



The Great Escape: Past to Present II

David McCallum at *The Great Escape* 50th Anniversary Screening in Omaha

In November, film historian Bruce Crawford organized a most memorable evening in Omaha, Nebraska, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *The Great Escape*. The John Sturges classic was introduced by David McCallum, who had a key early-career role in the film. A sold-out crowd of over 1,000 retro movie lovers listened intently to McCallum's recollections of making the movie. McCallum recalled the camaraderie among cast members: "We had a wonderful time together. The Germans went off with the British, and I went off with Donald Pleasence, who was a good friend of mine." After the screening, McCallum graciously signed autographs and copies of a special postal service envelope created by the artist Nicolosi that depicted scenes from the film. McCallum also enjoyed displays of memorabilia including a Triumph motorcycle identical to the one driven by Steve McQueen in the film. Proceeds from the event were donated to the Nebraska Kidney Foundation. (For Jon Heitland's in-depth report on the event, visit www.cinemaretro.com)

Lee Pfeiffer



Top: One of the memorabilia displays featured a replica of the Triumph motorbike as seen in the film *The Great Escape*.

Photo © Steve Gray Photography

The motorcycle chase was filmed in the countryside of Pfronten and Füssen.



ACHTUNG
100m
Schweizer Grenze



Below: Diredor and star on location: John Sturges discusses the sequence with Steve McQueen.



Top: The rooftops of Füssen still look the same as when Richard Attenborough ran across them in 1963 (see inset grab).

Above: Now an Italian restaurant, the window Gordon Jackson is pushed against by the German soldiers is now bricked-up, but still visible.

Roland Schaeffli

All present-day locations and Füssen exhibition photos, courtesy of Roland Schaeffli: Film stills from the Cinema Retro Archives.

Main Photo: The meadow the production company rented for the now-famous motorcycle jump sequence. The owner was paid 100 German Marks, a large sum in those days. After completion, the company left behind probably the most famous fence in movie history, which the German farmers used to fence in their cows. The barbed wire, which some members of the crew helped to make during breaks in filming, was actually made from rubber.

"Local farmers still shake their heads in bewilderment when asked about the film's locations today."

The Great Escape: Past to Present III

The Locations Website

My research into *The Great Escape* locations started back in 2010 when I travelled from my home in Weymouth, England, to the beautiful Bavarian town of Füssen: a journey of 800 miles by car. In her book, *My Husband, My Friend: A Memoir*, Neile McQueen explained how her husband and their two young children took up residence in a small hamlet in Deining only a few miles from the Bavarian Studios in Gaiselgasteig, Munich, where the original camp and sound studios were situated. It was being there that gave me my inspiration for my website.

Visiting Southern Bavaria has since been a regular event, taking place during early August, with each trip bringing new friendships and discovering new locations from meeting people with similar interests. The website has featured in several books, and is used regularly as a 'guide' for fans wishing to tour and discover the film's locations in and around Munich and Füssen. Please visit our site, and maybe we may meet up 'on location' some time.

Don J. Whistance

www.thegreatescapelocations.com



Above: Don in Market Schwaben with film frame grab showing it as in the film (right).



Don kneels at the exact spot where Steve McQueen crashed into the fence.