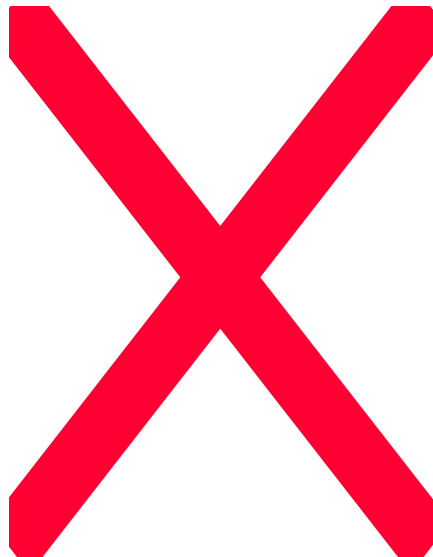


Johnny Whitaker

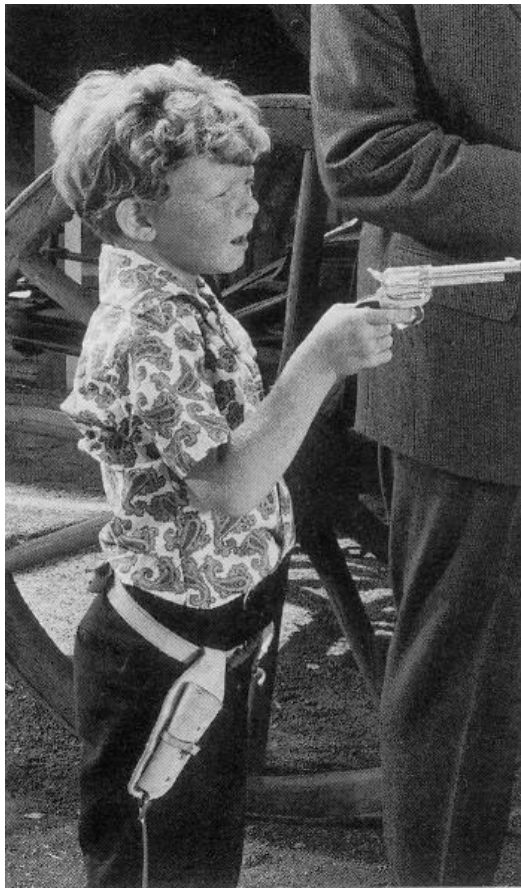
Titles: 10 Sources: 3 Stills: 15

Born: Van Nuys, California; December 13th 1959

Homely red-headed Mormon boy effortlessly outshone by co-star Jodie Foster in two of his film outings, the latter a woebegone musicalised version of "**TOM SAWYER**" in which the title figure takes a back seat to picaresque riverboats and aerial views of the Mississippi.



Source: indeterminate website



As Jody in the TV series **"A Family Affair"**
Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

"Red-mopped Johnny, son of Mormon parents, was no oil painting but a considerable performer. With the homely appeal of Jimmy Hunt a generation before, he had bigger opportunities than Hunt and took them with both freckled hands.

From the age of three he sang solos in the local Mormon church, and at four made his first commercial (for Chevrolet). In his acting debut, on the live TV show **"A Day in Court"**, he wept impressive buckets as his father was jailed.

He first impinged on the public conscience at the age of five, when he landed the role of Jody in what was to be a long-running TV sitcom, **"A Family Affair"** (1966-71). He was signed up by the Disney studio, with whom he made the majority of his films, for the cinema or for TV.

This was his cosy, kid-next-door side, which reached its apotheosis in the musical **"TOM**

SAWYER" of 1973. On the way he had partnered George Spell in a remake of **"THE BISCUIT EATER"** (boys and dog) and Jodie Foster in **"NAPOLEON AND SAMANTHA"** (boy, girl and aged lion).

However, he had also shown his teeth as a boy possessed by Dark Powers in **"SOMETHING EVIL"**, one of Steven Spielberg's early essays for TV: writhing and snarling on the floor, he has some of the horror of Mikael Rundquist, the boy demon who savages Max Von Sydow in Ingmar Bergman's **"HOUR OF THE WOLF"**.

"TOM SAWYER" was pretty well the end of Whitaker's child career, but he later took a degree in film directing at Brigham Young University, and appeared in a film called **"MAGIC PONY"** (79)."

Biographical note from **Reader's Digest** souvenir brochure on **"TOM SAWYER"**:

"Johnny Whitaker, who plays the title role in this musical adaptation, is the screen's fourth Tom Sawyer¹, following in the wake of Jack Pickford, brother of Mary Pickford, in 1917, Jackie Coogan, in 1930; and Tommy Kelly in 1937. Johnny has been a pro since he was three years old and his experience plus red hair and a more than fair quota of freckles make him a "natural" for the role of Mark Twain's hero.

Not that everyone thought so when his selection for the part of Tom Sawyer was first announced. This was because Johnny was best known to US television audiences for his part as Jody in the long-running **"Family Affair"** serial. Jody – a name that Johnny hates – had to be an obnoxious kid, a fate that Johnny escaped after playing the part for about three years. **"TOM SAWYER"** is his sixth movie. He has recently finished **"NAPOLEON AND SAMANTHA"** in which he appeared with Jodie Foster, his co-star as Becky in **"TOM SAWYER"**.

Johnny, whose home is in San Fernando, California, where his father teaches in Junior High School, is one of eight children. Six of the other seven – five sisters and two brothers –

¹ Actually the sixth – they omitted Gordon Griffith in **"TOM AND HUCK"** (1919) and Billy Cook in **"TOM SAWYER, DETECTIVE"** (38)

had bit parts in "**TOM SAWYER**" when they visited Johnny on location at Arrow Rock, the Missouri township that became Hannibal for the two months it took to shoot the film."

NAMBLA Bulletin vol. 5/5 media note:

"...From a small "Boy Actors Film Society" newsletter which came out monthly several years ago: August 1977: Featured was Johnny Whitaker, then 17½. Since the end of "**Family Affair**", he was involved in several movies and starred in another TV series, "**Sigmund and the Sea Monsters**". He was also in "**Muilligan's Stew**" which involved cute younger boys: Chris Ciampa, 11; K.C. Martel, 8; and blonde *[sic]* Johnny Timko, 10. Whitaker had a religious background and was also a singer..."

[**no listing** in "Great Child Stars",
"Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion",
"Those Endearing Young Charms" or "The
Virgin International Encyclopedia of Film"]

FILMOGRAPHY

Year	Age	Title	Role
deb	- -	A Day in Court	US TV live courtroom series - guest
65	5	THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING, THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING	
66-71	6	A Family Affair	US TV sitcom, as Jody
71	11	THE BISCUIT EATER with <i>George Spell</i>	Disney, in central role
71		THE LITTLEST ANGEL	
71		SOMETHING EVIL	US TV, as Stevie
72	12	NAPOLEON AND SAMANTHA with <i>Jodie Foster</i>	Disney
72		SNOWBALL EXPRESS	
73	13	TOM SAWYER   with <i>Jeff East, Jodie Foster</i>	in title role
73-74		Sigmind and the Sea Monsters	US TV series
c77	17	Mulligan's Stew with <i>Christopher Ciampa, K.C. Martel, Johnny Timko</i>	US TV sitcom