

My Pal, Paul “Kelton the Cop” Marco By Kurt Reichenbach

The policeman on the phone asked me if I knew what was to be done with Paul Marco’s body.

“Body?!” I asked.
 “Oh yeah, he’s dead. Sorry,” he replied. Thus I learned of the passing of my friend, Paul “Kelton the Cop” Marco, star of three infamously bad Ed Wood pictures, “Bride of the Monster,” “Plan 9 from Outer Space,” and “Night of the Ghoul.”

I had met Paul in 1991 at an Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films screening of “Defending Your Life.” He was standing off to the side of the lobby and I was throwing my popcorn container away. I nodded a casual greeting and he said, “Hi, I’m Paul Marco,” and handed me a card.

“Yep, that’s what it says,” I replied, taking the card.

“I played ‘Kelton the Cop’ in Plan 9 from Outer Space,” he continued. Now this caught my interest because I had recently seen Plan 9 after reading about it for years in Famous Monsters of Filmland magazine. It was bad... REALLY bad, but so bad, it was a blast to watch. And come to think of it, he did look like the cop in the movie—older, not in costume—but that *could* be him. We chatted for a few minutes and I gave him one of my cards and left.

He called me a few days later. It turned out he lived not too far from me and asked if I wanted to get together for a sandwich. We spent a couple of hours talking... well... HE was talking, I was listening to his stories about Bela Lugosi, Ed Wood, Criswell, Tor Johnson, Aldo Ray, Mae West, Jane Greer, and some of the other folks he had known while growing up in Hollywood. Of Bela, he said, “I was his best man when he married his last wife and I attended his funeral in 1956.” According to Paul, the story that Bela was buried in his Dracula cape is not entirely true. While Bela was wearing it in the casket, Paul retrieved it for Mrs. Lugosi before the lid was closed. Another myth shattered! He also told me about the Christmas party at his house with Bela and Ed and a BLACK Christmas tree. He even showed me a picture. Now there’s a potential Christmas card!

So we became good friends. I was stunned at the number of people who would recognize him in restaurants or book stores asking, “Aren’t you Kelton the cop?” and he would happily chat with them and give them autographs, always signing “Good Luck

Forever—Your Pal, Paul Marco ‘Kelton the Cop.’”

Paul was born Angelo Insalaco on June 10, 1925, in Los Angeles, the youngest of 13 children. He told me how he had been one of the original “Meglin Kiddies,” a troupe of young performers which at various times included Shirley Temple, Jane Withers, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney. Paul was also a graduate of the famous Hollywood High School.

Landing a small role in “Sweet and Low-Down” (1944), it looked like Marco’s career was off to a good start, but landing a substantial role was tough for the

nature, Paul/“Kelton” retired from the Ed Wood “repertory company.” But they remained close friends until Wood’s death in 1978.

CNN, and all of the major networks. This led to numerous personal appearances and awards including a Golden Scroll for

Outstanding Achievement from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films, the Southern California Motion Picture Council Special Merit Award,

were four of us—Kathy Wood (played in the film by Patricia Arquette), Kathy’s lawyer, Robert Weinberg, Paul, and me. I don’t think anyone spoke from the time the film began until the final credits rolled, but I could hear the occasional “sniff” as Kathy fought back tears. After the screening she commented to us, “It was so much like him.”

Marco also appeared along with all the surviving Ed Wood players in the feature length documentary “The Haunted World of Edward D. Wood Jr.” (1996).

For a while he did the celebrity autograph shows, just like Don Adams, Don Knotts, and lots of other well known personalities not named “Don.” At these shows he would pose for pictures and give free

autographs, as well as selling “I Love Kelton the Cop” buttons, T-shirts, autographed photos and other “movie-bilia” (an original Paul Marco word). He also sold autographed video sets of all three of the Ed Wood horror movies he was in, calling them the “Kelton Trilogy.” There were those who thought this was a bit egocentric of him, but the truth

is, Kelton was the only character to be featured in all three movies, and, of course, the role was always played by Paul. “Ed told me I was his good luck charm so he always tried to find a part for me,” Paul would tell me. After seeing all of these movies, I am convinced Ed needed a lot more than good luck.

Despite a bad fall resulting in a serious hip injury and generally declining health in recent years, Paul continued to make personal appearances and reprised his Kelton role in “The Naked Monster” (2005), and the first of what was planned to be a trilogy of short films, “Kelton’s Dark Corner” (2006).

On Saturday afternoon, May 13, Paul was interviewed for a few hours in his apartment at the Bethany Towers in Hollywood by David Wentink for an upcoming book. Wentink says Paul was frail but energetic and clear of mind, reciting stories in great detail. Paul was planning to shoot more scenes for the second episode of “Kelton’s Dark Corner” the following Sunday afternoon.

Paul died Sunday morning, May 14, 2006 just weeks shy of his June 10th birthday. His ashes are interred at Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

For more information about Paul Marco, visit www.winvisual.com/marco

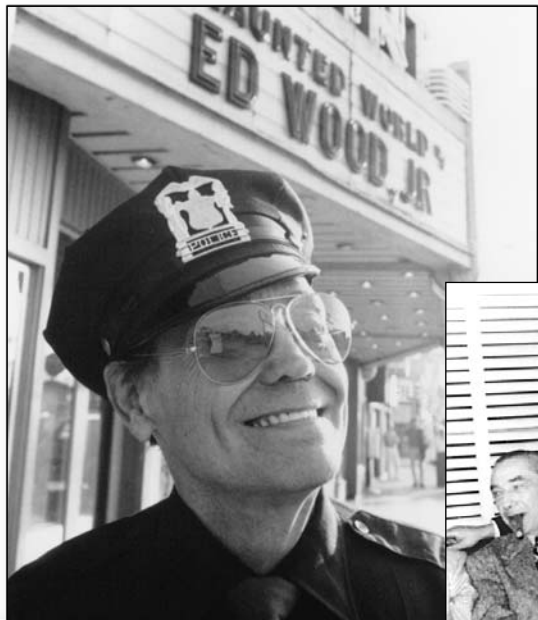


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Clockwise from above: Paul at the premier of “The Haunted World of Ed Wood, Jr.; Bela Lugosi, Paul, and Dolores Fuller at the black Christmas tree party; Ed Wood, unidentified woman, and Bela with the tree; Paul in Bride of the Monster; Johnny Depp, Paul, and Jeffery Jones on the set of Ed Wood; Ed Wood, Criswell, and Paul on the set of Plan 9.

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young actor. In the early ‘50s Paul formed Marwell Productions with Criswell, a prognosticator of dubious ability, with Paul producing the live television show “Criswell Predicts.”

“I was introduced to Ed Wood through my publicist and from then on we were best friends,” said Paul, “He was never in the business to make money, he was an original.” Paul went on to play Kelton in all three of Wood’s horror films.

“Bela’s last picture was ‘Plan 9,’” Paul would tell me, “People say he died in the middle of the film but that’s not true. He died before the picture began!”

Reflecting on these films Marco said, “He [Wood] made very good bad movies. His films are the greatest worst movies and they’re so bad they’re entertaining. Wood’s pictures were funny to people even when they first came out but that wasn’t his intention because he always meant them to be dramatic and suspenseful. That’s all Ed Wood lived for—he wanted to make movies—and that’s what he did.”

As Wood’s films took on more of a pornographic

“I married him and I buried him,” Paul would often say.

Paul continued pursuing an acting career, landing roles in The Young Savages (1961) and Rat Fink (1965) and taking featured acting roles on a few ‘60s TV shows including “The Donna Reed Show,” and “77 Sunset Strip.”

During the ‘70s, when acting work became even scarcer for Paul, he became a property master at Paramount Studios, working on such shows as “One Day at a Time.”

In the ‘80s, Ed Wood was suddenly “re-discovered” with “Plan 9” being run often on late night television, at sci-fi conventions and in art houses. Paul was much in demand to discuss the “Ed Wood phenomenon” on “Oprah,” “Entertainment Tonight,” “The Joe Franklin Show,” “The Incredibly Strange Film Show” (British), E! Entertainment Television,