

WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS

To the *Bag*:

In your most recent volume, saloonkeeper Rick Blaine is cited for this wistful comment to Ilsa, spoken with affection as he sets her off on the journey to Lisbon with Victor Laszlo.² As a journal dedicated to great writing, the *Green Bag* should have also credited the writers of that evocative line.³

Turns out that there is a backstory of interest to lawyers.

The screenplay for *Casablanca* is credited to the Epstein brothers, Julius and Philip, and Howard Koch. The trio shared the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay in 1943.⁴

I went back to see if the Paris line was in the source material. The movie script was based on an unproduced play called *Everybody Comes to Rick's*, written by Joan Alison and Murray Burnett.⁵ Although much of the action in the movie also takes place in the play – yes, including the defiant singing of “La Marseillaise” by French patrons and the pivotal role of the song “As Time Goes By” – the play does *not* include the line “We’ll always have Paris.”

The closest line in the play is in Act III. In a scene not depicted in the movie, Rick and Lois Meredith⁶ and Police Prefect Luis Rinaldo⁷ are waiting in the closed bar for Victor to come to Rick’s to be arrested picking up the letters of transit:

² 19 GREEN BAG 2D 82 (2015).

³ The line has been designated as Number 43 on the American Film Institute’s list of 100 greatest movie lines. www.afi.com/100years/quotes.aspx. Five other lines from the movie made that list: “Here’s looking at you, kid.” (#5); “Louie, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.” (#20); “Play it, Sam. Play ‘As Time Goes by.’” (#28); “Round up the usual suspects.” (#32); and “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine.” (#67).

⁴ Longtime Warner Brothers scriptwriter Kenneth Casey Robinson has also been cited as having contributed to some of the rewrites but his work was uncredited.

⁵ Manuscript copy found at www.pages.drexel.edu/~ina22/splaylib/Screenplay-Everybody_Comes_to_Rick's.pdf.

⁶ Ilsa Lund in the film. Have to account for Ingrid Bergman’s accent after all.

⁷ Capt. Louis Renault in the film. Claude Rains’ accent was pretty strong too you know.

To the Bag

Rick: (pouring out some champagne) A votre sante.

Lois: Not champagne, darling. Brandy.

Rinaldo: (also raising a glass) Shall we drink to love again?

Lois: (quietly) No. Let's drink to France.

Rinaldo: With all my heart.

Lois: (turning to Rick) To France, and to Paris . . . as we knew it.

(They drink).

(I do not count Rick's line in Act II, scene 1 – "I'm still just as nuts about you as I was in Paris" – as being in the same league as "We'll always have Paris.")

In reviewing the source play, I came upon two matters of interest to lawyers. First, Rick Blaine is a lawyer. There is no mention of this in the film, just that Rick was a champion of lost causes. But early in the play, Rick's "dossier" is reviewed by Prefect of Police Rinaldo:

Ah, here you are. Richard Blaine. American. Age – here I shall be discreet. Formerly a prominent and successful attorney in Paris

Act II of the play presents this angle:

Lois: So, Richard Blaine of Paris, criminal lawyer, champion of lost causes, becomes M. Rick, dispenser of entertainment for Casablanca.

Rick: There isn't much difference. You meet quite a lot of nasty people in both professions.

No word about how Rick Blaine, American, came to hang his shingle in Paris in the 1930s.⁸ But his negotiation skills and his care to stay on this side of the law in the movie may now be better explained (at least until he kills Major Strasser). Anyway, makes you feel better that that noble character on screen started out as a lawyer.

Second, while there were and are exit visas in real life, the letters of transit that animate the play and the movie were a creation of the playwrights. In Act I, Monsieur Ugarto (Peter Lorre's Ugarte in the film) de-

⁸ Early adopter of multijurisdictional practice I guess.

To the Bag

scribes them as “letters of transit signed by Marshall Weygand. They cannot be rescinded or questioned.”⁹ Alas, letters of transit did not exist, although the idea of a no-questions-asked ability to move from country to country remains a topical one today!¹⁰

While the creation of these lines may not amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world, I knew that the editors at the *Green Bag* would be among the usual suspects eager to learn more.

Paul J. Kiernan
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TWISTS AND TURNS

To the *Bag*:

Thank you for Ted White’s article, *The Lost Episode of Gong Lum v. Rice*, published in the Winter 2015 *Green Bag*. The story of the Chinese in Mississippi has many twists and turns which are ably described by Professor White’s article and the sources he cites.

As it happens, subsequent events proved more favorable to the Chinese here than the 1927 decision in *Gong Lum*. My friend Harriet Causey DeCell Kuykendall, now in her ninth decade, grew up in Cleveland, Mississippi, the county seat of Bolivar County where Gong Lum lived. She recalls that after the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1933 a Baptist missionary to China returned to Cleveland and brought his Chinese congregation with him. He became pastor at the First Baptist Church. The church built a school for the Chinese children. They were not allowed to attend the white public schools but, when they got older, were allowed to attend a nearby white junior college.

Harriet remembers her father, president of the Cleveland school board, talking about the inconvenience this caused the families. At some point in the late 1940s it was decided to allow the Chinese students to attend the white public high school. One became a star basketball player and another,

⁹ Maxime Weygand (1867-1965) was a career military man who served in the Vichy government.

¹⁰ For an intriguing discussion of the letters of transit and their real-life counterparts (visas, safe-passage documents and the like), enjoy the podcast from University of Washington Professor Joe James at faculty.washington.edu/jwj/doc/transit.mp3.