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Local History

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Subject Road to Perdition

Date of Material July 11, 2002



Elgin & the Fox Valley

Daily Herald

Thursday, July 11, 2002

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Heidi Jayne Netzley, 19,
graduated from Barrington
High School.

BY JAMES FULLER
AND TONA KUNZ

Daily Herald Staff Writers

There's a fair chance that people who grew up with Heidi Jayne Netzley won't immediately recognize her.

To prime herself for the role alongside Jude Law in "Road to Perdition" opening Friday, Netzley, only 17 at the time, had to transform her bright blue eyes, blond hair and Hollywood smile into an impoverished 1930s prostitute.

The former Barrington honor

student researched how a prostitute in that era would have lived and how she would dress and talk, even developing her own accent for the part. Netzley spent hours laboring over a journal and building an imaginary life for her character.

All this so she could look convincing sprawled on a stained mattress in a seedy Geneva hotel room for a few minutes on screen. It paid off.

"Honestly, it's the most comfortable I've ever felt in my own skin," Netzley said recently, insisting that

even the film's early Oscar buzz hasn't ruptured her sense of calm.

"The whole film was a work of art," she said.

"Road to Perdition" will open Friday nationwide and already is capturing the kind of reviews most moviemakers only dream of.

It stars Tom Hanks as an Irish mobster and enforcer for a ruthless crime boss played by Paul Newman. One night, his young son witnesses him kill two men, and father and son quickly find them-

See **ROAD** on **PAGE 12**

'Perdition' may give suburban teen her big break

More on 'Road'

• **Page 12:** Extras share their anecdotes about the filming.

• **Suburban living:** Spotting the suburbs in 'Road to Perdition' is easy if you know where to look. Section 4.

• **Coming Friday:** Find out how critic Dann Gire feels about the film, in Time out!



PATRICK KUNZER/DAILY HERALD

The antique Fords of Jim Warner of Elgin, left, and Dave Edwards of Dundee were used in the filming of "Road to Perdition."

ROSE SALE!
2 Gallon Pots

N

ad: Actress to have her paintings in show

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elves on the run, tailed by hit man Law. The film also stars Jennifer Jason Leigh as Hanks' wife.

For the suburbs, however, the added thrill comes in the form of familiar scenes — Geneva, West Dundee, downtown Chicago, Barrington Hills, where much of the film was shot — pictured in the gray, gritty, Depression 1930s.

Netzley has only a few minutes of screen time. She has a speaking role opposite Law's character, where she serves as the catalyst for one of the film's action sequences.

Still, her feature film debut was nine years in the making. Now 19, Netzley was a high-achieving student with an early interest in acting.

Her stage was the family garage until age 10 when she began studying at the Piven Theatre in Evanston, the same school where John and Joan Cusack trained.

Her studies have taken her to Second City and now Los Angeles, where she will start her second year this fall at Loyola Marymount University.

Professionally, she had done commercials for McDonald's and Cap'n Crunch cereal when a casting call for "Perdition" in Chicago turned into her big break.

She was a senior at Barrington High School, and so finals, prom and the end of senior year came just in time for the beginning of "Perdition's" filming. It didn't faze her.

"I have such a passion for this," she said. "I've always known it was

something I absolutely have to do. There's no other possibility of doing anything else."

Netzley spent a week shooting the film at the old Geneva Hotel in downtown Geneva.

It was in those 12-hour work days that she had her first taste of fanfare from locals turning out to watch the filming. Throngs came to catch glimpses of Hanks, Law and director Sam Mendes, but Netzley was flattered to hear a few people mentioning her as well.

"They'd say things like 'Oh, is that Miss Netzley?' or ask who I was," Netzley said.

"It was the most wonderful experience of my life so far."

Netzley said both Law and Hanks were very professional and friendly. But even they weren't as big a draw for her as Mendes, the director who also helmed "American Beauty."

To show her appreciation, Netzley put her painting talents to work and came up with a pastel on suede creation for him.

Her painting is more than a hobby, and some of her work will appear in a California show later this year.

Still, it's the challenge of acting that appeals to her most.

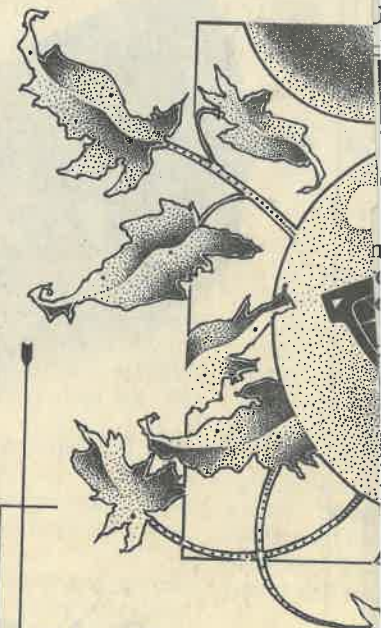
The role of a teen prostitute, because it conflicts with her real life so dramatically, is exactly the level of difficulty she seeks in a role. Her surroundings were decidedly unglamorous; she spent a lot of the time in the "brothel" across the street from the Geneva Hotel.

Film crews turned the second

floor studio of a marketing company into a disease-ridden brothel by painting moldy water stains dripping down mustard-colored walls, making paint chip off the doors, window trim and metal bed frame and covering the ceiling in a layer of dirt.

Still, "It was the honor of a lifetime," Netzley says.

SIZZLING



ROSE SALE!

2 Gallon Pots