

Scheider audition

SHAW: How'd you get that beautiful broken nose, Mr. Scheider?

SCHEIDER. The 1946 Diamond Gloves Tournament. I was thirteen. I lost by technical knockout to Myron Greenberg.

DREYFUSS. You were a boxer?

SCHEIDER. Welterweight.

SHAW. Now that's a real man's profession. Not like this -poncing about on a soundstage covered in makeup like a prostitute!

DREYFUSS. Was your father a boxer?

SCHEIDER. He was an auto mechanic. He ran the local gas station; typical blue-collar guy but full of contradictions. He hates everyone: Blacks, Catholics, Jews, Communists. Yet he married a Catholic, was friendly with the Jewish people who ran the local store, and his dentist was Black. But behind closed doors, all that bile came pouring out. He made derogatory remarks right in front of us.

SHAW. Did you fight with him?

SCHEIDER. Yeah! He beat the hell out of me. My biggest crime was disagreeing with him. I realised as an adolescent that what my father was telling me wasn't true. I took the beatings to let him know he wasn't fooling me. My mother couldn't intervene. I got the support I needed from a man who worked at the gas station. One of my father's Black employees, as a matter of fact. A guy named Friend Avery.

DREYFUSS. I bet you wanted to run as far as you could from the family business.

SCHEIDER. It's complicated. I was a sick kid. I had rheumatic fever, I'd get these horrendous attacks. My mother stayed home to take care of me. She thought I was gonna die. I spent an awful lot of time in bed. Thinking, dreaming, creating. A lot of fantasy worlds that probably led me into acting. To this day I cannot stand to be in a room with an unmade bed ... or drawn drapes. I want to throw them open and let in the fresh air, the sunshine ...

