

Alfie Creighton Interview September 27, 2006

(Rob Freeman has kindly consented to share his Alfie Creighton interview with FindingBrokeback.com visitors. For additional information on the Brokeback Truck and Rob's charitable endeavors, see TheBrokebackTruck.ca).

Alfie Creighton worked directly under Ray Breckenridge, Brokeback Mountain's Picture Car Coordinator, and, as such was in charge of the vehicles featured in the film. He was responsible for ensuring that the vehicles used, such as the Brokeback Truck, were on the sets at the proper times, usually driving them himself. He is listed in the credits as a Driver. Creighton drove the Brokeback Truck as it first entered Signal, as well as the semi truck in the drop-off scene. He's an interesting guy and had a wealth of information and production-related stories to share.

Thanks to everyone who submitted questions directly, or via the [The Ultimate Brokeback Forum](#), a 5,000 member discussion board. (see [Daily Sheet](#) article, October 15, 2006).



Rob, Alfie Creighton, and The Brokeback Truck



Alfie Creighton



Alfie also appears in the movie. He has a moustache and is directly to the left of Lureen. Ray Breckenridge is to the left of Alfie.

Rob: How and why did it come to be that the 1950 GMC pickup was selected as the vehicle for the movie?

Creighton: We showed the director quite a few different vehicles and the one he liked had been painted flat black. He wanted something that didn't stick out too much. We had to buy a second vehicle to match it, naturally, one for the stunts and one for the driving, and this is the color he liked, so we ended up with the '50 Chevy for the stunt truck.



Rob acquired the "stunt truck" from Dave Leader, a rodeo clown/bull fighter in the movie.

Rob: Where did you actually get the stunt truck from?

Creighton: We got it up in Penhold (south of Red Deer, AB). There's a guy there who only sells Chevy trucks. We looked at all his different trucks and he had one that was flat black, so we took a picture of that one and other Chevys. When the director decided to use it, then, naturally, we

had a little trouble finding one in good shape to match the stunt truck (the “beauty truck”), and then when we did, we had to paint it to the same color as the flat black one.

Rob: Where did you find the beauty truck?

Creighton: Ray Breckenridge found it. A fellow had a truck for sale in the Auto Trader, an older Chevy. And then when Ray talked to him he found that he had two of these. One was a '48 and one was a '50 GMC. So the '50 matched the one that we had already. And this one was in immaculate condition, was blue in color with hardly any rust on it at all and it ran well. So we bought it to match the other one and painted it flat black.



The Brokeback Truck in earlier days

Rob: I've heard that this one came from BC (British Columbia).

Creighton: I think originally that the gentleman that came here from BC, he had moved because of the pipeline. He worked in the “oil patch.” He had brought both trucks from there and that's probably why they were in better shape.

Rob: I understand this one used to be in shows, etc. It was really dressed up with chrome wheels.

Creighton: Yes, and all the bumpers and tail lights were chrome. We had to dress it down to make it what they wanted: an old truck.

Rob: Have you supplied other vehicles to the industry? If so, which movies? What about TV?

Creighton: Yes, lots of shows in the last twelve years. I started out with Dale Simpson, just hauling cars for him. I've slowly worked into the film industry with more picture cars. Right now we're doing four shows of Nora Roberts' books; I look after the picture cars in all four of them. They're about a month shoot, in other words 18 to 19 days, supplying six to a dozen vehicles on

each one. Going back, before I supplied vehicles, how I got into the industry was supplying horses on a TV show called "Destiny Ridge" and then working on Marlboro commercials supplying horses, slowly getting into the transport area, ending up looking for vehicles for different shows. So, both big features like Brokeback, or TV, movies of the week, finding and supplying picture cars.

Rob: How did you actually get hooked up with the movie Brokeback Mountain?

Creighton: Ray Breckenridge called me. He was hired to be the Picture Car Coordinator, then he hired me to work with him finding vehicles and hauling them to sets.

Rob: Did you know Ray prior to that?

Creighton: Yes, Ray and I have been friends since I first got in the movie business. We're still friends, buying and selling horses together and working in that industry.

Rob: Ray was the actual Picture Car Coordinator, but you did most of the work?

Creighton: No, he was there as much. He worked harder than I did to start with, finding the vehicles. That's his job as Coordinator, so he would go and research and find them, and my job was to haul them and be on set along with him. He started out probably two weeks ahead of me trying to find vehicles; he had a list of vehicles he had to find.

Rob: Do you have any upcoming movies or TV shows other than what you're working on right now?

Creighton: No. Every year it's whatever comes to Alberta and whoever gets hired to be the coordinators. We bid on the shows that we want to work on and that's how we end up in the business. So you could end up working on picture cars, in transport, or you could end up wrangling on the show. It just depends on what the show is.

Rob: What did you think of the selling price that the truck brought on eBay?

Creighton: I was quite surprised, mainly because, at the time, when the show was finished I was interested in buying it myself, to hang onto it, because it was a good truck, and I didn't hear about it even being sold on eBay until a month or so after it was sold.

Rob: Were you shocked at the price?

Creighton: Yes, definitely, and I was shocked at everything else that actually sold on eBay.

Rob: Do you keep a stable of vehicles that you offer to the film industry?

Creighton: No, we don't. It's not like California where there are certain companies that have a car lot and store vehicles there. What we do, between Dale and I and a couple other guys that supply picture vehicles, is we have a folder, a picture album. We take pictures of interesting vehicles, talk to the people that own them, write their phone numbers and names down. We keep a file so that when the director, whoever, of whatever show, comes looking for vehicles, then we can just refer to that, phone these people, see if they still have that vehicle, and see if they would be interested in renting it out to a movie.

Rob: Do you get involved in the movies in other ways these days, or just strictly supplying horses or vehicles?

Creighton: Mainly that's all I do. I am a member of ACTRA¹ and I have done some small stuff. I worked in Nova Scotia on a film doing stunts on horseback, and I've worked off and on with the stunt people here, driving, but mainly it's quite a close-knit thing, so if I'm looking after picture cars then I'll do fast driving, but not what you'd call stunts.

Rob: Jake Gyllenhaal was away from the shooting a good deal of the time. I think that, in many of the distant scenes, a double was used for Jake.

Creighton: Yes, there were a couple of times where we did drive-away scenes where we would put somebody in just so we could see the truck, his truck or one of the trucks, driving at a far distance. We do that lots where I'll jump in the vehicle if I'm the right size, or somebody else, and we'll throw their outfit on, their hat or their jacket or whatever, and drive. So in any of the, what we call splinter units, somebody else might have driven for him.

Rob: Do you have any specific information on which scenes we're talking about?

Creighton: There is the one with the red and white Ford going around the corner on the hill. I was sitting in the seat there. Shots like that, long distance shots, we'll use somebody else. It could be anybody, a cast member, or mainly just extras that are there.



Creighton drove in this scene.

Rob: In the opening Signal scene, it's my understanding that it was the stunt truck coming down parallel to the railway track, and then, when the scene switches, it's actually the beauty truck pulling in to the parking space. What's your information on that one?

¹ Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists.



Creighton also drove in this scene.

Creighton: Yes, that's right. That was where we were using the stunt truck to start with and hoping that we would bring it all the way into the lot so that when Jake got out to kick it, he wouldn't be kicking the beauty truck. The motor had quit running on us, we had to finish the scene, so we ended up using the beauty truck for him to drive down and kick. That was disappointing for me because it was our beauty truck and we didn't want any dents in the back fender.



Heel marks on the "Beauty Truck"

Rob: I've heard that the director said, "Kick harder."

Creighton: Yes, quite a few times, and I kept saying, "Quit kicking, that's enough of that."

Rob: Who actually looked after the vehicles?

Creighton: We hired another teamster, a mechanic, Stu DePass, who had a shop. As soon as we got these vehicles we went through them and I would help Stuey. The '57 Chevy that was Heath's, we had to tear off the bumper, the grill, the fender, change the door and put that on, and there was a brake problem. The '50 GMC truck had a bent rod. The mechanic had a trailer with all his tools which he brought to set and would be there in case something happened. He would keep the vehicles running.

Rob: Were all the vehicles for the movie bought, then sold after?

Creighton: A few we rented, some we bought. Anything we bought we turned around and sold for fifty cents on the dollar or whatever we could get for them. We hung onto the vehicles for six to nine months until everything had been put together. If we had to go and do a re-shoot, then we knew where the vehicles were. Then they were sold. We basically put the word out that they were for sale. Nobody thought they would go for what they went for.

Rob: How much of his own horseback riding did Jake do?

Creighton: I wasn't at many of the scenes where he did that, but most of the stuff both of them did, from my understanding, because they actually went out and rode and felt comfortable riding. Sometimes you'll get an actor who says, "Oh, yeah, I've ridden," and as soon as he climbs on a horse you know that he hasn't. Both of those guys could ride a little bit and did most of the riding unless it was a long ways away, and then again, it's more a matter of economics where you can't afford to have the actor there where you have a splinter unit. He's doing his main stuff and you put somebody else in on his spot and ride.

Rob: Did you ever get a chance to meet and talk with Jake, Heath, and Ang?

Creighton: A little bit. I talked to Jake more than Heath. I talked to Heath a little bit when he drove down the river just before they were going to jump in. They had horses in the back. He told me then that he came from a ranch in Australia and was used to driving a standard and hauling stuff in the back of the truck as a young kid, so he drove well. And Jake, I talked to him because he was trying to bulk up. They had bought him a bench and some weights and he would try to bulk up because he was doing his next show (Jarhead) and had to be in better shape than he was. He was so concentrated on this show that he didn't spend a lot of time doing it, but I talked to him a little bit and pumped some iron with him.

Rob: Could you tell me more about the people you worked with from the movie?

Creighton: You couldn't ask to work with a better person than Ang Lee. He was always very quiet, but he always had that humor about him and he kept everybody working. The first AD [Michael Hausman] was the same way. He was one of the best AD's we've ever worked with. He always let everybody know what was going on and what was coming up next. If there was any crowd standing around he'd walk over and talk to them and apologize for us taking up their area, their space, their yard, or wherever we happened to be working, and everybody loved him.

Rob: Is this one of your favorite movies you've worked on?

Creighton: I think it's one of the most remembered, mainly because of where it went, where it's ended up, and then the controversy about it in this day and age. It's something we really enjoyed working with. And then working with all the different picture vehicles. It was quite a challenge to find the vehicles that we needed to keep the director happy and go through that many years. It's hard to find vehicles today that cover ten years and don't look like they've been rebuilt, that they're actually new in those days, so it was a challenge to work on it.

Rob: Thank you for sharing your experiences with us.