



Saturday, January 26th, 2008

Heath Ledger Remembered

By FindingBrokeback.com - Jim Bond

During the course of our travels within southern Alberta, and our interviews with those who made *Brokeback Mountain*, we were told many things about Heath Ledger by those who had the rare privilege of working with him. He is fondly remembered by them as a deeply committed artist, a generous friend, and one who dearly loved this life. We are honored to share a few of their recollections here.

Ang Lee insisted on perfect lighting for the Basque Bridge scene. In the hours that the cast and crew waited patiently for the sun and clouds to cooperate, Ledger took off his shirt and hung from the underside of the bridge, clowning around, greatly amusing the crew.



Lee and Ledger at Campsite #2
Goat Creek, Spray Valley Provincial Park, Alberta

Ken Zilka (Roughneck #1) said that Ledger was so determined to make the Thanksgiving street fight realistic that he accidentally broke Zilka's nose. And, of course, Ledger insisted on doing his own stunt work for the cliff jump.

David Trimble (Basque) remembers the experience of working with Ledger and Gyllenhaal as "amazing."

“Massive auras, massive auras in terms of, well, they’re brilliant, they’re gorgeous. Let’s just call it for what it is—they’re gorgeous human beings. And that’s part of what the aura is. And so, you’ve got to work with them, so you’ve got to get inside that aura. And once you get in you realize that they’re just a couple of kids, having a good time, enjoying what they’re doing, and fun. Just as interested in me as I was in them. Had some great conversations, had some great laughs, and yeah, they’re just a couple of really good looking young guys. Super fun to work with and super relaxed.”

First Assistant Director Pierre Tremblay said Ledger accidentally landed on top of Michelle Williams while they were shooting the toboggan scene, injuring her knee. Tremblay recalls that Heath insisted on riding with her in the ambulance to the hospital in Canmore, presumably the first spark of their romance.



Williams and Ledger at the Laundry Apartment
Fort Macleod, Alberta

The proprietor of the Red Coat Motel in Fort Macleod, where a photo portrait of Ledger is proudly displayed, said Heath and Michelle shared a room while they stayed there, joking, “If only I’d saved the sheets!” To deter paparazzi, Ledger was registered as “Keith Fletcher.”

The bartender at the Blue Bar in Carseland (Signal Bar) said Ledger was "a bit of an asshole" because he would not talk to anyone while he was preparing himself emotionally for that scene, so determined was he not to be “the one who fucked [the movie] up.”

The owner of the Lonesome Ranch said Ledger was very focused during his time there, working extensively with his diction coach, intently trying to sound "downtown Wyoming."

Roberta Maxwell said that when her lines were to be shot, Ledger volunteered to be there, instead of a double. He was still in tears from doing his scene upstairs. She was touched by his gesture, an unusual professional courtesy, and has said it contributed greatly to her own performance.

In June 2004, while the production was based in Fort Macleod, Ledger visited the seedy Queen's Hotel bar (Cassie's Bar) and stayed up late, drinking with the locals. Some of the guys we met there remembered that. Unfamiliar with the Brokeback story line at the time, they jokingly offered to double for Heath in his movie's sex scenes.



Cassie's Bar
Fort Macleod, Alberta

Larry Reese (Jolly Minister) mentioned to Heath that his daughter was a big fan of his earlier films. Without prompting, Ledger later presented Reese with a hand-written message of thanks to Reese's daughter, an extraordinary kindness on the part of a celebrity who was mercilessly hounded for his autograph.



The del Mar Wedding Portrait
Dinton, Alberta

The owner of the Twist Ranch said that Heath waived union/guild work rules to allow the filmmakers to shoot late one day when they were trying to complete the critical scenes at that location.

During the shooting of the difficult fireworks scene in Fort Macleod, it rained very hard. The babies (twins were rotated to comply with child welfare regulations) were crying a lot. "Ledger held them like a father and calmed them down. He loved kids," said a crowd extra who was positioned nearby.



The Fireworks Scene
Fort Macleod, Alberta

A coincidence, Ledger's sister gave birth to a set of twins while he was making the film. He is remembered as having been very frustrated that he could not be with her in Australia at the time.

Hannah Stewart (Alma, Jr., age 3) needed to have her hair darkened for the role. When she looked in the mirror after the dye job, she started to cry. Her father remembered that it was Heath who stepped up to calm her down and stop her from crying, saying that Ledger had a way with children that was "magical."



Ledger and Lee at the Lonesome Ranch
Near Claresholm, Alberta

And, as has been reported, it was Ledger's inspiration to reverse the shirts for the final scene, never imagining that it was to become his own, enduring valediction. Yes, he really did get it, didn't he?

A dedicated, loving, and vibrant presence has now passed on, but his legacy will endure, not simply in the form of a monumental work of art, but in the hearts and minds of those whose lives have been forever changed by it.

* The TDS tribute to Jackie - Paintedshoes - will be posted Sunday *

Forum Posts of the Day

In the [Farewell to Heath thread](#), [LSky94](#) reflected:

"Heath gave life to a character in a storyline that few Hollywood actors had the artistic courage to portray, and did so magnificently. There will be those who say *Brokeback* was "just a movie" about some gay guys, but we here know it was so much more. It was the first genuine voice on this scale given to a deep, hidden pain that so many of our fellow gay people have lived through since who knows when. For the first time, many gay people saw their life experience portrayed with dignity and love, and Heath Ledger was an irreplaceable part of that."

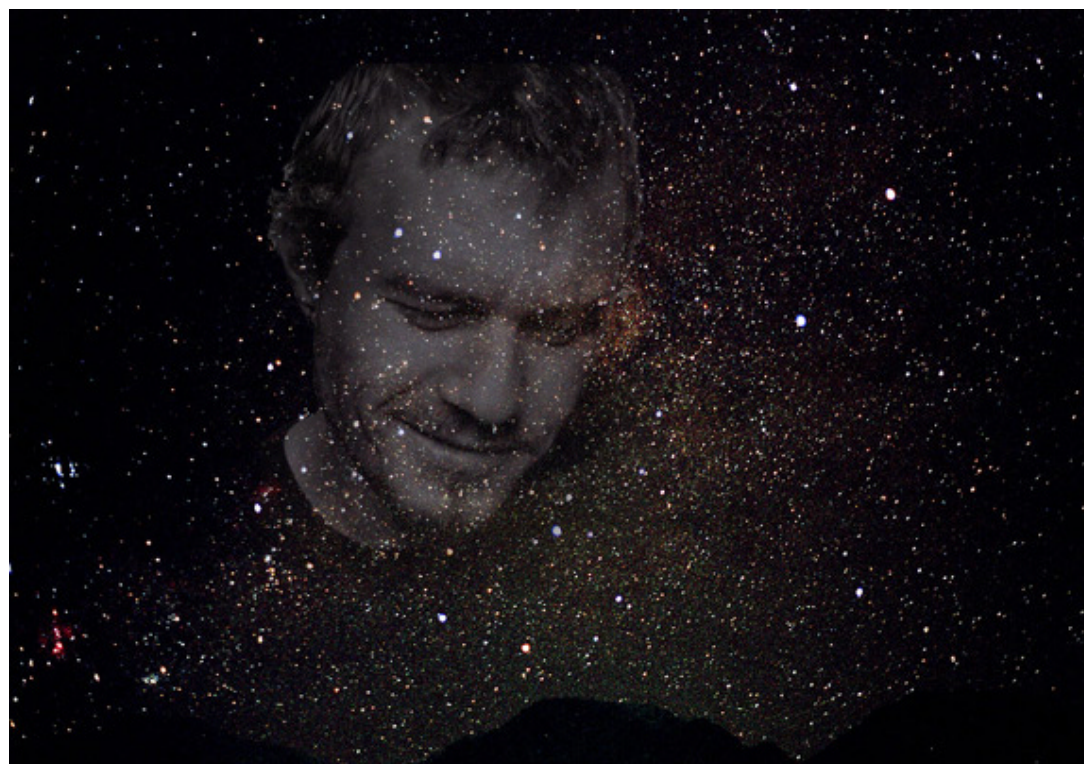
Quote of the Day:

"Heath Ledger is just almost really beyond description as far as I'm concerned. He got inside the story more deeply than I did. All that thinking about the character of Ennis that was so hard for me to get, Ledger just was there. He did indeed move inside the skin of the character, not just in the shirt but inside the person. It was remarkable."

~ Annie Proulx ~

Photo Captions of the Day

From [Photo Captioning Fun 3](#)



Anything interesting up there in heaven?

By [LauraGigs](#)



HEATH LEDGER
1979 - 2008

By [Bubo](#)