

Hepburn treats 'em to a rare Hollywood view from the office

By DAN BREEN

The women in Staten Island Developmental Center's word processing department had something more to occupy them yesterday than their keyboards.

Looking out the window, they watched the most famous and most honored actress in movie history at work.

"It's overwhelming," said Gerry Hacker, as Katharine Hepburn joined co-star Nick Nolte in the front seat of a late-model Buick.

The two — a frail, small Hepburn and a gruff-looking, husky Nolte — were filming scenes for "The Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley" at the Willowbrook institution.

A crew of about 100 cameramen, soundmen, make-up artists, security personnel armed with radios, and others were on hand, as was an ever-changing audience of center employees and residents.

According to the word processor operators — who got their information from one of the drivers of the company's trucks — in the film, crusader Hepburn hires

professional killer Nolte for some sort of protest against maltreatment of the aged.

The developmental center is

used for scenes in which Hepburn tries to prove to Nolte that the elderly are abused, they added.

One scene in the film, which is being directed by Englishman Anthony Harvey, was shot on the third floor of Building 2, now shut down, but once a medical-surgical building.

Some employees of the center gathered in the hallway and applauded as Hepburn emerged

from a makeshift dressing room. Gerry Hacker said the actress smiled and turned back, saying "I forgot my shoes."

"Most of the day she was wearing sneakers!" Hacker added, something that impressed the word processing crew.

Hepburn's dressing room was originally supposed to be in the administration building, where the word processing department is located.

"But when she came in, she said it was too hot," said Marie Orcuilo. So the dressing room screens and lighted mirror were set up under a cluster of tall trees behind the building, where most of the outside scenes, including the one in the Buick, were shot.

The word processors expressed mixed opinions about Nolte, who is probably best known for his portrayal of the slovenly brother in television's "Rich Man, Poor Man" miniseries, and as co-star next to Eddie Murphy in "48 Hrs."

"He's the homeliest thing I've ever seen," said one woman, while another disagreed. "I like him," she said.

But everyone loved Hepburn. "She's so gracious," said Orcuilo.

"She's got a lot of class," Joan Donovan said.

At lunch, the four-time "best actress" winner ate behind her screens very quickly. Orcuilo said and then she got down on the ground and stretched out.

"She stayed like that for about 20 minutes," said Hacker. "She looked so peaceful, all alone there. You almost wanted to go up and talk to her, but no one would dare."

Hepburn's shyness from the public and press is well-known, and yesterday was no exception.

"One of the guys in the crew told me to put my camera away," Hacker said. "If Katharine saw it, he said, she would rip it right out of my hand."

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The actress did get upset when a photographer was spotted. Crew members asked him to leave the grounds.

A center employee asked her for an autograph, one of the word processor operators said. "But she told him that if she gave out one, she would have to do 2,000, so she doesn't give out autographs."

Both stars were pale-faced with make-up, but otherwise, Hepburn, her gray hair in a full bun and clothed in a white hospital coat, looked much the same as she did in her Oscar-winning role in "On Golden Pond."

"Somebody told her 'Katharine, you look beautiful,'" said Joan Donovan. "She got so excited and said 'Thank you.'"

Employees at the center said they learned to appreciate the hard work that goes into making a film. The scene in the Buick, for example, took at least 2½ hours to shoot in the late afternoon and was shot at least five times, with different camera angles and lighting.

"But I'd do it for the money they get," added one employee.

The word processing department learned last week that there would be filming on the grounds. But the actual arrangements were made more than a month ago.

Thomas Zielinski, the center's deputy director, said someone in the crew was familiar with the center. "It has the right period, the right motif for what they wanted," he said.

"They came and asked, and we said it was OK," Zielinski said. "They only asked us to turn off the air conditioning in the administration building, which we did anyway because it's cooler."

The fact that a movie company and a star such as Katharine Hepburn came to Willowbrook to shoot a scene reflects well on the center's environment and on its clients, he added.

"This can do a lot to educate the community about the people who live here," Zielinski said.

The filming did not interfere with normal operations at the

center, because the shooting was not on a main thoroughfare, Zielinski said.

"Besides, it's just a big thrill to see her," he said, admitting that he took "just a moment to peek out."

As for tomorrow, the word pro-

cessing department's source in the film crew said shooting was to continue on Staten Island at the Sea View Hospital and Home grounds.

But for the word processor operators themselves — "It's back to boredom," Marie Orcuilo said.

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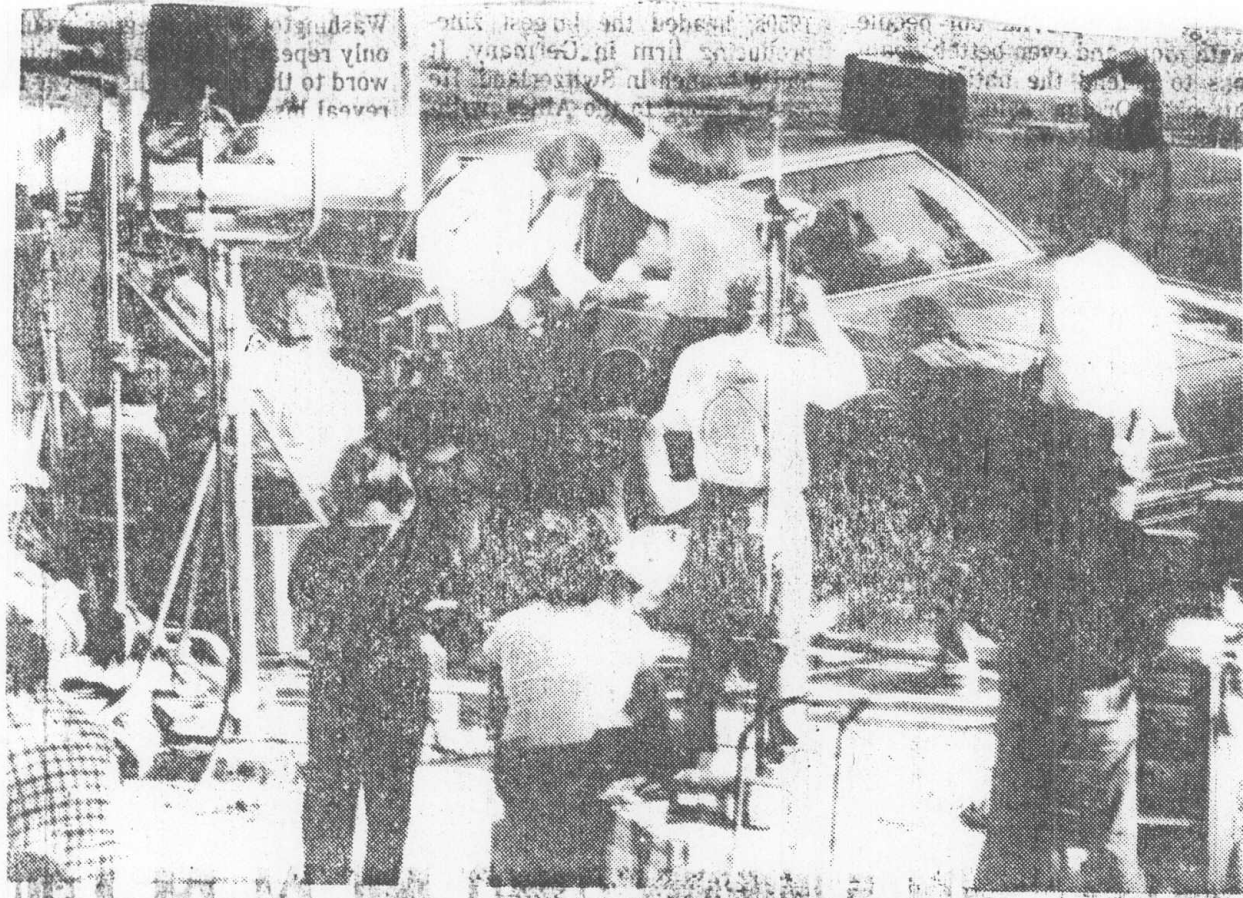


Katharine Hepburn walks on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center as she films a movie.

S.I. Advance Photo by Tony Carannante

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Kate, seated in auto, acts out a scene as film crews work all around.

Associated Press Laserphoto



Kate walks through a scene, not aware that she is being photographed.

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Kate takes a break during the filming.

Advance Photos by Tony Carannante

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A little makeup during the shooting at a mirror tied around a tree.