

## Interviews: ‘M\*A\*S\*H’ Up! ‘Trapper John, M.D.’ at the Hollywood Celebrities Show

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CHICAGO – The film and TV journey of “M\*A\*S\*H” was recently present at the Hollywood Celebrities Show in Rosemont, Illinois. From the film, Elliott Gould and Sally Kellerman were there, as well as Gregory Harrison of “Trapper John, M.D.”

HollywoodChicago.com put the three stars through their interview paces at the event and also asked them to pose for Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto.

The saga of the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, based in Korea during that war, spawned a virtual entertainment industry. The book called “M\*A\*S\*H,” by Richard Hooker (a pseudonym for Dr. Richard Hornberger) was released in 1968 and was a publishing sensation.

The legendary director Robert Altman made his mark with the film version in 1970. And then, of course, the M\*A\*S\*H fate was sealed in the guise of the extremely popular TV sitcom from 1972-1983. So popular was the series, a spin-off was created set in those modern times (1979-86) called “Trapper John, M.D.”

At the mid-October Hollywood Celebrities and Memorabilia Show, two of the cast members from Altman's film, Elliott Gould (who portrayed Trapper John) and Sally Kellerman (Hot Lips Houlihan) were holding court. And from the Trapper John TV show, Gregory Harrison (Dr. Gonzo Gates) was also at roll call.

Throughout this holiday week, we will be posting the interviews and pictures from that October show event, and today is M\*A\*S\*H day.



### **Elliott Gould, The “Star for an Uptight Age”**

Elliott Gould was part of the emergence of the radical direction that film made in the 1970s golden age. A distinctive and stalwart presence for Robert Altman in both M\*A\*S\*H, “The Long Goodbye” and “Nashville,” Gould made so many quirky films in his early career that Time Magazine called him a “star for an uptight age.”

Mr. Gould has set himself apart from there, starring not only in classic films (“Bob & Ted & Carol & Alice”) but maintaining his presence through the generations, most popularly as the Geller patriarch in the TV show “Friends” and as Reuben Tishkoff in the “Ocean’s 11” film series.



Hot Lips & Trapper: Sally Kellerman, Elliott Gould, October 17th, 2009

*Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** In 1970, a Time Magazine cover called you a 'star for an uptight age.' What was so uptight about the era and why were you so representative for it?

**Elliott Gould:** That was in relation to two pictures I was in at the time, one was M\*A\*S\*H and the other – which was on the cover of Time in the United States – was "Getting Straight," which had to do with student unrest and the revolution in America.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** I have a theory about the film M\*A\*S\*H. The reason the dialogue in the film was delivered so unusually, is that the doctors were constantly afraid of being in a war zone. You were on set, any credence to that theory?

**Gould:** No, it's purely Robert Altman's style of people talking at the same time, like we are now. It's just how people are and were.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Since you sit on the board of directors of the Screen Actors Guild, what is that union's greatest challenge today?

**Gould:** Oh my goodness, keeping up with the reality of the industry, the times and the economy. How can we develop a positive working relationship with other unions, so we can possibly sustain ourselves and survive?

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What did you and Robert Altman decide on in your portrayal of the iconic detective Philip Marlowe in his film version of 'The Long Goodbye'?

**Gould:** Bob called me when he was able to make the picture, to ask me what I thought. I said I always wanted to play this guy, and Altman said 'you are this guy.' And that's what it was. We broke a mold. I probably always was a little nervous [playing Marlowe] but Altman gave me so much room to invent and to create.

And actually when I was doing 'Ocean's 11,' and we were all set up at 1:30 in the morning to do the scene where the whole group was together and [George] Clooney is going to tell us what we're going to do. [Director] Steven Soderbergh walked over to me and asked, 'the ink on the face, was that an improvisation?' You know the scene I'm talking about in 'The Long Goodbye?' So I said to Steven, 'yes, was that all right by you?' And he said, 'Of course, but I thought that behavior was so unexpected.'

But that is where Altman gave me that room. As Marlowe, I still had the ink on my fingers from the fingerprinting when the police were roughing me up, and I didn't take to it. So in terms of the irreverence of the character and also his behavior, it felt right to put the ink under my eyes and say 'big game today.' And then I went further to put more on my face to do Al Jolson. If I had stopped and wasn't sure, it would have cost us about 25 minutes in time of production.

And that's what movie making is about, administrating the time in relationship to the resources. That's where Bob Altman really went with me.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** One last question, how does your faith inform you as an actor and a man?

**Gould:** Through my nature. Through nature. Through our nature.



### **Sally Kellerman, the Original Hot Lips Houlihan**

Sally Kellerman has a distinguished film and television career, highlighted by her famous portrayal of Hot Lips ("His will be done.") in the film version of M\*A\*S\*H, which included that infamous reveal in the shower scene.

But Kellerman was so much more, making several more Robert Altman films including "Brewster McCloud." She began her career in the late 1950s with several soon-to-be-famous acting students in Los Angeles. From there she worked her way up the series TV and film ladder, including a notable appearance in the second filmed pilot episode of the original Star Trek series, entitled "Where No Man Has Gone Before."



Sally Kellerman, October 17th, 2009

*Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What was it like when you were a kid in Jeff Corey's acting class, studying with Jack Nicholson, Robert Blake,



Dean Stockwell and Shirley Knight?

**Sally Kellerman:** Yes, we all started there, but later we were all in the Actor's Studio West [an offshoot of the Actor's Studio in New York City]. So I was in class with Jack, Carole Eastman [screenwriter, 'Five Easy Pieces'], Robert Towne, Roger Corman, James Coburn and Robert Blake, and we were all just young and struggling actors.

I was so fortunate to have a teacher like Jeff Corey and so fortunate to have that talent all in one place. What makes a good acting class, is having people there who are as excited as you are. I was lucky.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** When you were breaking into 1960s television, who was the most influential in giving you the break that led to your career?

**Kellerman:** Joe Stefano, he wrote the screenplay to 'Psycho.' He saw me in a play in a little theater I helped build on Vine Street. Joe came backstage, I didn't know him, and said he had seen me a play six months before, and he expressed how much I had grown as an actor. He said he may do a TV series and if he did he would give me a part. As he walked away, I said to a friend, 'I'm going to be a waitress for the rest of my life.' [laughs]

Six months later he sent me the script. He said the part was Ingrid and the magic was mine. And that was the TV show "The Outer Limits." I never stopped working after that. Stefano was old school Hollywood.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** I read somewhere that you weren't really sure you were going to do the famous nude scene in M\*A\*S\*H. How was that set up and what really happened?

**Kellerman:** I knew it was going to happen, and I was horrified by it. But I knew it was the centerpiece of the film and so there was no way around it. So I said to Bob 'can I least get the proper lighting so I look pretty?' And he said, 'yeah you can stand there naked for an hour with the whole crew looking on or you can do it as fast as you hit the deck, that's what we'll see.' I decided to take the second option (laughs).

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Okay, finally, tell us something about Robert Altman that nobody knows.

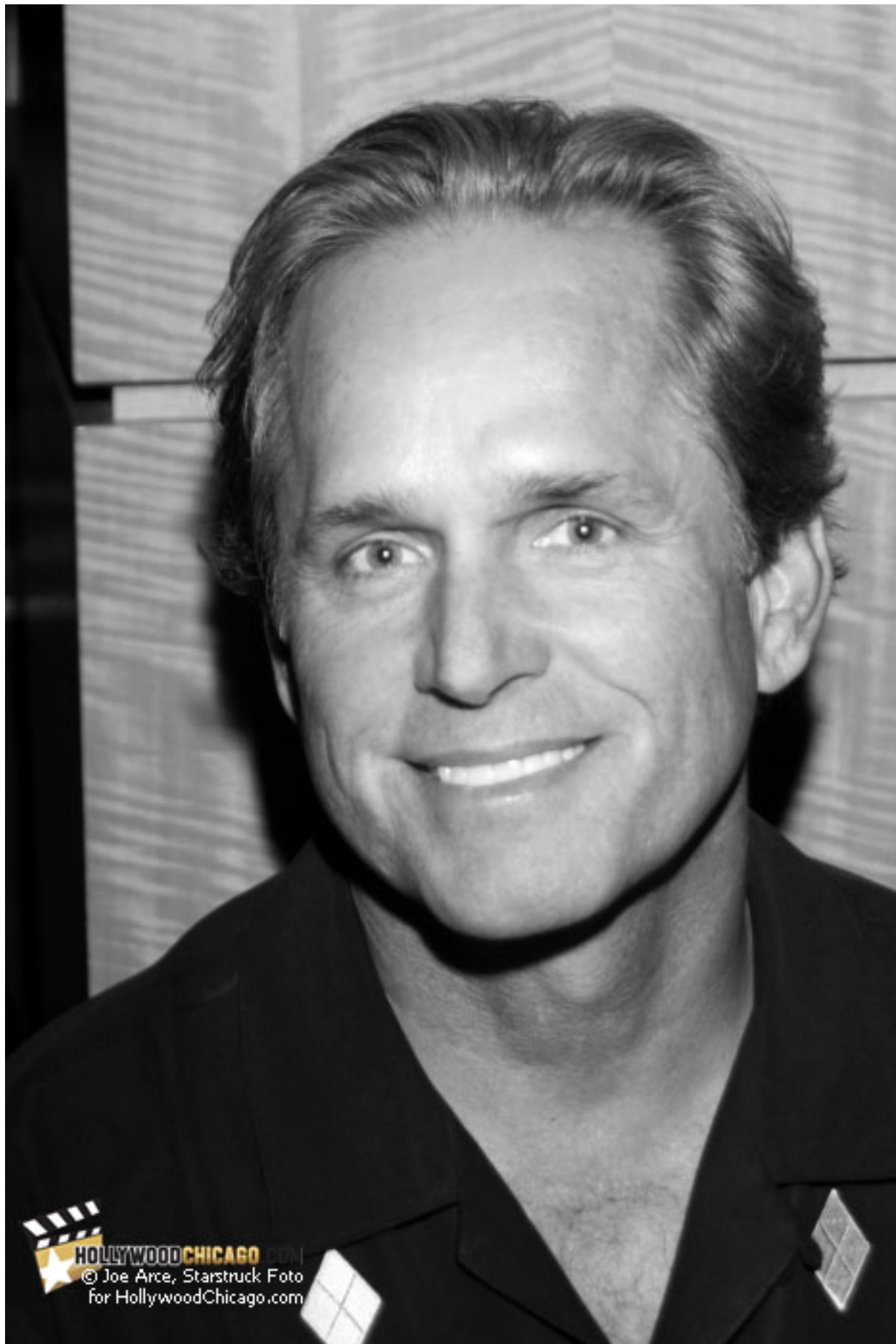
**Kellerman:** I can't. There is a book coming out and I just read it, and everything I knew or felt about Bob everyone else articulated in ways that I couldn't describe. It was such a special experience with him and it was one of the biggest thrills of my life to be close friends with Bob.

There were foolish and arrogant times when he asked me to do a part, and I wasn't ready ["Nashville"], and there were times when he would arrogantly say back that he had gotten someone else. There were a couple of roles I missed that I am so sad that I did, because we were so close.



#### Gregory Harrison, Dr. Gonzo Gates in "Trapper John, M.D."

The handsome and perspicacious Gregory Harrison is not that far removed from his look as the oddball Gonzo Gates in the Trapper John series, which starred veteran TV star Pernell Roberts in the title role. Harrison also made a splash in a made-for-TV holiday film "The Gathering," and in the TV Movie "event," in which he played male stripper John Phillips in 1981's "For Ladies Only."



Gregory Harrison, October 17th, 2009

*Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** From what you observe, was it easier to be a working actor in the 1970s and '80s than it is now?

**Gregory Harrison:** It wasn't easier, but being a successful working actor in the '70s and '80s was much more lucrative and much more rewarding. The industry has changed so much from then to now that even though I'm still working all the time, there is no middle class actor anymore. You're either a \$20 million dollar player or it's a hobby.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Tell me something about Pernell Roberts that nobody knows.

**Harrison:** Pernell told me the reason he quit 'Bonanza' after the sixth or seventh year, was that he could no longer call a man 'Pa' who was only seven years older than he. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** John Phillips or Gonzo Gates, who has the better life now and why?

**Harrison:** I think Gonzo probably does. He seemed to be the kind of character that could come up with anything at the right moment. I'm not sure John was capable of that. [laughs]

**"Where Were You in '62?" We catch up with the gang who starred in the 1973 film "American Graffiti" and the TV show "Laverne and Shirley." CLICK [1970s REDUX](#) [17].**

*'The next Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show is scheduled for March 13th-14th, 2010. [Click here for more information.](#) [18] For Part One of this weeklong visit to the show, [click here.](#) [19]*



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