

Alfred Palca, 78, Screenwriter Blacklisted After Basketball Film

By **Dinitia Smith**

June 22, 1998

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Alfred Palca, a blacklisted writer whose film "Go, Man, Go!," about the Harlem Globetrotters, became a classic among basketball fans, died on Thursday at Beth Israel Hospital in Manhattan. He was 78 and lived in Manhattan.

The cause was cancer, said his sister, Roz Leader.

In 1953 Mr. Palca, who was just completing "Go, Man, Go!," was accused by F.B.I. agents of being a Communist. It was only after he removed his name from the credits that he was able to find a distributor for the film. Mr. Palca's career never recovered from the accusation and he never wrote or produced another movie.

Though Mr. Palca said he was "attracted by the Soviet Union's Socialist ideals," he once told an interviewer that he "was never a Communist."

After the accusations, Mr. Palca said, "My career was phhhttt." He supported his family by writing magazine articles, plays, television shows and, with Monte Ghertler, a nonfiction book about sex called "The Couple," all the while remaining optimistic. Last year he was writing a script that he said "will start my career all over again."

Mr. Palca was born in Manhattan and educated at Boys High School in Brooklyn and at New York University, from which he graduated in 1940. He began writing for NBC radio while he was in college. He served as a private in World War II and did public relations for the show "This Is the Army."

After the war, Mr. Palca was a publicity agent for 20th Century Fox. In 1950 Columbia Pictures agreed to finance his film about the Globetrotters. Mr. Palca hired Sidney Poitier, who then owned a barbecue ribs shop in Harlem, to star in the movie. In fact, Mr. Palca said, part of the proof that he was a Communist, the F.B.I. told him, was that he had hired Mr. Poitier, a black man.

The film, with Mr. Palca's name removed, was distributed by Fox. Mr. Palca gave the producing credit to his brother-in-law, Anton M. Leader, and the screen-writing credit to his cousin, Arnold Becker, a pediatrician.

Despite the film's success, Mr. Palca said he never liked it. As the years passed, looking at it made him "wince," he said.

Last year, at a 50th-anniversary ceremony honoring blacklisted Hollywood writers and directors at the Academy Theater in Los Angeles, Mr. Palca's writing credit was restored.

"It was a wonderful ceremony," said Ms. Leader, who was there with him. "There were 20 to 25 of them, those who have survived, around. The whole audience just applauded."

And Mr. Palca's reaction to the event? "I can't tell you," Ms. Leader said. "It's a four-letter word. He felt it was long overdue."

Mr. Palca is survived by Ms. Leader of Los Angeles; his wife, Doris, of Manhattan; a daughter, Margaret Palca, of Brooklyn; a son, Joe Palca, of Washington, and four grandchildren.

A version of this article appears in print on June 22, 1998, Section A, Page 17 of the National edition with the headline: Alfred Palca, 78, Screenwriter Blacklisted After Basketball Film