

Oh, do I miss my Myerberg friends! My notebooks are bulging with much history to impart with you all. Therefore, I revel in this opportunity afforded by our great staff to be able to share.

The class which I was in the middle of, is about the art, science and creativity of the Silent Movie Era. We had just taken a deep look at: Pearl White, whom you know from “The Perils of Pauline” along with Harold Lloyd, a comedian daredevil whom you know as the pale faced, horn rimmed, straw hatted, fellow dangling from a clock face (over a city street) in the movie,” Safety Last.”

For today, I’d like to share some fun historical facts about these Silent Era icons. Now people, it may be 2020, but my mom taught me that it’s still ladies first - So here’s some notes on Pearl White (1889-1938). Many of Pauline’s perils were filmed by the French Pathe’ company in both Jersey City and Fort Lee, N.J. Pearl’s popularity was boosted by campaigns driven by the likes of W.R. Hearst in the Sunday papers. He would offer huge cash rewards to fans who could compose a new perilous plot for Pauline. WWI soldiers loved her. As you know, soldiers are motivated and comforted by charming ladies. Perhaps they felt that Pearl appreciated the daily danger our G.I. Joes were enduring. Pearl was quoted, that before each new peril film, she was taught new daring skills. “I’ve even learned to fly an airplane, a feat that took me many months.” Biographers are not sure which skills were fable and which were real.

Pearl had another successful series called “Exploits of Elaine.” Under whatever name she was performing, Pearl’s films were shown all over the world. She became an international face of heroic and courageous women everywhere. The right for a woman to vote was not ratified until 1920. Yet, Pearl gave women the right (at least on the screen) to do almost anything way before that!!

Now for Harold Lloyd (1894-1971.) A specialist in thrill comedy. Harold felt that comedy had to have some “play” in it to be true humor. If the comedian could do hair raising suspenseful stunts, as the quite

athletic Harold could do, then that much better. He could really scale buildings, tumble and fall bigtime... and make it look almost effortless. (Sometimes though he opted to be a pioneer in trick photography. Some things could really kill a guy!! He would be an innovator of the camera throughout his life.)

He is described as both the fool and the fox. He would escape those bad guys or angry bosses, but often just barely. Both weird and wily, Harold would live to the next day and even get the girl. Even if that means crashing and smashing everything and everybody in his path. Sadly, though, while handling what he thought was a bomb prop, it exploded and he lost a thumb and a forefinger. This did not deter him. He continued to make films, some of them his best. In the famous dangling from the clock scene, he is missing those fingers. You cannot tell though.

His fame has generally been shadowed by the huge success of Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Nevertheless, he made more films than them and matched up well with those two stars financially. A description of Lloyd: "Lloyd was not a natural comedian, rather he was a great actor playing comedic roles. His ability to create multi-dimensional characters, both funny and moving, has helped to shape our contemporary view of what a comic actor can be."

Thanks for reading.....

Until next time,
Shabbat Shalom