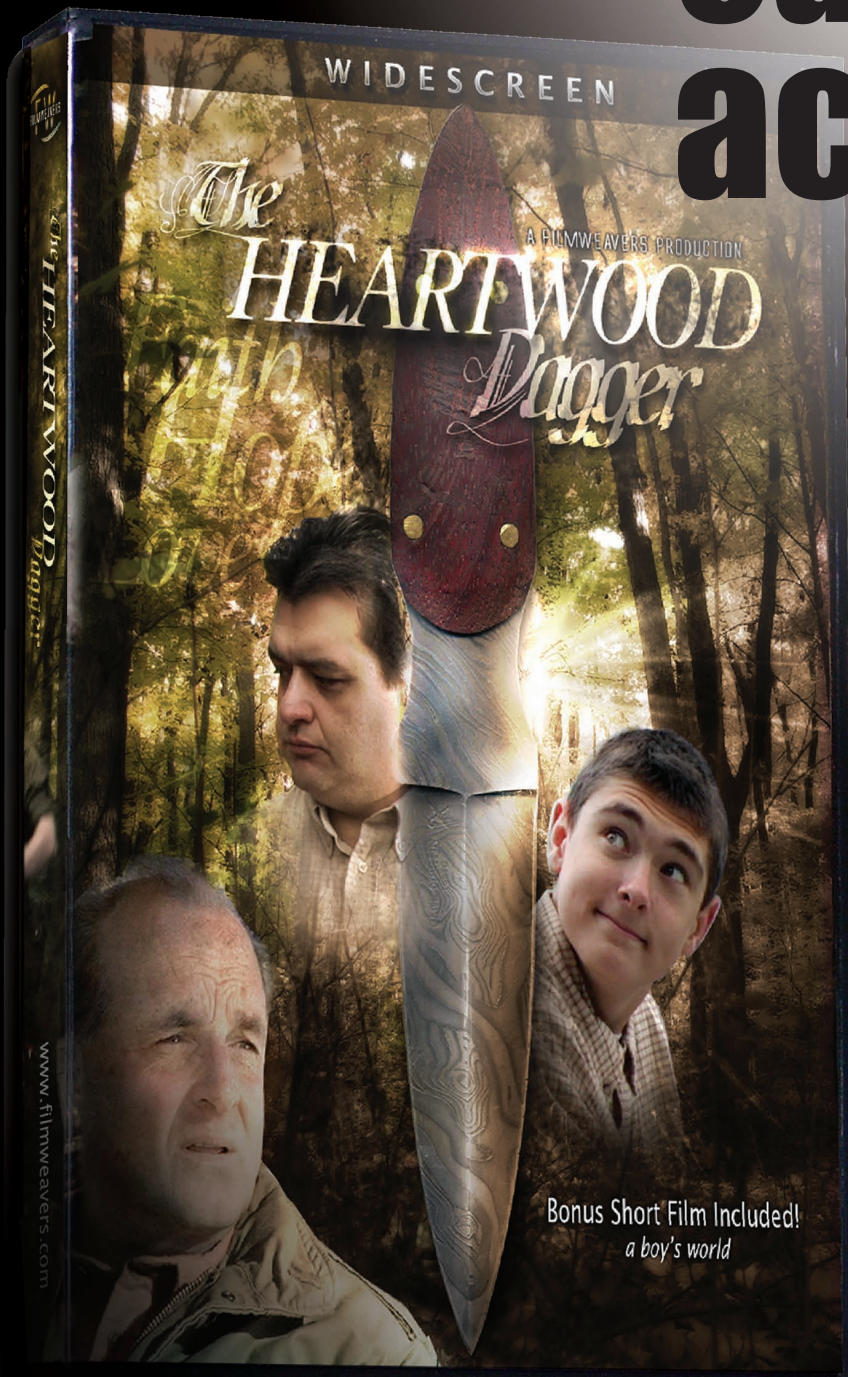


'Lights, camera, action ...'

Photos courtesy of Filmweavers

In addition to his accomplishments in CAP, this volunteer is making a name for himself on the big screen

By Kristi Carr



"The Heartwood Dagger" is now available on DVD. Go to www.filmweavers.com.

Be prepared for a long answer if you ask Lt. Col. Dan Bell what he does in his spare time. While he has a day job as district sales manager for the Vollrath Co. LLC of Sheboygan, Wis., helping clients with the design of original equipment manufacturer parts fabricated of stainless steel, carbon steel or aluminum, it's a wonder he has any time to devote to his many avocations. For CAP's Wisconsin Wing, his title is director of homeland security. As a nationally registered first responder, he also is an emergency medical technician. Then there's his position as wildland firefighter for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as an adjunct professor of business at Marian University of Fond Du Lac, Wis.

So perhaps it should come as no surprise that he plays yet another part — actor.

How CAP Helped Land A Role

Acting in a high school production of "Oklahoma!" introduced Bell to the theater. Later as an adult, he continued performing, even directing, in community theaters, including helping found the Marais Players in his hometown of Mayville, Wis. Meanwhile, his EMT and firefighter training became his entrée into CAP, which he joined in 1979. But it wasn't until 2001, back home in Wisconsin, that he found a unique way to take acting and CAP full circle.

It was then he saw an announcement that a Chicago and Los

Angeles film company was looking for local actors for a production being filmed in Fond du Lac, north of Mayville. He'd never acted before a camera lens, but he nevertheless whipped up a biography to send off to the film company. In it, he mentioned he was a lieutenant colonel in CAP. It so happened one of the supporting roles the company was looking to fill was for a military officer. Bell showed up for his audition dressed in his CAP uniform, got the part and thereby launched his film career.

What The Critics Say

Since then, he's had a steady stream of film roles — more than 20 — and several have been of a military nature.

In the 2004 production of "The Last Bridge Home," from the independent film company My Town Pictures, Bell played a Vietnam veteran returning home. That performance netted a Telly Award for Excellence, recognition given annually to the best in television, Web and film programs, segments and commercials.

More recently, Bell portrayed another Vietnam veteran in "The Heartwood Dagger," a 2006 film produced by Filmweavers, an independent Christian film company. The story centers around Bell's character, who failed to pass on a treasured family dagger to his son. "The Heartwood Dagger" was a finalist in two categories at the 2006 San Antonio Christian Independent Film Festival. It aired on national television in 2008.

"Dan's been a real blessing to the production," said "Heartwood" director Dustin Ledden. "He's gone out of his way to get us resources that wouldn't have been available otherwise. He's a very precise actor and he brings a unique presence to the screen."



Waiting for Naomi Webster of the "Heartwood" production crew to snap the clapperboard, Civil Air Patrol Lt. Col. Dan Bell, right, gets ready for a scene with Aaron Ledden, who plays Bell's grandson. Filming was in upstate New York as well as Wisconsin.



About love, compassion and patriotism, “The Last Bridge Home” won a Telly Award for Excellence in 2004. Besides his film acknowledgements, Lt. Col. Dan Bell has received several Civil Air Patrol awards, including two Exceptional Service awards, four Meritorious Service awards, five Commander’s Commendations and a Life Saving award.

How CAP, Acting Are Alike

Though seemingly diverse, Bell’s extracurricular activities have a common thread: All are team pursuits.

“Sure,” noted Bell, “in a film or onstage, you have a lead — a star — but you would be nothing without all the people supporting that production and making you look good.” The same holds true of CAP, he said. “A CAP mission wouldn’t be successful without team support.”

What’s Next?

To date, he’s not been paid for his film work, but that could change. He’s just gotten wind of a

Universal Studios production, “Public Enemies,” about the gangster John Dillinger. With Johnny Depp as Dillinger, the film needs local extras for scenes to be shot in nearby Beaver Dam, Wis. Bell’s bio is in the mail.

In May 2008, Bell had a small role in the Hollywood Production “Nobody,” which was filmed in Minneapolis. The movie was directed by Rod Perez and co-starred Josh Hartnett (“Pearl Harbor”).

Bell is currently costarring in the new Filmweavers production of “The Penny,” which will be introduced to the public later this year and entered in numerous film festivals throughout the United States and Canada. ▲