

Obituary: Henry Bumstead

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Henry Bumstead, the veteran Hollywood production designer who won Academy Awards for his work on "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "The Sting" and whose longtime association with actor-director Clint Eastwood kept him on the job into his 90s, has died. He was 91. Bumstead, who reportedly had prostate cancer, died Wednesday in Pasadena, his family said.

Lloyd Henry Bumstead was born in Ontario on March 17, 1915. In a nearly 70-year career that began when he was a draftsman in the art department at RKO in the late 1930s, Bumstead's first picture as an art director was the 1948 Paramount drama "Saigon," starring Alan Ladd.

Bumstead received his Academy Awards for his depiction of 1930s rural Alabama in director Robert Mulligan's 1962 drama "To Kill a Mockingbird" and for re-creating Depression-era Chicago in George Roy Hill's 1973 comedy-drama "The Sting." He also received Oscar nominations for Hitchcock's 1958 romantic thriller "Vertigo" and for Eastwood's 1992 western "Unforgiven."

Bumstead, who was affectionately known as Bummy, had more than 100 films to his credit, including "Come Back, Little Sheba," "Cinderfella," "The Great Waldo Pepper," "Slap Shot," "The Front Page," "Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here," Martin Scorsese's 1991 version of "Cape Fear," "Mystic River" and "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil."

Bumstead recently completed work on Eastwood's companion movies "Flags of Our Fathers" and "Red Sun, Black Sand," the last of a 13-film collaboration.

"Bummy was one of a kind," Eastwood said in a statement Friday. "He seamlessly bridged the gap between what I saw on

the page and what I saw through the camera lens. He is a legend in his field and a cherished friend. We will all miss him terribly.”

Bumstead once described his job as a production designer by saying, “In a nutshell, my job is to break down the script, find the best possible locations, make a budget and design the appropriate sets that correspond to the story.”

The tall and bearish Bumstead was an unpretentious, down-to-earth survivor of the old Hollywood studio system.

“I love doing films,” he said in a 2002 interview with the Dallas Morning News in which he made note of his career longevity and said, “I’ve never been laid off, I’ve never been fired and I’ve never looked for a job.”

In the same interview, Bumstead added: “I wouldn’t be working now at my age if it weren’t for Clint Eastwood.”

Their professional relationship began on the 1972 western “Joe Kidd,” directed by John Sturges and starring Eastwood. That was followed by the Eastwood-directed 1973 western “High Plains Drifter.”

While working on “Million Dollar Baby,” Eastwood’s Oscar-winning 2004 drama about a female boxer starring Eastwood and Hilary Swank, Bumstead learned that he had prostate cancer.

“Clint furnished me with a car and driver and a wheelchair,” he told Daily Variety last year. “I went through radiation and chemotherapy, but I was still able to work for him.”

“What really makes him invaluable is that he has a great reservoir of memory and technique of working with everybody from Hitchcock to [Billy] Wilder,” Eastwood told Variety. “Of that era, he’s the last man standing.”