

Murphy's Footwork Saved Zanuck

By Jack Anderson

Genial George Murphy, the only tap dancer in the U.S. Senate, did some fancy footwork for movie mogul Darryl Zanuck to make sure the Navy would continue its major role in Zanuck's new film "Tora! Tora! Tora!"

The widescreen extravaganza about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor ran into serious trouble last year after seven American sailors on leave to work as extras were badly burned during a fire scene.

Howls of outrage at the Pentagon's participation in the film were heard from Rep. John Murphy (D-N.Y.) and others on Capitol Hill. At the time, the Navy was supplying an aircraft carrier and a host of sailors to pose as Japanese seamen.

Secretary of Defense Mel Laird began to make noises about cutting the Pentagon's ties to the movie. With the new administration in office, Zanuck could no longer rely on Lyndon Johnson's former White House factotum, Jack

Valenti, to fix his problems.

Faced with the loss of millions and a public relations disaster, Zanuck turned to Murphy, his screenland buddy for three decades. The hawkish senator can always be counted on to oppose a unilateral military withdrawal, even from a movie.

Murphy put on a dazzling backstage performance. Here is the scenario:

The movie producer wrote Laird on June 23 protesting that all Pentagon rules had been obeyed in making the movie. Zanuck expressed concern that the secretary "might be deliberately brought into this situation by certain publicity seeking representatives."

Besides, Zanuck pleaded, he was an old chum of President Nixon with whom he had often corresponded about personal matters.

Although Zanuck is a famous man, his letter might never have gotten the immediate attention of the busy Laird had it not been for the intervention of Murphy.

The senator had Zanuck's letter hand-delivered to Laird with a covering note from

Murphy himself, urging Laird's "personal attention and consideration." The mail got through, Laird bought the act and "Tora! Tora! Tora!" was out of trouble.

The performance did not go unnoticed in Washington, however. Zanuck got a bad review in a staff memorandum prepared for the House military operations subcommittee.

Zanuck, the memorandum said, "did not hesitate" to exert "influence . . . in the Nixon administration. (He) asked the senator to transmit it and see that it got Mr. Laird's personal attention. The letter was hand-carried at the senator's instruction."

Zanuck and Murphy's friendship has carried over into the 1970 elections. At New York's swank "21" club, Zanuck hosted an exclusive gathering of movie figures to further the Californian's bid for the Senate this fall.

Footnote: Reached by this column, Murphy was forthright in explaining his role in the movie incident. He said he was merely helping a constituent and emphasized that Technicolor, Inc., from which he

was then receiving a \$20,000 a year consulting fee, was not involved in the movie. "There were no special favors" he said.

While Economy Bares

Despite bitter complaints of a "tight economic situation" which has thrown hundreds of employees out of work the Goodyear Aerospace Corporation recently managed to squeeze enough out of its budget to throw an expensive bash for Pentagon brass hats.

"Some Navy people" admitted a Goodyear spokesman were among "friends and business acquaintances" who attended GAC's \$1500 party at Washington's ultra-swank Sulgrave Club. The 40 couples enjoyed a sumptuous buffet dinner and later danced to the music of a three-piece combo.

Meanwhile GAC President Morris B. Jobe was solemnly announcing a "work force reduction" which has resulted in some 400 layoffs since January.

Another Sulgrave party for Pentagon officials was planned for next month but has recently been called off.