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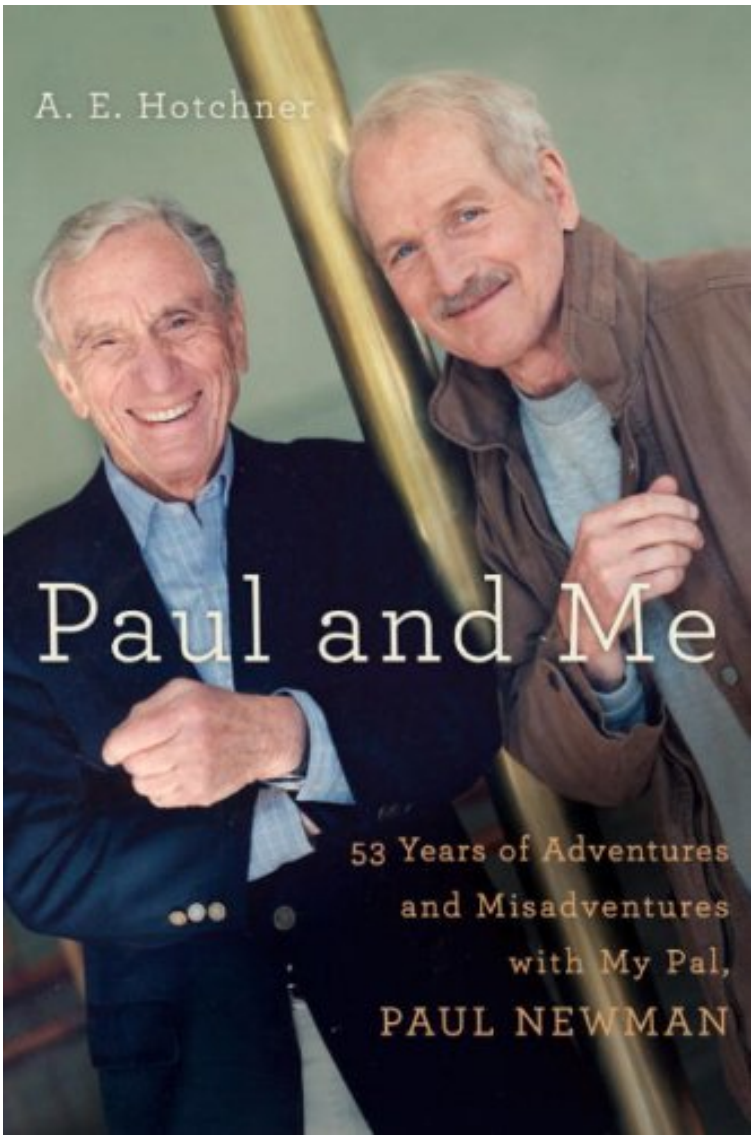
Paul and Me: Fifty-three Years of Adventures and Misadventures with My Pal Paul Newman



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Par A E Hotchner : Paul and Me: Fifty-three Years of Adventures and Misadventures with My Pal Paul Newman before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Paul and Me: Fifty-three Years of Adventures and Misadventures with My Pal Paul Newman:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBestselling author A. E. Hotchner's intimate account of his 53-year friendship with his pal Paul Newman.A. E. Hotchner first met Paul Newman in 1955 when the virtually unknown actor assumed the lead role in Hotchners first television play, based on an Ernest Hemingway story. The project elevated both men from relative obscurity to recognition and began a close and trusted friendship that lasted until Newmans death in 2008.In Paul and Me, Hotchner depicts a complicated, unpredictable, fun-loving, talented man, and takes the reader along on their adventures. The pair traveled extensively, skippered a succession of bizarre boats, confounded the business world, scored triumphs on the stage, and sustained their friendship

through good times and bad. Most notably, they started Newmans Own as a prank and watched it morph into a major enterprise that so far has donatedall its $300 million in profit to charities including the Hole in the Wall Camps worldwide, dedicated to helping thousands of children with life-threatening illnesses. Paul and Me, complete with personal photographs, is the story of a freewheeling friendship and a tribute to the acclaimed actor who gave to the world as much as the world gave him.From the Hardcover edition.ExtraitUp FrontPaul Newman was an unadorned man. He was direct and honest and off-center and mischievous and romantic and very handsome.All of these attributes became the generating force behind him. He was the same man in 2008 that he was in 1955, unchanged despite all the honors and the fame, not a whisper of a change. That was something--the constancy of the man.In these bleak times that feature men whose greed and selfishness have been so disillusioning and ruinous to their fellow citizens, Paul's concern for those less fortunate and his altruistic mien were important antidotes.He was a complicated, unpredictable, talented man who certainly gave back to the world as much as the world gave to him.Paul Newman and I first met in 1955 in a funeral parlor on La Cienega Boulevard in Hollywood. There were sample coffins in the anteroom, but the large viewing room beyond had been stripped of its funereal paraphernalia and instead outfitted for the rehearsal of The Battler, a television drama I had written based on a Hemingway short story. It was my first television play and, as it turned out, it became a fortuitous launching pad for Paul's career as well as my own. We were in this mortuary because NBC had run out of rehearsal space, and this bizarre spot was the best they could do.Both Paul and I were at the start of our respective careers and each of us had come to a halt. Paul had been brought up in Shaker Heights, an affluent suburb of Cleveland. He had been in a dozen or so plays at Kenyon College, and after graduation he had performed in summer stock--once playing the gentleman caller in Tennessee Williams's The Glass Menagerie. He later enrolled in Yale University School of Drama, where in Shaw's Saint Joan he was required to weep onstage. As Paul told me years later, "The muscles contracted in my stomach, and immediately I tried to figure out some way to play the whole thing facing upstage. And then I thought, What an ass. I drag my family--I had married an actress I had met when I was in Woodstock summer theater and had a son with her--with only nine hundred dollars in the bank, all the way to Connecticut, and then think of all the ways I can cop out. At the time I was living in a boardinghouse, and I took that script downstairs to the boiler room and I said, Okay buddy, you are going to sit here until you find out where it is going to come from or you get out of this business right now. I did the part and my tears arrived on cue."After Yale he was accepted by the Actors Studio. Marlon Brando and James Dean were in his session, and they were given the leads in most of the scenes that were performed. Paul admitted he did not have the aggression that one needs to get noticed and also was terrible at sight-reading a new script. He and Dean performed together in a screen test for a part in East of Eden, and Dean got the part.Paul picked up small parts in TV dramas that were being filmed in New York, and he landed a small part in Picnic on Broadway and was also the understudy to Ralph Meeker, who played the lead. Later in the run, when Meeker went on vacation, Newman asked the director, Josh Logan, if he could take Meeker's role when the play went on the road. But Logan told him no; he didn't think Paul carried enough "sexual threat."As for me, I had come from the rough streets of Depression-era St. Louis, and had made my way through Washington University Law School and the air force. Rejecting the banality of lawyering, I had opted for freelance writing and was attempting to liberate myself from the dead end of magazine work. Years before, in 1948, I had visited Ernest Hemingway at his finca in Cuba to edit his novel Across the River and into the Trees for magazine serialization. At that time Hemingway was being pursued by television producers. "Hordes from the north," he said. "They sweep down like Huns with their deals and residuals." He felt "under siege" and, because I was from New York and he assumed I understood that world, he asked me if I would be willing to screen the "dross from the brass." I told him I would do what I could, but that I had never written for television and knew nothing about it. "That puts you a jump ahead of all those network geniuses who think they do," he replied.This eventually led to my converting Hemingway's brief story "The Battler" into a television play. Fred Coe, the veteran producer, had cast an actor named Paul Newman to play a supporting role. Paul had recently appeared on Broadway as one of the hoods in The Desperate Hours and had acted in one film, The Silver Chalice, which had been a fiasco. When Coe asked him about The Silver Chalice, Paul blamed his agent, who had told him, "They've been knocking and knocking on your door, offering you scripts, but at some point they're just going to stop. And the trick is to answer the last knock before they quit." So when this awful script arrived, his agent said, "This may be the last knock," so Paul accepted. He said it "was without a doubt, the worst film made in the entire decade of the fifties."The role Paul was to play in The Battler was that of Nick Adams, a teenager who runs away from

home and encounters an addle-brained, psychopathic former boxing champ at a campsite alongside a railroad track. Although Paul was thirty-one years old, he had a youthfulness that allowed him to play much younger.No sooner had the set builders and costume designers started work on The Battler than we got the tragic news that James Dean, who was to play Ad Francis, the battler, had died in an accident involving his souped-up sports car. Now, with rehearsals imminent, we were without a leading actor in this long and difficult part that called for a punch-drunk, dangerously unbalanced, suspicious ex-pug who was once welterweight champion of the world, a part that moved back in time, depicting the boxer in his prime. After a frantic search for a star to replace Dean on such short notice, Coe reluctantly turned to Paul, lamenting having to go with a relatively unknown actor in the demanding lead role.The following day Coe, the director, Arthur Penn, and I met with Paul in Coe's office to tell him he was being recast. Paul was reluctant, not only about replacing his friend James Dean ("I don't want to take advantage of anyone else's misfortune") but because he was not sure he could handle the part. Coe and Penn spent the next half hour trying to convince Paul that the role was less demanding than he thought, but he remained hesitant. He said he wanted to reread the script and think about it. This was a depressing unraveling of what had promised to be a play that would open a fresh career for me. The role that Paul was tentatively rejecting was, in my judgment, a great opportunity for an actor to make a name for himself. In a way, I admired Paul for his reticence, but I knew that if he rejected the part, the show would have to be canceled. And so would my hope of escaping from the confinement of magazine writing.In the elevator after leaving Coe's office, I told Paul that I sympathized with his reluctance and suggested we talk about it."Sure," he said, "let's have a beer."We settled into a booth at a nearby bar and grill and ordered Budweisers. "I know how you feel," I said. "When I was faced with having to turn Hemingway's short story into a full-length drama, my first try at playwriting, I didn't think it was possible. At least you bring some acting experience to the table.""Yeah," he said, "but that's not saying much. Maybe I'm fooling myself. Maybe I need a new line of work. I guess it's too late to be a dentist."I liked him. I was touched by his honesty. At that moment, apart from my desire to get the play performed, I truly felt he would have the perseverance to master the role. "Listen," I said, "we're both trying to get up and out. You from secondary, meaningless television roles. Me from magazines, like the "This Week" Sunday newspaper inserts and an occasional Saturday Evening Post article. I have a couple of kids, so do you, so we don't have a lot of loose time lying around. We could play it safe but we'd never make it. I believe in the dictum of that great philosopher, Babe Ruth, who said, 'Never let the fear of striking out get in your way.' " By that time I was ready for a Scotch and Newman decided to join me. He flagged the waitress. "Two Glenlivets and a couple of burgers, medium rare, okay?""Any way you want it, sweetheart," the waitress said.When the waitress returned with the drinks, I asked her, "Do you think he's a sexual threat?""You betcha!" she said, and beamed at him.I raised my glass. "Here's to the battler," I said.He raised his. "Here's to Babe Ruth," he said.During the beginning of rehearsals, Paul was out of sync, floundering, trying to discover something in himself that related to the character he was playing. In the story, this is how Hemingway had described the character: "His nose was sunken, his eyes were slits, he had queer-shaped lips . . . the man's face was queerly formed and mutilated. It was like putty in color . . . He had only one ear. It was thickened and tight against the side of his head. Where the other ear should have been, there was a stump."I felt sorry for Paul because he had been talked into a part that he knew he wasn't suited for. Makeup could create the face, but he had to find some way to identify with this pathetic character who was totally foreign to him. Paul was hurting badly.One day, after rehearsal ended and I was leaving through the casket room, a voice from one of the caskets called out, "Hotch!" I levitated and when I returned to terra firma I cautiously approached the casket. Paul was laid out, his arms folded across his chest. "Batten down the lid," he said. "I'm checking out."I helped him out of the casket and we went to the bar and grill for a couple of beers. We didn't mention the play or the elusive battler who was bedeviling him. He simply wanted to take his mind off of the frustration of that day's rehearsal. The casket gambit was the kind of Newmanesque distraction that would take place numerous times over the coming years.But one morning, as he started to rehearse a pivotal scene at the campsite, the slurred, halting speech, the stiff-legged shuffle, the jerks and twitches of a stumblebum prizefighter suddenly emerged. This accomplishment was not an accident. Paul had started to hang out at the YMCA, a run-down building in downtown Los Angeles next to the grubby gym where local boxers worked out. He had found a punch-drunk welterweight named Bobby Wilcox with whom he had become friends, and now Paul was slowly assuming the old pug's persona. It was a thrilling metamorphosis.During our lunch break, it was customary for us to go to our diner where we sat in a booth and discussed the morning's work. Most of the time, a lovely young actress named Joanne Woodward came

to join us. She had been in Picnic with Paul, and it was obvious that they were very much in love. They were a beautiful couple and they certainly illuminated the booth. Paul was still married, but it was apparent that in due time his entente with Joanne would replace the marriage.By the time The Battler aired and was pictorially covered in Life magazine, Paul and I had become friends. MGM had been trying to cast Rocky Graziano's autobiography, Somebody Up There Likes Me, an account of his brutal life as welterweight champion. On the basis of his performance in The Battler, Paul was offered the part. For the second time, ironically, it was a part that had been intended for James Dean.Paul called to tell me the good news and we had a congratulatory evening to celebrate both his good fortune and mine, for I had just signed a contract to write a play for Playhouse 90. In the course of that evening at The Brown Derby, Paul and I indulged in the irreverent, politically liberal, scatological, rebellious, ambitious, and irresponsible prejudices, ideas, and dreams that we shared.As the night ended and we went our separate tipsy ways, we had solidified a comradery that was destined to keep us as closely bonded friends for the next fifty years.I visited Paul on the set of Somebody Up There Likes Me, and I was fascinated with how he was, in a way, building on the fighter he had become for The Battler. We had a late dinner that night, and I asked Paul if he was consciously bonding the two roles."No, not that I expressly link them or even think that way, but certainly what residue there is from me as the battler seeps into me as Rocky. There sure as hell is no seepage from The Silver Chalice."We both laughed."It's funny now," Paul said, "but after that debacle I really thought I'd never be in another movie, honestly. My confidence was shot and an actor without confidence is like a canoe up a creek without a paddle. I was grateful I was able to get that part on Broadway in The Desperate Hours. Tell you the truth, I thought that would be the only way for me--Broadway stuff.""What was it about The Silver Chalice that was so terrible?""Everything. Every damn thing. It was a biblical costume epic in which I played a Greek slave named Basil and wore what looked like a cocktail gown that accented my skinny legs. I was paid a thousand dollars a week and it was the most painful money I ever earned. This sculptor had been commissioned to sculpt the face of Christ, who back in those Roman times was an unknown. Basil kept trying to envision this face and he kept working and working at it, and then all of a sudden, the bells went off, trumpets sounded, soaring violins and all that, and Basil sees a vision of Christ. In rehearsal the director said, 'So you see it, and then you go, Aha!' I said, 'Victor, if this guy really saw a vision of Christ, you'd think he would hallucinate, or faint, or do something like that. But to have this powerful vision and say, Oh boy, there's the new model of the Edsel and I'd better get to work on it . . .' That movie added luster and dimension to the word 'awful.' Virginia Mayo and Jack Palance were in it, and a couple of camels. I had to ride one of the camels. The gait of a camel is very uneven--just try to hit a camera mark on a camel. We were in terrible disarray. My first movie, and the review in The New Yorker was: 'As the Greek sculptor, Paul Newman, who resembles Marlon Brando, delivers his lines with the emotional fervor of a Putnam Division conductor announcing local stops.' Small wonder, when I had lines like: 'Helena, is it really you? What a joy!' Needless to say, I never got another call from Hollywood. And I wouldn't have gotten this call except for Jimmy's bad luck.""Not really, Paul. Your performance as Ad Francis in The Battler is what did it. Jimmy's bad luck is what gave you the opening, but you made your own good luck.""Yeah, well, maybe somebody up there really does like me."From the Hardcover edition.Revue de presse"Atribute to Newmans fun-loving spirit and fiscal generosity . . . . Theres not a self-righteous moment in Mr. Hotchners jokey, anecdotal account of their camaraderie . . . . They clearly shared a lot of good times over Budweisers and burgers, and Mr. Hotchner has the quotes and photos to prove it all . . . . The fun they had is unmistakable in these pages.The New York Times"Hotchner's portrait of his pal is breezy and heartfelt. He obviously adored him. And reading his anecdotes of their high jinks together, it's easy to see why . . . . The actor's last words to him perfectly sum up their times together: 'It's been a hell of a ride.'"Entertainment Weekly