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No divas here: Extras happy to follow film director's 'Agenda'

JIM HARDIN jhardin@longview-news.com

Edward Cross couldn't suppress his excitement after completing his duties on the set during filming of the movie, **Agenda**. "The A-team strikes again," Cross proclaimed Tuesday as he and three other men left the set in the shop at Hayes RV Center in Longview.

Cross, a 62-year-old retiree from Van, and other members of the A-team don't have starring roles in the made-in-Longview movie. They didn't even have to rehearse. They were extras.

"I just walked through, once carrying a box and once, no box," Cross said of his role as a person in the background.

Cross and the three other men were working or walking in the background while a recreational vehicle was on a lift. The key cast members were in the forefront.

The men chuckled when they described their simple tasks: Ray Aguirre of Hallsville operated a screwdriver while inspecting the spare tire on the RV; Jeremy Newlin of Kilgore picked up an extension cord off the floor; and Steve Hampton of Lone Star operated a grinder.

Cross said the movie people named the four-man team the A-team. They were instructed to respond any time there was a call for the A-team.

The producers literally recruited Hampton off the street. Hampton said he was riding his Harley-Davidson on Judson Road when he was slowed by vehicles pulling into the parking lot at Hayes RV Center. A man directing traffic invited Hampton to join the others who were responding to a casting call. He agreed, thinking they were making a biker movie. The movie people took a picture of him, wrote down some information, and he was back on the road.

Hampton wasn't sure why he was selected as an extra. He's 6 feet 6 inches tall and weighs 250 pounds, Hampton said, and maybe that's the reason he was chosen for the shop scene.

The importance of extras is often underestimated.

"They are crucial," said Danny Martin, president of Longview-based Azisa Pictures.

"We have to have people to create an atmosphere that is realistic," said Martin, whose company is producing the film. "Everyday life happens, and you have to have people around you. You may not notice that on a daily basis, but the camera does."

About 1,300 people answered the casting call for extras. Close to 90 extras were selected for brief appearances in the movie.

Martin said filming started Sept. 18. They've filmed most of the movie at various locations in Longview. They've also filmed in Tyler and will head to Shreveport next week. They will be back in Longview the following week.

Seven other extras waited patiently in an adjacent shop while the A-team's scene was being

filmed.

"We've been sitting and waiting, waiting a long time," said Connie Wolfe. "When they need us, we'll be in the background, or extras."

Wolfe, Robbie McCormack, Jana Bradley and Cindy Seifert, all of Longview, and Sheri Snyder of Marshall were waiting for their opportunity to be office workers in the background. Paige O'Neal of Gladewater was called to be a nurse, and John Brogan of East Mountain was signed up to be a shop worker. Don Mackay of Longview waited for his opportunity to stand in for one of the film's key actors until he took his place on the set.

The extras arrived at Hayes RV Center at 8:15 a.m. and were still waiting about noon. They were served coffee, bottled water, coffee cake and bananas. A production company employee even brought decks of cards to a table for anyone who wanted to play Rummy or Old Maid. Bradley and Seifert chose Old Maid.

They weren't complaining because they had been warned there would be delays. The extras were willing to wait hours for the opportunity for a brief background appearance.

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