

December 7, 2001

Hi sports-fans,

GREETINGS:

Thanks again for all the feedback on HWI#4 - especially to the half dozen of you who replied to inform me that the stock ticker AROL is still available. Now why don't you all pony up some seed money and get this venture going?!

A lot has happened since the last HWI (I got some paid work, appeared in a NY Film Academy film and put together an audition tape for a talk show in Holland).

WHAT I HAVE DONE:

Toys-R-US:

Some of you may recall in HWI#3 where I had auditioned to play a costumed character for the grand opening of the Toys-R-US Times Square flagship store. Well, I ended up booking the job as the "Good Knight of All Toys" (A Chess Knight) one of the Toys-R-US (hereafter TRU) branded characters. My costume was this gargantuan blue neoprene encasing on rollers with an enormous horse head on top. My little face poked through where the horse's neck would be. A great look for me, I can assure you.

There were 14 TRU branded characters - all of whom were "able" to talk and, thus, had their faces exposed. Eventage, the company staging the production, tried to make us feel that we were the featured characters because we represented TRU and could talk (the other characters had masks and were not allowed to speak), but the proof was in the kids' faces. The little tykes would sprint right by us to give a big bear hug to Angelica from Rugrats or Piccachu (who was a real nasty guy by the way). When kids did take notice of me it was usually something like "Hey mommy, look at the big, blue dog!" Nice. Thanks very much.

As humiliating as I thought this would be, it turned out to a fun week of events and I met some very interesting people (and pocketed \$1,075. OK, you can all stop snickering now. This paid last months rent!) There are two interesting things I learned about the costumed character event business. First, there are some actors who actually enjoy doing it, in fact, for some of them it's all they do. Others, like me, are doing it just for the cashola. You don't want to be caught by this first group belittling this sub-genre of "acting". They get very defensive. Second, the little kids are getting fooled, because often the actor's gender is not consistent with the character's gender. For example, at the TRU event, Ernie (From Bert and Ernie) was played by a female, and Angelica from Rugrats was a guy. Height is the major requirement when your face is hidden. So next time you're at Disneyworld with your kid and little Johnny is giving Minnie Mouse a big hug, he may actually be hugging some pimple-faced high school drop out named Dustin.

Another note of interest, I asked Eventage why they selected me given my lack of experience relative to the other actors (only 2 of the 12 people in my audition group were selected). The reply was that, in addition to liking my improv work, they liked the fact that I had

Wharton on my resume. They felt that indicated I was very serious about what I was doing and a real professional. "An MBA.....Its not just for Bankers anymore..."

Hunger:

As I believe I have mentioned before, networking and serendipity play a huge role in landing a role. Here is a neat little anecdote that resulted in a credit on my resume. I was having a grande cappuchino at a Starbucks with my former roommate when I noticed two girls at the table next to us, seemingly studying script lines. But then one girl got up and left only to be replaced by another one. When that girl also left, I leaned over and asked the original woman if she was

As it turned out she was an NY Film Academy student casting for her graduate thesis film called "Hunger" - something she adapted herself from a book of the same name by Lan Samantha Chang. I asked her if there was a part for me, gave her my headshot/resume and the next day I got a call asking me to play the supporting role of John O'Neill (best friend to the protagonist).

Most SAG actors do not do student films because they do not pay, require a SAG waiver form and are typically not great works of art. But I still have a thin resume and at this point being on a film set and getting a credit is still valuable to me. We had one rehearsal to go over blocking and lines and then shot my three scenes the next day. John O'Neill is a concert Pianist and best friend of Violin virtuoso Tian Chang. It is the 1950s and we are both trying to obtain professorships at this music/art school. In my big scene I am accompanying Tian on my piano. The funny thing was that neither I nor the guy playing Tian could play our instruments. He had to fake his more than I did as the camera angle never got my hands actually on the keys. But boy you can bet I was passionately banging away on the ivory as if it truly moved my soul. Why she didn't cast someone who could play piano I'm not sure although I am learning that a certain look is more important than talent or musicianship.

Versatility is also a good trait to have. They had cast someone as the middle aged Dean of the Art school, but he didn't show up. So I changed clothes, stuck on a moustache, slicked my hair back and added some grey to it, acquired a slight limp and pulled it off. They were happy and I got another credit on the resume!

Well, this one won't be playing in a theater near you any time soon, but you never know where it might lead. I have already gotten a call from the woman who was helping produce this film to be involved in something else she is working on.

Talk Show Host:

I replied to a casting call for a weekly English language talk show host in Holland. They wanted someone who could do stand-up comedy, interviews and interact with an audience - a la Jay Leno or Conan O'Brien. I thought, "wow, this is really up my ally". I was brimming with excitement when I received an email back saying they really liked my look, but that they were concerned with my resume (lack of experience). They asked me for a tape showing my work. Well, I didn't have one, but I was truly interested and that I wouldn't be wasting my time I commenced operation "Dutchboy". I basically had a week to

gather a production team, build a set, write a script, film this thing and get it off to Holland via FEDEX.

The first person to jump at the challenge was my roommate Dennis, a recently out of work promo producer for USA Networks. He really made me believe that this could be done. Then we signed on a cameraman, James (a friend of a friend who works part time in the Goldman gym). Lastly, I asked one of my improv classmates, Katarina, to play an actress I would be interviewing on the show. With the team all in place, I borrowed \$6,000 of camera and lighting equipment from a friend, Chris, set up a studio in my John Street apartment and started writing the script. Dennis and I watched Letterman, Leno, O'Brien and Kilborn observing the camera angles, what they wore, what they said, their mannerisms, etc.

So far all of this was well within Dennis' skill set. But then came the make-up. A male actor doesn't need much, but a little foundation keeps one from looking like a starving refugee under the bright lights. Dennis and I ventured to our local Duane Reade to purchase some. We definitely looked like a couple of blazers from the West Village suggesting various shades and sampling them on the backs of our hands. Then when we were finally stuck, we asked a lady shopper where we could get those little spongy thingies that you put the make up on with..... "oh, you mean an applicator?" YES! That's it! FYI: my base color match turned out to be 'Autumn Tan'.

With all the setup taken care of we filmed an introduction to the show (called "Right Now with Arol"), a short comedic monologue, an interview with Katarina and a segment called "Deli Classics" where I did an improv interview with the cooks at a local 24 hour deli. Finally, we hired a professional editor to clean it up and add a laugh track and applause. The casting director in Holland confirmed that he had received the tape and that he liked it, but needed to show it to his colleagues. He hopes to make a decision soon. Fingers crossed. If I get it, it would require me to travel to Holland from January through March. I'll keep y'all posted. Get ready for the Holland Insider!!

Screen Actor's Guild:

Now that I am once again a card carrying member of the Screen Actors' Guild in good standing, I thought I would take a few minutes to describe what this organization means to the screen actor.

Given my past white collar work history I never thought I would be in a trade union. Now, when most of us think union, we're thinkin' blue-collar men with beer bellies and butt cracks, but SAG is a very powerful organization for the professional actor. For a long time the actor was exploited by savvy businessmen, but now we are very much protected by the contracts required by SAG.

About SAG: SAG has a membership of over 93,000 artists. In addition to negotiating contracts on behalf of its members, SAG offers health benefits to actors making over \$7,500 per year in SAG residuals. While this may seem like the pittance you give away in Christmas tips every year to your doormen, the reality is that only a very small percentage of the 93,000 members reaches this amount each year (hence the abundance of waiters, bartenders and WP processors). However, while not every actor gets health benefits, each must pay dues each year.

This is based on the formula of \$100/year plus 1.85% on earnings from \$1-\$200,000 and 0.5% on earnings from \$200,001 - \$500,000. [Not unlike the sliding scale M&A fees you bankers charge].

History: SAG was founded in 1933 to give actors a unified voice over greedy producers. President Roosevelt's pro-union legislation in that same year helped inspire the founders. In 1935 SAG received an AFL (American Federation of Labor) charter and in 1937 the first contract was signed. [Like you care....]

Organization: SAG is a democratic union run by a National Board of Directors serving 1-3 year terms. There are three nationally elected offices (President, Recording Secretary and Treasurer) which serve 2 year terms (must reside in Los Angeles). Then there are 12 regional Vice Presidents. The current National President of SAG is Melissa Gilbert - you remember, the girl from "Little House on the Prarie" who wipes out coming down the hill in the opening credits. She was elected in early December in a mudslinging battle royale with Valerie Harper. Past presidents include James Cagney (1942-1944), Ronald Regan (1974-1952,1957-1960), Charleton Heston (1965-1971), and Ed Asner (1981-1985).

Name Change: Many of you have poo-poo'ed my name change to Arol as a pretentious actor thing to do (indeed, I believe I have characterized it that way myself). However, it should be noted here that, although there are numerous reasons for a name change (not the least of which is that your name just sucks), SAG actually does not allow for more than one identical name in its membership base. So every John Smith that joins SAG after the initial guy, has to come up with another professional name. Likewise, I had to confirm if there was another Arol Jahns already in SAG. Unlikely you say? Yes, but can you imagine if the Steel Workers' Union had this rule....do you think there is only one Bubba Smith?! [An actor has the exclusive right to a professional name for five years after he or she has honorably withdrawn from the union - that includes death, believe it or not!]

MUSIC:

My former bandmates from college are playing at the Grape Street Pub down in Philadelphia this Saturday and I am going to sit in on a set with them. The band's name is ZUZU and they have a great sound (you can check them out on www.garageband.com). If anyone is going to be in the Philly area or wants to make the road trip, email me for details.

JOB-JOB: As I have mentioned before, I have been struggling to find a side-job where I can use my MBA while still maintaining the flexibility to audition when I need to. Well, as a temporary solution I have taken on some independent consultant work for an environmental consulting company doing market research as well as some basic M&A advisory work. It should provide enough to pay the rent for a few months.

THIS ISSUE'S STATISTICS:

Days since becoming an "actor": 190

Number of Films: 3

Number of TV shows: 0

Number of Theater shows: 2 (I'm gonna count the TRU thing as theater)

Number of Subscribers to the Insider: 134

Website Hits: 0 (www.aroljahns.com). Ah....still working on it.

Mood Meter: Still Mixed. Nov-Dec is typically a slow time for the industry. That coupled with the poor economy means that there is not as much work right now. Therefore, I am not going on as many auditions as I would have hoped. However, I continue to meet people who inspire me and keep busy with several projects including starting a theater company, writing a one-act play, learning about production, etc. Overall I am very excited about the entertainment industry, but hope the acting end of it picks up by early next year.

LAST ISSUE'S STATISTICS:

Days since becoming an "actor": 155

Number of Films: 2

Number of TV shows: 0

Number of Theater shows: 1

Number of Subscribers to the Insider: 123

Website Hits: 0 (www.aroljahns.com). Many of you offered names of web designers...thank you. I may have to look into that since I clearly am not making time myself to do it, despite purchasing software for this purpose.

Mood Meter: Mixed. I am somewhat disappointed that I am not going out on auditions every day given that the entertainment industry is as depressed as the rest of the economy, but I am excited about some of the projects and prospects that I do have going. More on those as they progress.