director Norman Jewison, and top Hollywood players like super-agent Mike Ovitz and producer Ray Stark.

In 1986, Puttnam, then 45, had been brought in as head of Coca-Cola-owned Columbia Pictures. Because of his track record on the other side of the Atlantic as the maverick producer of such lofty films as Chariots of Fire, The Mission, The Killing Fields and Local Hero, he was widely viewed as a classy if enigmatic act.

With a lot of goodwill behind him, Puttnam blew into Hollywood determined to sweep away, at least at Columbia, a system of overpaid stars, powerful agents, and sweetheart deals with producers. (Beat-



PUTTNAM

ty and Dustin Hoffman had been paid \$5 million each for the disastrous Ishtar).

In other words, he was taking on the Hollywood System.

In little more than a year, he was canned, having alienated most of the industry and even some of his fiercest supporters.

"In movie-making terms it had indeed been a fast fade," observes Andrew Yule, the showbusiness journalist who has clocked Puttnam's meteoric rise and fall in the new book Fast Fade: David Puttnam, Columbia Pictures and the Battle for Hollywood (Dellacourt, \$26.95).

Yule, a Scotsman, arrived on Puttnam's posh Coldwater Canyon doorstep (a previous owner was Greta Garbo, another famous Hollywood misfit) two days before the firing, originally with the intention of writing the biography of a success story.

Surprisingly, Puttnam didn't tell Yule to shove off, but let him record every detail of the crisis-in-action.

Yule was later to say, "Oh God, how he loves to talk."

Puttnam's famous foot-in-mouth incidents included publicly bad-mouthing comedian Bill Murray for being "a taker."

During a speech to the British-American Chamber of Commerce, Puttnam cited Robert Redford as a shining example of an actor who gave back to the community in the form of his Sundance Institute.

Then, he apparently said, "Bill Murray exemplifies an actor who makes millions off movies, but gives nothing back."

Not only did the remark infuriate Murray and stall the development of Ghostbusters II at Columbia, it was viewed by Coca-Cola as an act of betrayal — a direct hit on a very profitable asset.

Just a few months into his job, Puttnam chose to upbraid the Hollywood community after a screening of his saintly movie, The Mission, the story of the battle by Jesuit missionaries to protect South America's Guarani Indians from slavers.

He went on to tell his stunned audience: "The reason that there are so many lousy movies around is because of the corruption of the role of producer. Only independent producers actually prepared to produce will find a welcome here at Columbia."

One of the producers Puttnam alienated was Jewison, who left

Columbia taking with him a property that was eventually entitled Moonstruck. Made by MGM, the movie was a critical and box-office hit.

Puttnam assured everyone that he had not been offered the picture. But Jewison claimed to have a letter of rejection with Puttnam's signature on it.

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