

## Reel North Carolina II:

### More Movies and Videos from the Old North State

The first column of reviews of movies and videos with a North Carolina connection appeared one year ago in the Summer 1997 issue of *North Carolina Libraries*. Since North Carolina is now second only to California as the place of choice for filmmakers and producers, we must work overtime to keep up with the production of new films and videos here in the Old North State.

The casting call is hereby posted: MOVIE REVIEWERS WANTED. Share your memories of fond films of the past or your critiques of new films and videos. Send your review for inclusion in "Reel North Carolina III."

**T**his fond tribute to the career of North Carolina native Charles Kuralt originally was aired as the CBS "Sunday Morning" program two days after Kuralt's death at the age of 62 on July 4, 1997. Hosted by Charles Osgood (who took over as host of "Sunday Morning" when Kuralt retired in 1994), the program reviews Kuralt's tenure at CBS, which began in 1957. Those early years, shown in black-and-white footage, record Kuralt reporting from some particularly dangerous places, including Vietnam and the Congo, but they also show the genesis of the pieces that would become Kuralt's trademark — his look at the neighborhood and the people of 117th Street in New York City.

Osgood notes that what Kuralt valued most was greatness of spirit. Kuralt's profiles of extraordinary people (from both his "On the Road" series and "Sunday Morning") show that in his travels across the country, he found this greatness in abundance. And he found it mostly in people we didn't know, such as Jethro Mann of Belmont, North Carolina, who repairs bikes and loans them to any child who doesn't have one, while teaching the older kids to repair bikes for the younger. Osgood's affection for Kuralt is apparent. The video includes a portion of Osgood's interview with Kuralt upon the publication of his book *Charles Kuralt's America*. It is one of the few times we hear Kuralt talking (a bit) about himself. Clearly, Kuralt was more comfortable telling us about the people he met.

This profile spotlights the talent for which Kuralt no doubt will be best remembered: discovering people with remarkable stories, who at first glance seem to be just plain folks encountered everyday throughout America. Fittingly, the "Sunday Morning" program ends with its usual montage of pastoral scenes, with only the breeze and birds for musical accompaniment. This time the montage features scenes from the coast to the mountains of beautiful North Carolina, Kuralt's birthplace, with which he maintained strong ties throughout his life.

No North Carolina library with a video collection should be without this title.

— Melody Moxley  
Rowan Public Library

#### **A Tribute to Charles Kuralt.**

CBS Video; 1997; color; 53 min.; \$14.98.  
Dist. by Baker & Taylor Entertainment  
(1-800-775-2600)  
and Ingram Library Services  
(1-800-937-5300).

**H**ow many minor league baseball teams can you name? Unless you live in Asheville, Hickory, Winston-Salem, or Wilmington, the Tourists, Crawdads, Warthogs, or Sharks are probably not too familiar to you. Now what about the Durham Bulls? Thanks to the 1988 film, *Bull Durham*, starring Susan Sarandon, Kevin Costner, and Tim Robbins, there is one minor league team that has arguably won a place in popular consciousness usually reserved for the likes of the Yankees and the Braves. Film producer and Durham native Thom Mount brought his cast and crew to the Bull City in the fall of 1987 to create a film that would immortalize a North Carolina team. In *Bull Durham*, Ron Shelton, the former minor league baseball player who wrote and directed the film manages to convey the unglamorous reality of life in the minors with faithful reverence, while spinning a sexy and intelligent comedic yarn.

### ***Bull Durham.***

1988; color; 108 min.;  
video released Feb. 1989; laser, cx encoded;  
\$39.95 Dist. by Image Entertainment,  
9333 Oso Ave., Chatsworth, CA 91311.  
Order No. ID63120R.  
Telephone: 1-800-407-9100.  
FAX: 1-800-407-9111.

The story involves the triangle of Sarandon as Annie Savoy, a part-time English teacher and full-time baseball junkie; Robbins as "Nuke" LaLoosh, a talented, but green pitcher; and Costner as Crash Davis, a veteran catcher brought in by the team to mold the younger player into a star. Annie reveals a similar mission as she enters an affair with Nuke that has as much to do with civilizing his behavior and strengthening his game as exploring new forms of pleasure. As her narration reveals, Annie "worships at the church of baseball," choosing one lucky player each season to prosper from her own brand of religious training. Though attracted to the intelligent and experienced Crash, who can match her verse for verse and speak knowingly on quantum physics, Annie initially resists his charms in favor of the more pliable young player. Not to worry, eventually the two older and wiser characters relent to their passions and heat up the screen, dancing joyfully together as the closing credits roll. Despite the emphasis on love and lust,

baseball is not neglected as the season unfolds, with its long schedule of games played across the region under less than stellar conditions. Nuke learns to control his powerful arm and earns a chance in the majors while Crash gets his own swing at personal triumph. By the film's end, all the characters achieve some level of personal growth, while allowing themselves and the audience a lot of fun along the way.

When first released, *Bull Durham* received some local criticism for its depiction of Durham as a quaint Southern town. By watching the film, it is hard to recognize the bustling urban center with its world class university, medical school, and modern dance festival. Ultimately this portrayal of Durham can be forgiven. *Bull Durham* is a romance, and a little romanticizing of the locale is allowed. Consider that the Durham Athletic Park, another star of the film, with its intimate stands, advertisements for Bojangles and Northgate Mall, and its crazy, smoke-snorting bull, was replaced after the movie's release by a modern state-of-the-art stadium with sky boxes and gourmet concessions. In reality the new stadium is a more comfortable and practical venue for watching a game, but in the film, the old park and the small town spirit of Durham survive timelessly as a place where people live and play baseball, not for big bucks or media-fed glory, but for the love of it and the spiritual deliverance it can provide.

Rated R, for sexual situations and strong language, this film is not recommended for younger viewers. It does belong in any collection devoted to North Carolina and/or baseball.

— Billy King  
State Library of North Carolina

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