

# Hey mister, who's that on the silver screen?

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

Can you see former Idaho Gov. Cecil D. Andrus acting in a soft-porn flick?

No?

How about former Gov. Phil Batt?

Not really?

Or even the current crop of Idaho politicians? How about Congressman Mike Simpson, R-Idaho? Or Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho?

Come on.

Such a thing would be so out of character for any of them that Idahoans would be stunned, dismayed and embarrassed.

Yet, when it's Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter who turns up playing the role of the corrupt sheriff in an early 1990s Western potboiler, nobody gets all that worked up.

When they read in the New York Daily News that Otter is part of a film that is "pure Idaho, complete with rodeos and chases on ATVs and horseback. The cowboy battles get so intense, somebody fires a rocket launcher at a horse trailer," Idahoans shrug.

That's just Butch, they say.

Not when they guffaw over The Spokesman-Review's Doug Clark's string of uproarious zingers, beginning with this one: "Isn't 'Butch Otter' about the best-ever name for a porn star?"

Say Otter's constituent: Hey, that's just our Butch. Nothing new here. Let's move on.

As reported by the Idaho Falls Post Register last week, Otter was serving as Idaho's lieutenant governor in the early 1990s when he offered Western Image Group the use of his horses on a film titled "Roundup."

Taken with Otter's "authentic Idaho looks," the director gave him a small role as the sheriff.

Fast forward a few years. The film group went broke. The unreleased footage was sold to another producer, who added about 10 minutes of what the newspaper described as "simulated sex with women shown in full frontal nudity." Renamed "A Time to Revenge," the production went straight to DVD in 1997.

The defensive crouch of Otter's spokesmen Jon Hanian and Mark Warbis notwithstanding, those details take a lot of the air out of this story.

As does the fact that Idahoans are no strangers to Otter's eccentricities. Around the time he appeared before the cameras, Otter had famously competed in a tight jeans contest. A jury had rejected his contention that his chewing tobacco had been laced with whiskey and convicted Otter of drunken driving. His marriage to Gay Simplot had ended. And it was not unusual to see the lieutenant governor jogging around downtown Boise in revealing running shorts.

None of that seemed to bother Idaho voters, who re-elected Otter twice more as their lieutenant governor, three times to the U.S. House of Representatives and twice as their governor.

With Otter, they tolerate a lot.

Such as the admission that on his watch, Idaho no longer follows a constitutional obligation to adequately fund public schools.

Or that "gettin' me re-elected" is priority No. 1 in the current administration.

Anyone else playing the witless victim to a bunch of filmmakers so unscrupulous that they'd take three scenes of the fully clothed Otter and juxtapose them with scenes of silicone-infused eroticism would be fending off charges of naivete at minimum and being a dullard at worst.

But, hey, this could happen to anyone.

Especially someone who has presided over a private prison mess that has drawn the attention of the FBI.

Whose buddy and former Administration Director Mike Gwartney has so fouled up the Idaho Education Network contract that the feds may never restore funding for it.

Or a fellow who has so mishandled the megaload controversy that he has ceded control of U.S. Highway 12 to the Forest Service and the federal courts.

Still, by all indications, he enjoys the trust and affection of his fellow Idahoans and may well be headed on his way to a third term.

Even if he needs to break the rules every once in a while.

Even if he proves to be something less than diligent in carrying out his professional duties.

Idaho voters can't help themselves. They can no more abandon Otter than the nation could walk away from Bill Clinton, and you know all about his foibles.

Of course, Clinton stayed away from acting in low-budget movies. - M.T.

