

Lincoln home for screenwriter

By Chuck Jagoda

Screenwriters are found in Los Angeles or New York. If they happen to be any place in between those two media meccas, it's because they are on location or in a plane between meccas. One just doesn't expect to find real live members of the Screenwriters' Guild living and working in Lincoln, Neb. Yet that's what Angela Rackley has been doing for the past two years.

"I had an eclectic upbringing — the jungles of Panama, Europe, all over the United States. My father was in the service."

She left the College of Journalism and Communication at the University of Florida in her senior year to pursue a career as a singer and songwriter. She had released several records and worked with Dick Haller who wrote *Snoopy and The Red Baron* and *Abraham, Martin and John*. A career in Los Angeles as a songwriter seemed like the next step. What actually developed, however, was a job as a record buyer for Warner Bros. Records. That evolved into production work in films and eventually screenwriting.

Rackley credits her mentor Ben Barzman with helping her to learn the craft of writing for the screen.

"He had been blacklisted in Hollywood and had lived in France. He's written the screenplays for *Z*, *The Vist*, *The Damned*, *The Kid*, *The Blue Max*, and *The Boy With the Green Hair* among others. The line that became a poster 'War is not good for children and other living things' was one of his in *The Boy With Green Hair*." Rackley describes it as "a

mentorship of encouragement." He was also secure enough to discuss whatever he was working on.

After nine years in Los Angeles, Rackley decided she had a gap to fill.

"I wanted to learn more about good literature. I felt I had a responsibility as a writer to read and study the great works." She returned to college at UCLA and in one year completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree in English and American literature.

Rackley found in the competitive Los Angeles area but also many frustrations. She completed a screen adaptation of Frank Waters' book *People of the Valley*. So far, however, it has not been produced.

"It has kicked around for a while. I've also written several other projects that may be produced." But Los Angeles is a city in which many deals are discussed, few finalized and fewer still that come to fruition. "That was part of why I left. I struggled for years, turned down a lot of assignments that I couldn't relate to — car chases and things that



Photo by Rodger Bruhn

Angela Rackley

smacked of self-righteousness."

Rackley came to Lincoln to do research on the trial of Standing Bear as well as to escape the frustrations of Los Angeles. She didn't know anyone in the film business here but she made contact with people and has kept up her contracts. And the contracts have led to jobs.

"I've been extremely lucky. Marshall Jamison (of

ETV) asked me to do a documentary, which was a new experience. Some people leave a small place to go to Los Angeles. I've done the reverse. I've found new opportunities and a new place to grow."

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