



There are times when a man has to step forward to do what's right, and sometimes the right thing to do is to get weird. And sometimes the weird sticks around longer than it ought to. And sometimes it gets written down...

Go For Jimmy!

FLASHBACK : Saturday, December 8, 2001

It was nearly midnight in the town of Crawfordville when a voice rang out in the chill November air:

“I know it was you, Fredo. You broke my heart.”

Our first assistant director, Louis D'Esposito, was quoting Michael Corleone over channel one, and every time the process truck made a swing past the courthouse Louis would smile and point at me in a way which made it clear that I should not be surprised to discover a horse's head tucked beneath the sheets of my hotel room.

This was, of course, entirely Jimmy's fault; if I was going to finish this picture in one piece I would have to take care of Jimmy permanently, which was going to be a bit of a problem since Jimmy only existed *inside the Walkie-Talkie*.

What Louis didn't know was that two years prior to this film I'd been on a big show where the 1st AD turned out to be a rotten bully to his own crew and was constantly berating and belittling them on channel one. It was embarrassing and unnecessary and didn't sit right with the rest of the crew but what could anybody do? After one particularly scalding public outburst to one of his hardest working ADs I felt a twinge of rebellion stirring in my soul and from somewhere deep within my psyche a fresh-faced PA named "Jimmy" sprang forth onto channel one, the realm of the 1st AD.

Jimmy was always enthusiastic and eager to report the condition of his extremely remote and absolutely unnecessary lock-up to the tyrannical 1st AD, and Jimmy's muppet-like speech impediment was underscored by a simpleton's innocence. Jimmy the nonexistent PA would typically "appear" on channel one to make his reports any time the 1st AD began raking his team over the coals, peppering the 1st with questions and occasional opinions about shots. Though Jimmy was a lovable anarchist and gained instant adoration from some of the crew, time and experience make me realize what a juvenile act it had been and I do (mostly) regret loosing him on the world.

Still, how could anyone not love hearing the excited burble of "Go Foh Jeemy!!" over channel one from time to time?

MOTOROLA

The terms "walkie" and "radio" are used interchangeably in the motion picture industry.

I'm not sure where Jimmy went after his very first show, but he returned most unexpectedly two years later for the filming of Sweet Home Alabama during a punch-drunk tour of Georgia, from Atlanta to Rome to Crawfordville... only this time Jimmy wasn't there to make trouble, he was just having fun. Even better, the 1st AD on this new show (Louis) had an entirely different reaction to Jimmy: he loved him.

By the time our crew had rolled into Crawfordville Louis would ask over channel one "Where is Jimmy?? I love Jimmy!! Jimmy, where are you?". Sometimes Jimmy would reply, sometimes he wouldn't. Some of the PAs on the crew had started doing their own versions of Jimmy, confusing things further and leading Louis to put out a bounty out for the true identity of Jimmy eventually leading back to that showdown in Crawfordville: the 1st AD of the movie calling Drewprops out on channel one for being Jimmy. My cover appeared to have been blown.

The following Tuesday our company had moved south of Crawfordville to the taxidermy-enriched climes of Heavy's BBQ, and I went onto set to take something to my co-second, George Lee, who was preparing pink umbrellas for actress Jean Smart. I sat down on a bar stool next to Louis and before he could turn around I quietly issued a signal into my radio on channel four then quickly switched back to channel one, stealthily turned up the volume on the Walkie and placed the Walkie onto the bar, aimed toward Louis.

As soon as he turned and saw me sitting beside him Louis began grinning; his eyes twinkled with the satisfaction of a French revolutionary who'd just nabbed the Scarlet Pimpernel (or like Barney Fife after catching Goober jaywalking, for those of you whose knowledge of literature ended with the Illustrated Tale of Two Cities). I began to list the reasons that it just wasn't possible for me to be Jimmy but Louis was having none of that, like Deputy Fife: he knew when he had his man.

That's when channel one suddenly **exploded** into life with the unmistakable warbling of the real Jimmy, nattering on with some sort of gibberish about a completely needless lock-up inside the honeywagon.

"Jimmy's in the poo-poo hut!!!"

Louis' satisfied grin evaporated instantly into the most hysterically shocked look I've ever seen on a 1st AD's face. Everything Louis knew about the world had been turned upside down... he kept looking back and forth between his radio and me with his jaw wide open. With an air of righteous indignation I stood up and snarled, "See?? I **told** you I wasn't Jimmy!", before snatching my radio from the bar and stalking off set.

Story continues on the next page...

rites of passage

One of the most catalyzing events in an eager young PA's life is the moment in which they're handed a fully functional Walkie-Talkie. It's the motion picture equivalent of being handed the keys to the family station wagon; a great and grand and very public responsibility in which they can ensure that anyone within broadcast distance can be made to realize how incredibly important they've suddenly become through the overuse of words like "copy", "roger", "okay", "whaaa?", "no, seriously, what did you say??" and many other obscure and mystical incantations which are covered in greater detail in the accompanying radio primer ("**WalkieTalk 101**").

This period of radio-induced self-importance generally lasts between 20 minutes and 45 years, though it's a widely held belief that "Walkie fever" can be quelled by clipping a Walkie to a PA's belt because the sudden and unexpected exposure of a person's butt crack normally wrings the glamour out of the possession of a radio.

Studies by the Midwestern Institute of Transmissions (MIT) have demonstrated that Walkies are particularly attracted to water, stating that "the deeper the water the stronger the attraction" (see chart provided by the Unit Production Management division of the Directors Guild of America) and that Best Boys stand the greatest chance of losing a Walkie in water.

It's difficult to imagine the craft of filmmaking prior to the advent of radio communication, and even more unimaginable how those radio-free crews managed to keep tabs on each other prior to the existence of Channel 2.

For the sake of the uninitiated, Channel 1 is dedicated to anything associated with "making the shot happen" and is thus guarded with great jealousy by the 1st Assistant Director, so much so that whenever a voice calls out frantically for someone to "Go to 2" for a sidebar discussion, you should in no way be surprised to observe several dozen crew members surreptitiously reaching down to change their radios to Channel 2 in order to eavesdrop on the aforementioned panicky radio conversation for the simple fact that one department's grim emergency may directly affect the entire company's schedule. It's no secret that film crews thrive on misery so long as it isn't their department doing the suffering.

WALKIETALK 101

A GLOSSARY OF WALKIE TALKIE TERMS

10-20

Current location. Typical use would be "What's your 10-20?". Also know as "ten twenty".

10-100

The act or state of needing to urinate. Typical use would be "I'm 10-100" or "I need to go 10-100".

10-200

The act or state of needing to poop. Typical use would be "I'm 10-200" or "I need to go 10-200".

Channel Assignments – (example)

Each department of the shooting crew typically has its own channel so that it can have internal conversations outside of channel 1 or channel 2. These assignments vary from region to region and show to show, but this is a typical example:

Channel 1 - Production/Traffic

Channel 2 - Sidebar discussions

Channel 3 - Transportation ("Transpo")

Channel 4 - Props

Channel 5 - Backup for Channel 2

Channel 6 - Camera

Channel 7 - Electric

Channel 8 - Grips

Charger

A charging station for radio batteries. Available as single chargers and multiple chargers.

Dead Battery

A depleted radio battery.

Go to 2

A directive made over the radio instructing the receiver to change channels on their radio to channel 2. Alternate use off-air might mean for people to take a discussion elsewhere.

Hot Biscuit

A fully charged radio battery.

Officers Release Traffic

An instruction given to police who are holding up street traffic to allow held auto traffic to continue past set unhindered.

Radio

See "Walkie Talkie"

Walkie Talkie

A walkie-talkie (more formally known as a handheld transceiver) is a hand-held, portable, two-way radio transceiver. Also called a "Radio".

I allowed Louis to puzzle over the mystery of Jimmy for more than a week before explaining to him how I'd given our prop truck driver, Johnny Poucher, a tape recording full of Jimmy's crazy ramblings and told him to listen for my cue before playing the recording over channel one.

As far as I know that was the last show I worked on with Jimmy, though I did hear that some of the PAs had taken Jimmy with them to their next shows. I shudder to think what sort of calamities that might have caused.

You see, I'm older and I finally understand that the walkie is a crucial tool of the motion picture industry and should never be misused, regardless of the circumstances.

To make amends for my past walkie misdeeds I am now urging my production friends around the world to begin training current and future production assistants on proper radio etiquette and to expedite the process I have created a paper model of a walkie talkie to allow for inexpensive training sessions. Simply cut out the "On-Set Activity Playset #5 : Walkie-Talkie" and slide the tabs into the corresponding slots. If you are inexperienced at using scissors, please ask a prop person or a responsible looking producer for help. Please take particular care when assembling the antenna sub-assembly and don't forget to attach the belt-clip (since the paper is so light you will have to simulate the weight of the radio pulling your pants down by tugging at your pants with one hand).

Please consult the sidebar "WalkieTalk 101" for some of the general terminology your PAs should incorporate into their training. Make sure that they know the difference between "10-20" and "10-200" - lives will hang in the balance.

- Teach your future Spielbergs how to change channels on their radios and how to turn down their volume if they are near camera and are operating without a headset.
- Simulate changing batteries.
- Put a cement block into a backpack and have them carry it around all day to simulate being in charge of spare batteries.
- Drill them on the procedure for switching to channel 2 and then back to channel 1.
- Teach them to ANSWER the \$#!*@!! radio when the 1st or 2nd AD calls out for some assistance.
- Show them how to bounce a radio on the pavement like a frustrated 1st AD when no PAs respond to an all-call.

Most importantly, make sure that they have FUN!!

Officers, release traffic.