

# Movie Collector's World

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## Remembering ED McMAHON & 'DAUGHTER OF HORROR'



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## Dr V. Profiles Dealer/Collector **DWIGHT CLEVELAND**





# How To Collect A Monster...

## Meet the Dealer #2:

# DWIGHT CLEVELAND

by Freddie Poe (aka Dr. Vollin, MD)



*I am glad to be back (and so soon) with another round of "Meet The Dealer" This months featured dealer is veteran collector/dealer Dwight Cleveland of Chicago, Illinois. Dwight has been advertising in MCW as far back as I can remember and I can remember far back but I can't remember yesterday.*

*I can't tell you a whole lot about Dwight except that I sold him some posters and of course it was a swift, no nonsense transaction on both ends. Dwight's poster site can be found online at [www.movieposterbiz.com](http://www.movieposterbiz.com).*

*Now it's time for Dwight to enlighten us with his views on our beloved hobby. Drum-roll please!*

**DR V: First, Please give us a brief bio of your youth; where you grew up and your interests.**

**DC:** I was born in 1959 in Bronxville, NY a leafy suburb of New York City.

My parents moved to Minneapolis (my mom's hometown) in 1972. I went to high school in N. Andover, MA and then to Columbia College, graduating in 1982. Between these, I interned in Los

Angeles for a U.S. Senator. I worked for Cushman & Wakefield as a commercial real estate broker in mid-town Manhattan for three years and then went to the University of Chicago for my MBA. After graduating in 1987, I started my own real estate development firm, specializing in renovating historically significant structures in Chicago.

**DR. V: How long have you been active in this hobby?**

**DC:** My art teacher in high school was one of the great early collectors of film posters. We all kind of made fun of his weird eccentric hobby until one day he returned from a buying expedition with

several lobby cards circa 1926/7. I was particularly smitten by a scene card from WOLF'S SONG starring Lupe Velez and Gary Cooper. At the time, no one really sold film posters. There were only a few serious dealers like Todd Feirtag and Jack Banning (who both distributed semi-regular catalogs).

While living in Los Angeles after graduation, I frequented the shops on and off Hollywood Blvd. searching for tradable material to swap for the WOLF'S SONG. It was finally a CAMILLE scene card I purchased from Mike Hawks that allowed this first trade to take place. It was in 1977.

**DR. V: Who were your major influences as a collector?**

**DC:** That art teacher gave me a royal christening to the hobby; needless-to-say it was not a trade I'd make today; but the good news is that I secured that first great piece, which I still treasure as much now as I did then. In all the years since, I've only seen that same card on one other occasion. My teacher did counsel me to collect on just what appealed to me, to my mind's eye. If you have read Malcolm Gladwell's recent book *BLINK* you will know what it means to know instantly about something. The advice to collect only the posters one loves instantly is a great guiding light; it makes collecting less agonizing and more fulfilling with each acquisition. No matter what happens with the market, moving up down or sideways, if you own what you love, then what does it matter? It doesn't.

**DR. V: How did you get started as a collector and then a dealer?**

Anyone who is a serious collector eventually winds up having to purchase collections, which contain only a fraction of items which are truly of interest. The real test is how to expeditiously unload all that unwanted excess. It is the part of collecting that is least appealing to me. I miss the big trades, which formerly dominated our hobby. They could be all-night coast-to-coast marathons or weeks of negotiating adding more fodder along the way and tweaking a deal here or there with a well-placed bonus poster or a few hundred dollars. That was before the price guides and big money took over. It was just paper for paper and we all had slight differences in how we valued individual posters. If you had a duplicate or maybe the title card and a portrait card, it was easier to justify coughing one up in trade.

**DR. V: What is your personal favorite genre(s) and poster(s)?**

**DC:** There are about 50 posters that occupy my top ten favorites, it's just so impossible to narrow it down (remember that I love almost everything I've ever purchased). One can never favor one child over another. Most poster collectors first loved the films and then started acquiring posters to their favorite ones. I started loving the graphics and then learned to love films. My bias is therefore towards bold graphics and striking colors. Some of my favorite posters are from obscure films, with no memorable stars that none of us will ever see. I'm also a lobby card completist for a few male stars and several female stars of the 1930's.

**DR. V: What material, if any, have you retained for your personal collection?**

**DC:** About two years ago, one of my children was lost in my office without food or water for a week, and I knew it was finally time to re-evaluate. But seriously, one couldn't walk through there without tripping over stacks and stacks of posters. My poster holdings had

grown so large it was really a burden. This archive is really bigger than me at this point. It has a great story to tell and should really be available for public research and enjoyment.

So, for over a year, I've been cataloging everything on a new website, [dwightclevelandposterarchive.com](http://dwightclevelandposterarchive.com). The goal is to find someone who can take this collection to the next level. There are reproduction possibilities, road show circuits, lecture series, hob-knobbing with the stars, museum shows, a graphics arts library, programs with film schools: the possibilities are endless. Someone with a lot of creativity (and money) could create a worldwide sensation. The archive has over 13,000 individual pieces from 40 different countries. There is something from every Academy Award winner, every American Film Institute Top-100 and Internet Movie Database Top-100, plus a ton of just great looking film posters each hand-picked by me.

**DR. V: Everybody has one, so I have to ask – what was your biggest find ever as a collector/dealer?**

**DC:** For me, what the French call "la chasse," the hunt as it were, is the real appeal. There are few things more fun than getting up at 3AM, taking a public bus for a few hours and arriving at a flea market and then paying the extra fee to get in early, before the public.

After 32 years of collecting movie posters, many of my fondest memories are from the hunt itself, rather than the feast that follows. That being said, I have been fortunate enough for Lady Luck to bestow upon me many, many great finds.

There has, of course, been the Three Oaks, MI window card find and the Des Moines, IA Mickey Mouse 1-sheets which were both memorialized on *HUNT FOR AMAZING TREASURE* on national TV. There was also the Neva Schermerhorn 1920's 1-sheet find, which was my first real haul: 35 near mint 1-sheets in 1978. The Russian ballet dancer with the 1000 Polish posters. The chance purchase of a round trip ticket to Tokyo which begat several trips to the Orient and ultimately some great poster finds. The early days of Fed-Ex'd issues of *Film Collector's World* (the predecessor to MCW); do I start at the beginning and work back or start at the back and work forward?

The Frankenstein lobby card set that just arrived in the mail one day. Bruce's early Christies auctions the first week-end in December; the John Kobal sale in London. The Schyler, NE farm sale. The guy I met at Logan airport who had the load of 1930's lobby cards. In 1985, before starting my MBA degree, however, I circumnavigated the globe for nine months occupying myself with scuba diving and fly-fishing in the world's premier destinations...and hunting for the ever-elusive vintage film poster.

I returned home with tons of great stuff, most notably some great Italian posters. The biggest lesson learned

however was how fabulous foreign posters are in our hobby. There-to-for, I was hypnotized by the mantra which inhibits most local collectors that U.S. 1-sheets were the end-all-be-all of our hobby. Being exposed to all these great unfamiliar designs awakened me to how the grass really can be greener on the other side. Now I value foreign posters as much as I do many domestic ones; that philosophy change has been my greatest awakening.

**DR. V: Would you care to share your biggest single sale of a poster?**

**DC:** My movie angel is going to swoop down and buy my archive, maybe add a few gems here and there and donate it their name to one of the prominent film schools.

**DR. V:** What's your take on the trending of the hobby; and how what effects does the economy have on poster collecting? Any type of collecting is non-essential buying. Our survival does not depend on one more movie poster (Can you believe I just said that?). Since everyone has been hit in some way by the current economic depression, everyone has been hit with the prospect of fewer acquisitions; I know I have.

There is no better time than right now to purchase anything. In my day job, I had to recently lower the price on one of my spec homes by 30% just to get it sold. This type of price reduction has been necessary in most industries over the past year just to keep one's head above water. And it may continue for another year or two, at the least. So the folks who have some spare cash are in a great position to buy if they know what to buy and where to find it.

**DR. V: What do you say to those who say your prices are too high?**

**DC:** We still live in a free society and you are free to buy what you want, when you want it from whomever you desire.

**DR. V: What do you say to those who think Ebay is dead?**

**DC:** eBay has been one of the absolute greatest things for anyone in the collectibles market (especially for collectors of graphic items like posters where the image sells it). I spent years scouring the flea markets of the world, at great expense in time and money. On eBay a collector is always just a few clicks away from buying posters on the other side of the globe. How great is that. Of course it is easier said for those who already own tons of stuff. But, for those who don't, and are afraid of the competition, trust me, it is still much cheaper having the opportunity to buy at your fingertips 24/7.

**DR. V: What are your policies toward your customer relations?**

**DC:** There are some people I'm sure I've disappointed over the years, but I always do my best. Remember that this is not my livelihood, but really an obses-



*Dwight Cleveland and MCW publisher Brian Bukantis in the mid-1990s. One of these two has really aged well! (Hint - initials are DC)*

sive hobby. We all have our idiosyncracies (there is a mind-numbing spread between the extremes which define the typical movie poster collector), but the bond we all have is a love for this crazy rare old paper. Some collectors let the personalities get in the way; I've always tried to avoid the gossip and focus on the posters.

**MEANWHILE BACK AT THE HOUSE OF POE:** As I write this we are a few days away from Halloween. I wish you all the happiness and excitement that the Holiday season brings!

Unfortunately, my Patricia Neal interview fell through. I never heard back from her people on finalizing the interview date.

But here's one better.

A couple weeks ago, I received in the mail, an invitation for two to Carla Laemmle's 100th birthday party, a gala event to be held at the Egyptian Theater on Hollywood Blvd. in sunny California.

I showed the invite to my girlfriend Jayme and said "Too bad we can't go"

Her reply was "Why can't we?"

"You know damn well why." I said. "I'm not getting on a plane. Especially a six hour flight on my maiden voyage!"

"You can't turn down the opportunity of a lifetime. Not just anyone gets invited."

In fact, invited, were the likes of Ray Bradbury, Gloria Stuart, Lupita Tovar, Arnold Schwarzenegger, George and Laura Bush, Bela Lugosi Jr., Ron Chaney, Sara Karloff, Rick Baker, historians Scott MacQueen and David Skal, collector extraordinaire Ron Borst and many more.

She was right. How in God's name did I fit in with such a distinguished lineup? I would be a fool not to go. Even if it was to be as an unnoticed observer?

So. Even though I had never been on a plane in my fifty-three years of balls to the walls living, I sucked it up and said "Book the flight. I'll get on the goddam plane!!"

Jayme and I were on our way to Carla Laemmle's 100th Birthday Party at the Egyptian Theater. Hollywood!

**TO BE CONTINUED:**