

OBITUARIES

'Hollywood Ten' Film Director Edward Dmytryk Dies

Uncooperative Witness Later Testified on Communist Ties; Career Included 'Caine Mutiny,' 'Crossfire'

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Edward Dmytryk, 90, a prominent and critically acclaimed movie director who as one of the "Hollywood Ten" went to jail for refusing to testify before a congressional committee about his membership in communist groups, died of heart and kidney ailments July 1 at his home in Encino, Calif.

After first serving a prison sentence and suffering on the Hollywood blacklist, he decided to proclaim his former communist memberships after all, as well as identify other Hollywood figures who were communists. He then was allowed to resume his Hollywood directing career.

In 1988, he told an Associated Press reporter that he knew that whatever his accomplishments as a director, they would be overshadowed by his political troubles during the Red scares of the 1940s and 1950s.

"When I die, I know the obits will first read 'one of Hollywood's Unfriendly Ten,' not 'director of 'The Caine Mutiny,' 'The Young Lions,' 'Raintree County' and other films,'" he said.

Mr. Dmytryk had belonged to the Communist Party for only a matter of months in the mid-1940s. Then, in 1947, the House Committee on Un-American Activities

called him and nine other Hollywood figures to a Washington hearing.

All 10 refused to answer questions about their own party membership or identify others as communists. All 10 were convicted of contempt of Congress, fined and sentenced to about a year in prison.

After Mr. Dmytryk was released from prison, he decided in 1951 to return to the committee, admit his party membership and "name names." He later explained that one of the reasons he had decided to do so was that he had come to oppose communism. Another was that because of his short dalliance with the party, the only people he could identify as communists had long been known as party members.

Mr. Dmytryk has been compared to recent Oscar winner Elia Kazan, another former communist who named names and who was never forgiven by much of Hollywood.

Mr. Dmytryk was born to Ukrainian immigrant parents in British Columbia and grew up in San Francisco. An unhappy child, he ran away from home as a teenager and by the age of 15 was working in Hollywood as a messenger at Paramount Studios. He worked his way up to film editor and then director of "B" movies. These included features in the popular "Boston Blackie" and "Falcon" police adventure series.

In 1944, he directed his first important film, "Murder, My Sweet," based on the Raymond Chandler classic and featuring the pleasant crooner Dick Powell as the hard-boiled private eye Philip Marlowe. Both Mr. Dmytryk, hailed as a master of film noir, and Powell received rave reviews for their work.

Later in the 1940s, he directed "Crossfire," an early Hollywood examination of racial prejudice in general and antisemitism in particular. It starred Robert Ryan, Robert Mitchum and Robert Young and brought Mr. Dmytryk his only Oscar nomination.

After serving 4½ months in prison, he went to work for producer Stanley Kramer, making a series of competent if largely unremarkable films. Then, in 1954, he seemingly struck pay dirt with "The Caine Mutiny," a World War II saga based on the bestselling Herman Wouk novel. The film was a huge success and featured Humphrey Bogart in one of his most memorable roles, the vicious and unstable Captain Queeg.

The film seemed to put Mr. Dmytryk back on the Hollywood map as a major director. Whether a film was a drama, war movie or classic Western, it seemed for a time that one of the first-sought directors was Edward Dmytryk.

He directed a romantic and mysterious Clark Gable amid the splendors of Hong Kong in "Soldier of Fortune," the ethereal

Gene Tierney and, once again, Humphrey Bogart in "The Left Hand of God," and Montgomery Clift and Elizabeth Taylor in the Civil War epic "Raintree County." He also directed Clift, Marlon Brando and Dean Martin in the World War II film "The Young Lions."

He also directed a series of films that featured major stars but failed to become as successful as many hoped. These included "A Walk on the Wild Side," with Jane Fonda and Barbara Stanwyck, and "Anzio," starring Robert Mitchum.

After retiring from directing in the mid-1970s and after directing more than 50 movies, he taught film, first at the University of Texas and then at the University of Southern California, until retiring altogether about two years ago. He was the author of filmmaking texts as well as two autobiographical volumes, "It's a Hell of a Life but Not a Bad Living" and "Odd Man Out, A Memoir of the Hollywood Ten."

Writer Ring Lardner Jr., 78, now is the last living member of the Hollywood Ten.

Mr. Dmytryk's marriage to Madeleine Dmytryk ended in divorce. Survivors include his wife, the dancer and actress Jean Porter, whom he married in 1948 and who lives in Encino; two sons; two daughters; and three grandchildren.