

Georgia-filmed 'My Cousin Vinny' celebrates 25th anniversary

Prison scenes filmed at Alto prison

BY DOUGLAS J. GLADSTONE

If you check out Atlanta resident's Chris Credendino's blog, there are a number of write-ups dealing with the many film locations he's visited over the years, including "Sweet Home Alabama" and "The Dukes of Hazzard."

But of all the movie locations Credendino has visited, there's one in Georgia that he is especially fond of.

Located at 54 state Route 16 in Monticello, the real-life convenience store, The Sac-O-Suds, where the murder of the clerk in "My Cousin Vinny" occurred, has become a bucket list sort of place for tourists to visit.

The movie, which celebrates its 25th anniversary on March 13, has done for Georgia tourism what "Jaws" did for Martha's Vineyards in Massachusetts.

Cary Terrill, the co-owner of the Sac-o-Suds, says she was floored when somebody from Australia stopped by to take photos.

But maybe she shouldn't be so surprised. "Vinny" co-star Ralph Macchio says that people are always coming up to him "asking me to sign cans of tuna with the inscription of either 'I shot the clerk,' or 'Two Yutes.'"

The former line of dialogue is when the flabbergasted Macchio, as William Gambini, reacts in horror when the Sheriff of fictional Beechum County, Alabama, tells him



Chris Credendino/Special

The real life Sac o Suds is located at 54 state Route 16 W in Monticello. At the time the movie was filmed, Jimmy Tomlin was the store's owner. It is now owned by Cary Terrill and Payson and Dolores Hoover.

he shot the Sac-O-Suds' clerk.

The latter references what is arguably the movie's most famous line of dialogue, uttered by the late Fred Gwynne (in his final film role) as Judge Chamberlain Haller:

Judge Haller: Did you say yutes?

Vinny Gambini: Yeah, two yutes.

Judge Haller: What is a yute?

Vinny Gambini: Oh, excuse me, your honor. Two youths.

So when Credendino – whose video of his dog praying before eating dinner went viral on YouTube last March

– learned that the Sac-O-Suds had reopened under new management, on Jan. 24, 2014, he made sure to visit the store four months later.

As you can guess, there's a lot of "Vinny" memorabilia on display at the Sac-O-Suds, including a copy of the script signed by all the actors. But for real film aficionados, the store's own label of "Two Yutes" tuna fish cans is the merchandise you really don't want to leave without.

"I can't believe I'm not getting a cut of that," joked actor Mitchell Whitfield, who played Stanley Rothenstein in the film. "I'm not a selfie guy in the least, but now I'll have to purposely go back there when I'm visiting the Atlanta area so I can take a picture with one of those cans."

If Whitfield does go back to the Peach State, chances are pretty good that he won't be visiting Alto anytime soon. Not because he doesn't want to do the tourist thing and go to Jaemor Farms, but he still has unpleasant memories of listening to the obscenities hurled at him and Macchio by some of the real-life inmates at the Lee Arrendale Correctional Institute, on Gainesville Highway, where the prison scenes were filmed.

Once home to 1,200 male prisoners, Arrendale is now a women's prison that houses the state death row for women.

"Those looks of horror on our faces when we're going through the gates? That was genuine, there wasn't a lot of acting going on," agrees Whitfield. "The whole experience definitely brought a sort of edge to things."

"When I was practicing for the scene where Ralph and I were shooting baskets, I wanted to warm up," continues Whitfield. "So I started playing with a few guys on the court. Well, the next thing I know, someone started shouting for me to stop. It turns out I was practicing with real inmates."

"It was awkward," remembers Macchio. "Between takes, it was a reality check, that's for sure."

Macchio, of course, knows a thing or two about cult classics. In a July 2013 issue of Sports Illustrated, Macchio wrote a column about the 30th anniversary of the making of "The Karate Kid," in which he famously played Daniel LaRusso.

"I represent a time stamp in people's lives," he wrote. "I have played a character that was part of your childhood."

While he was referring to Daniel, he might as well have been referring to William Gambini, too.



Chris Credendino/Special

The Jasper County Superior Court played the "Beechum County courthouse" where the "trial" of William Gambini and Stanley Rothenstein took place.

Perdue, Collins take action to improve management of Georgia's Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Sen. David Perdue (R-GA) and Congressman Doug Collins (R-GA-09) have introduced legislation to improve management of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest by creating a more cohesive park boundary and management area.

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest is an important economic generator," said Perdue, a member of the Agriculture Committee. "These updated park boundaries will make the land more manageable for our park rangers and improve opportunities for hunting, fishing, and

hiking within the forest. Equally as important, a cohesive park boundary and management area is a more efficient use of taxpayer money."

"The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Land Adjustment Act represents a commonsense approach to better conserve federal forest lands in northeast Georgia while also eliminating federal waste and providing more recreation opportunities for hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts," said Collins. "I'm proud to reintroduce this legislation with Sen. David Perdue to ensure that our beautiful natural resources – including the

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest – can better be enjoyed by Georgians."

Perdue and Collins were joined by U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Congressmen Rick Allen (R-GA-12), Buddy Carter (R-GA-01), Drew Ferguson (R-GA-03), and Barry Loudermilk (R-GA-11) in this effort, which has earned praise from The Nature Conservancy.

"Updating the boundaries of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest will improve the efficiency of management and is a win for the community, a win for visitors and a win for taxpayers," said Isakson. "I'm pleased to once again

support these efforts."

"Sen. Perdue and Rep. Collins clearly understand that this legislation will allow the U.S. Forest Service, in collaboration with partners like The Nature Conservancy and The Conservation Fund, to better steward northeast Georgia's natural resources and provide more benefits to all Georgians," said Deron Davis, executive director of The Nature Conservancy in Georgia.

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rial numbers or the exact amount of tools taken but did state that he would be in contact with the company to obtain the information.

Burglary

March 12

• A Clarksville man reported a burglary on his property which contained a metal building where he stored several items. The complainant

stated a worker from the neighboring residence had seen someone on the property in December 2016, that he knew did not belong there and had told him to leave the property. The complainant stated that he was then contacted by the same subject that had been keeping a watch on the property, and said that six Texaco signs were missing. The estimated value of the signs were \$6,700. The victim was unsure of what all was missing but did know that the signs were gone.