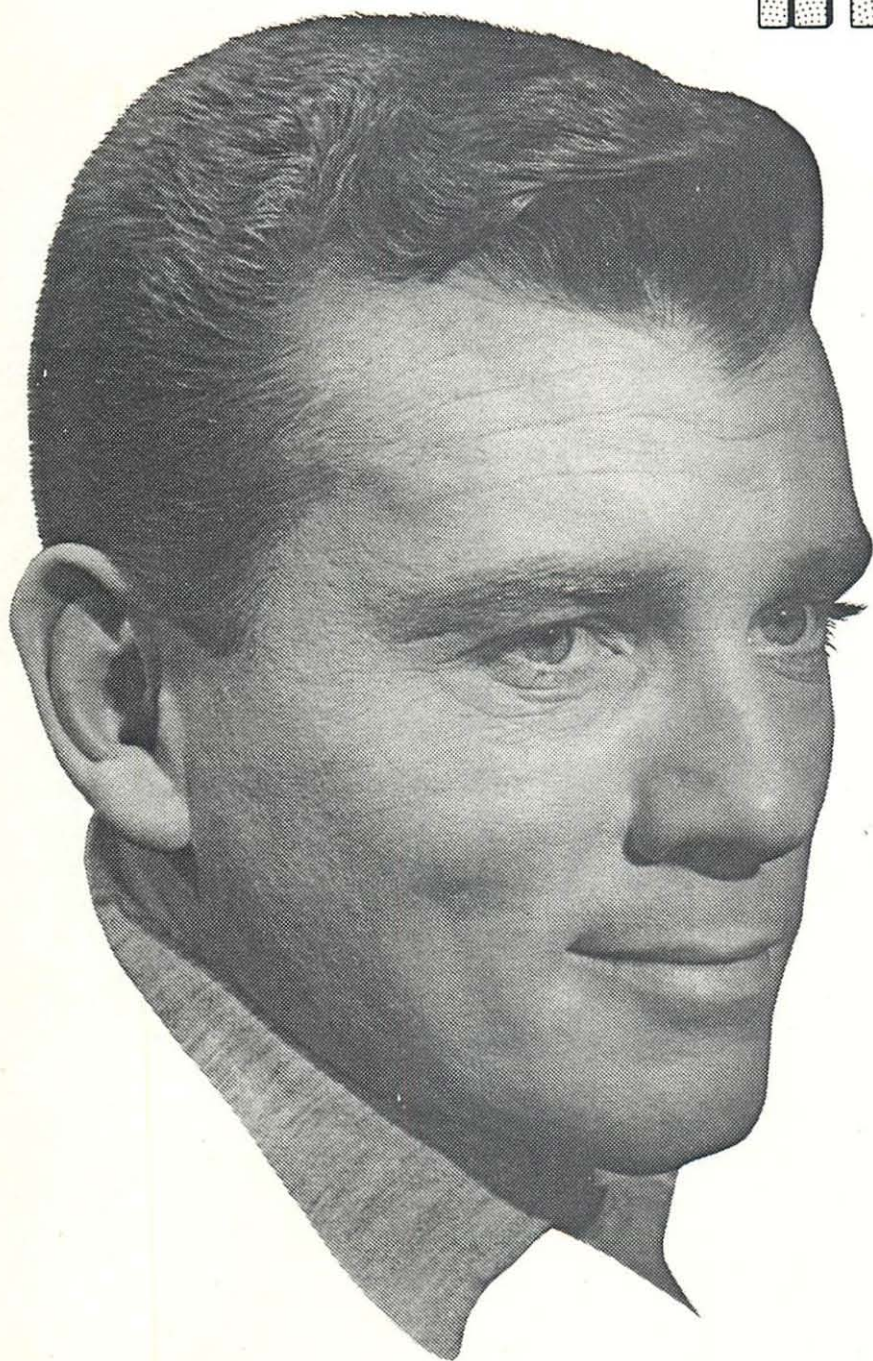


- An Autobiography and
Theatrical Scrapbook



ACTOR ALMOST



by

RUSTY

MORRIS



☆ Presentation Copy - Not for Sale

A C T O R A L M O S T

An Autobiography
and
Theatrical Scrapbook

by
Rusty Morris

Adapted from:

REMINISCENCES OF AN ALMOST ACTOR

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For Tom with love

- You helped make
some of it happen -

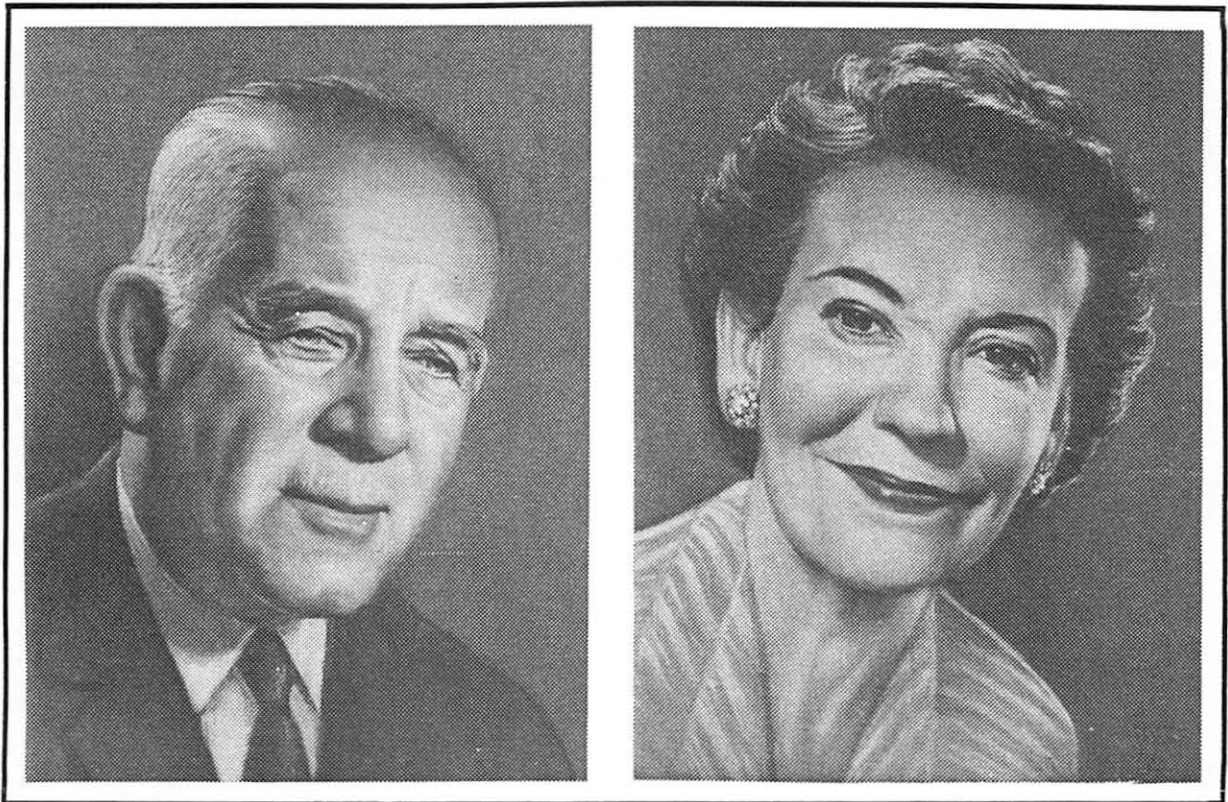
Thanks Always.

- Rusty

To
MOM and DAD
with
Love and Appreciation

☆

*You Can't Read This Now -
But You Were Always There!*



- And for those along the yellow brick road who cared,
shared interest, kindness and encouragement
when it counted:

Eleanor Bond
Joseph Bramlette
Ruth Burch
Frank Carioti
John Chizen, M.D.
Marvel Conner
Alex Courtney
Homer Curran
Jack Easton
Margo and Stanley Farrar
Carol Goodner
Dorothy Harrison
Edna Helvey
Alfred Hitchcock
Jerome Lawrence
Meniffee I. Johnstone
Cole Lesley
Ralph Levy
Moss Mabry
Paul Nathan
Leona Powers
Sue Seay
Al Seaman
Charles B. Trantum
Marion Ward
Helen Warren
Frank Woodruff
David Young

and for Don Chapman, the most talented
actor I ever worked with - killed in
World War II, inspiring forever ...

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Dedication Page:

Pastel Portraits by Chester Bloom, NYC
from Photos by Rusty Morris



THIS WAS WRITTEN FOR MY SISTER, LORENE,*
who, over the years,
being so busy going to school,
getting married,
raising two sons
and living 2,000 miles away,
was unable to get a really good idea
of what my life was like.



In this chronicle, there may be no flags, marching bands,
or sparklers lighting the sky.
You could say the parade passed me by, or ...
I reached for the brass ring and dropped it down the loo,
as the British say.

That it isn't a "success story" in the best tradition,
that it doesn't have a smash finale,
may give it an "Everyman" quality ... or so I've been told --
a familiar narrative to which Mr. and Mrs. Frontporch
can relate their own lives --
even though this is "show-biz".

Everyone has his or her dreams, just as I did.
And everyone makes a try, just as I did.
It's my view that I was as lucky as many
... maybe luckier than some.
I went to some exciting places,
and had some exciting times.
I met and worked with a lot of inspiring stimulating people.
I'm glad it happened.
I'm glad I had the time and know-how to put it to paper.

I like to think that I had the chance war denied Don Chapman ...
and it was terminally-ill LOOK Senior Editor Sue Seay
who, cheered by my letters,
pleaded from her hospital bed:
"Oh, Roland, write -- you must write!"

* Mrs. J. G. Taylor
Memphis, Tennessee

*"If I've learned anything in my life,
it's that everything happens for a reason,
and for whatever reason, we have to accept it,
do the best we can to make the best of it
and move on ..."*

- LUCILLE MORRIS

July 1, 1982



O V E R T U R E



Her name was Agnes Emily Peterson ... she was Principal at the John Muir Junior High School in southwest Los Angeles and fancied herself something of a writer. She was from another era, with a voice and manner much like Eleanor Roosevelt's. Though everyone seemed tall to me then, she seemed taller, and I suspect she wore a wig, for her hair, piled high, with braids, never varied.

As she was something of an autocrat, which is to say unpopular, to be summoned to her presence was not a happy occasion as a rule. One day I was. She informed me that she had written a play. It would be performed at the Summer, 1937, Graduation Exercises by members of the graduating class, and after careful consideration, she had decided that I was to play the leading character, that of a Country Schoolmaster, vintage 1820.

There had been no audition of any sort. We were all but total strangers. I had appeared only in a skit presented by my English Class which I remember as being fun because we had to say such odd things as "Good morrow, neighbor, prithee ..." and such. The hit of the playlet was a boy named James Griffith, portraying the housemaid in a dress and a hemp wig who chased everyone with a broom! Time perhaps mercifully erases all else, including the reason or reasons why I was the one selected to be the Schoolmaster, though I suspect my homeroom teacher had a finger in the pie.

The play had a large cast and was documentary in flavor. We enjoyed being in it much more than the eventual audience enjoyed watching it. I especially liked it because I could keep my script on my desk and when I forgot what was next, it was easy and natural to refer to it with no one being the wiser.

There was no budget for costumes, of course, but once the cast was rounded-up, each member was sent home with a page describing what he or she was to wear and mothers then as now, did their best. My mother, who was a very capable seamstress, was taken aback when she learned that she had to somehow create a gentleman's tailcoat for a very skinny child of 14-going-on-15, growing taller by the minute. She didn't know where to begin. But I did. I drew a pattern for her on butcher's wrap. She cut it all out of material from an old black coat of her's -- what's more, she lined it with the same lining.

Looking at the photos today, the coat seems to be something out of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, but like most costumes, it cast a magic spell. When I put it on, I felt older and taller and very grown-up. They said I was good in the part, if a little nervous, though it hardly matters, almost fifty years after the event.

What does matter is that I was exposed to a live audience and its reactions and for years suffered from that near-fatal disease for which grease-paint seems the only remedy.

I had been bitten by the acting-bug.



ALL THESE PEOPLE WERE ONCE AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY DAILY LIFE, but it would be impossible to put names to faces at this late date except close chum June Adams, front row, third from left. Tallest seems to be me in "Schoolmaster's" get-up, and the boy at the far right, who portrayed a parent for possibly the same reason! What a gang, what stories we could tell each other about the nearly 50 years we've lived since this occasion -- bless 'em all, the chubby, the short and the tall! I'm so glad I found this to include here

(1937 Photographer Unknown)

☆ C U R T A I N U P . . .



The man was never identified. How he obtained my phone number was never learned. But he called on Friday to tell my mother to have me downtown at the Biltmore Theatre at 10 o'clock in the morning ... there was a play being cast and there was a part in it for me, should I care to make a try for it.

I did. My dad drove me down to what was, to me, a shrine. For my sixteenth birthday, my parents had given me a ticket to this small jewel-box of a theatre to see Helen Hayes perform in Victoria Regina (I still have the souvenir program and the ticket stub). Now, a year later, I was walking in, giving my name to a gentleman collecting such things and when it was called, getting up on "Victoria's stage", much smaller than I remembered it, and reading for a woman named Joan Hathaway and a fatherly gentleman who whispered things to her.

Whatever, however, whom-ever, why-ever, I was hired at fifty bucks a week and warned by someone named Howard Young (always stern) to stay away from agents. I didn't even know what an agent was. I only knew I was glad I came because it looked like it was going to be an exciting summer vacation from school!

The play was The Great American Family, by Robert Frayne Chapin and Charley King, based upon a best-selling novel of the same name by Los Angeles Times columnist, Lee Shippey. It had been the most popular play ever presented at The Pasadena Playhouse. Beloved West Coast Producer Homer Curran had taken an option on it, and with Carol Goodner and James Bell in the leading roles, it was on it's way to The Great White Way, co-produced by Luther Greene.

In the course of early rehearsals at the Biltmore, James Cagney's adorable young sister, Jeanne, auditioned for the role of the "girl next door". She was wonderful in the part and I immediately fell in

love with her and my feelings have never changed. But she proved to be too expensive for the show's budget. Twenty actors is a large cast, even for a stage production in those days, and it included an actor of large size with beguiling charm to match. He introduced himself to me as Sam Cregar, one of the talented few who had been transferred over from the Pasadena Playhouse. For him, as for me, it was his first Equity play. (A fact which prevented him from returning to the Playhouse or appearing in any local non-union production. It was not exactly a blessing for any of us who later struggled for recognition.)

After subsequent rehearsals at a simply splendid theatre called the Belasco (soon afterwards a parking lot for it's next-door-neighbor, the Mayan), we opened in Santa Barbara at the Lobero Theatre during Fiesta Week. As it was my first time away from home, at seventeen, exciting as it was, I permitted myself to be mothered by one of the character actresses, dear kind and caring Anne O'Neal. Stanley Farrar was in the cast, too, a big-brother friendship that lasted for thirty-five years and which his widow still maintains.

From Santa Barbara, we moved to San Francisco for three weeks at Mr. Curran's beautiful Curran Theatre, close-by the Clift Hotel. He was the kindest man, quiet-spoken, with a disarming wit and impeccable manners. He had taken each member of the cast on a trip to some of Los Angeles' finest stores, including Bullock's Wilshire, to select our on-stage wardrobe. In a day when a sport coat cost \$12.50 and a good one \$25, he paid \$45 for the one I wore, and at the end of the run, insisted that everyone keep the clothing as a gift from him and Luther Greene. For Mr. Curran, a show couldn't be a show without music, so there was a full-pit orchestra for our play, filling the theatre with sentimental music like Beautiful Ohio* not only as an overture to the play, but also during the intermission and the curtain calls!

The setting by Norman Rock was constructed in Mr. Curran's famed Scenic Productions Studio, still active on Hyperion. It was an intriguingly clever home interior, which grew with the family and ultimately displayed action in three rooms at the same time. The stairway to the unseen upstairs bedrooms was a veritable race-track occasionally, which audiences loved.

* The love song of the parents in the play and our curtain-call anthem.

... "Last night's audience liked them enormously, this Gregory and Sylvia Seymour and their Frank, Chuck, Hank, John and little Sylvia."

- S. F. CALL BULLETIN

... "Last night at the Curran, author Lee Shippey sat in the front row and watched honest, humorous pages out of his life relived by a capable and often lively cast on the stage ... it was good Americana ... full of homely comedy as natural as laughter and as refreshing as a summer breeze."

- S. F. EXAMINER

... "The Curran-Green production is admirable ... it calls itself a play, but is more of a lovable charade, cataloguing the trivia of family life in seven scenes ... enough to fill an evening with merriment ... the very plotlessness of it gives it a special charm. In a hundred varied details of her direction, Joan Hathaway has caught the harum-scarum quality of a tumultuous home ... Bob Wark is fine as the wayward son, Hank, and so is Rolland Morris as the red-headed mischief maker of the family."

- S. F. CHRONICLE

... "The youngsters are all spontaneous and appealing. Particularly noticeable are Rolland Morris and Peggy Stewart."

- THE ARGONAUT

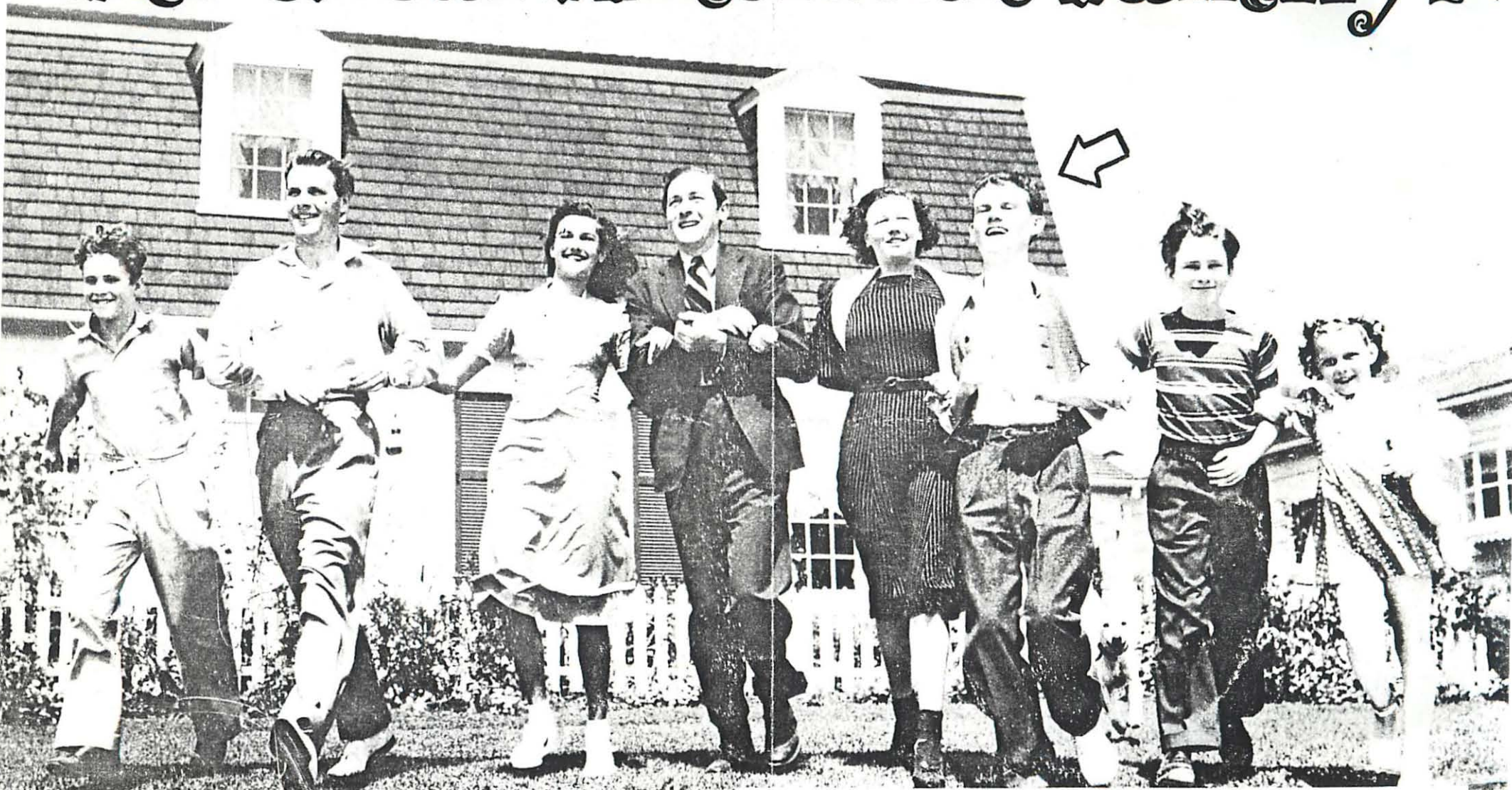
... "Joan Hathaway has directed the piece with sympathetic understanding, managing the two sets of children - in different years - efficiently. Taking their play from a novel that has achieved a distinguished sale, (the playwrights) contrived a pleasant portrait of a pleasant American family ... providing an evening of wholesome entertainment ... unsophisticated, unpretentious and a lot of fun. Of the others, I liked most Rolland Morris as the mechanical second son, Peggy Stewart as the love interest and Laird Cregar as an effusive realtor."

- Wood Soanes,
OAKLAND TRIBUNE

... "A white pullet, a black goat and a flock of clever kids stole the show from leads Carol Goodner and James Bell."

- DAILY VARIETY

The Great American Family.



An All American Cast

with

JAMES BELL • CAROL GOODNER
LOIS BUTLER • TOMMY BAKER
TOMMY RUCKER • BOB WARK
ROLLAND MORRIS and Twenty Others

Staged by JOAN HATHAWAY

THE Gregory Seymours bought a house because they had decided to settle down, write the Great American Novel and rear one offspring. But the stork turned out to be more prolific than the typewriter. He flew back and forth with the instincts of a homing pigeon, to deliver five precious bundles of joy and trouble to the Seymours! Five of a kind...a very full house...well peopled with future presidents and a first lady...that's "The Great American Family"!

Although there were ten other children in the cast, my closest friends became Stan and Margo Farrar, Anne O'Neal, Sam Cregar and lovely Ann Evers. Where Santa Barbara's Fiesta Week had been a lark for a teenager, San Francisco was a very real adventure, for it was then the scene of the 1939 World's Fair Exposition. I practically lived on Treasure Island, the Disneyland of its day.

Anne urged that I accompany her to the movies one afternoon and we were joined by Sam, the three of us sitting in the front row of the balcony. Sam was not only large, he was jovial, and when he enjoyed something, he enjoyed it! It's a wonder that he didn't take a header over the balcony railing, he was so enchanted with the film -- not at all surprising, as it was the opening day of MGM's The Wizard of Oz.

We seemed to be a smash-hit ourselves. Delighted audiences filled the theatre and every performance got better and better. Because it was the story of a struggling writer and his wife coping with their five children, four of them boys, it was roisterous from beginning to end, with a double cast of kiddies (except for the daughter, who was created in the course of the story), one group appearing in early sequences, the rest of us as the same children a few years older.

I was "Chuck", the second eldest, a hobbyist, who built gasoline model airplanes. One sequence called for me to put airplane glue into my brother's hair dressing just before he went out to a formal dance in his first tuxedo. One night, I opened my kit box and there was no glue bottle nor anything else which might appear to be one to an audience. Instantly, I learned a cardinal rule of the theatre: check your props before going on-stage.

Fortunately, there was so much activity going on downstage, that I was able to get someone's attention in the wings, explain things and in the nick of time, the glue bottle was set on a window sill next to my work table. The agony of those few moments was far worse than the "thrashing" I had to take every evening when brother Bob Wark roared in from his date, hat-band still glued to his head!

Anne O'Neal was saddled with a piece of business every evening that we kids looked forward to with glee. As a snoopy but over-righteous neighbor who thought a bottle of home-brewed rootbeer was the real stuff, she had to indignately wave the bottle about as she

villified our parents for their harmful example. It wasn't beer or even rootbeer, of course, but some concoction developed by the prop man involving vinegar and soda. The trick was to get the soda saturated with the vinegar in time to allow pressure to build up and knowing this was exciting for all. Anne was a trouper and more often than not the foaming cork-popping explosion was hilarious.

When assembled across the stage for the final curtain-call, the cast almost filled it side-to-side. Then someone had the charming idea that all the pet animals had to be brought on as well, and I was asked to carry the kid -- in this case, a baby goat unrelated to the actual Nanny (a born ham) who portrayed it as an adult and was lead-on by another player. The kid was apt to be frightened, and one night, I naively put my little finger in its mouth for it to suck on. No one in the audience knew from my smile that I almost lost my finger.

Wiser heads prevailed and I was taken to an emergency hospital facility over by the Opera House. They had seen almost everything in a city like San Francisco during a World's Fair Year, but they were incredulous when I arrived shortly after midnight to show them a bloody finger and insisted that I had been bitten by a goat -- a mean little kid, in fact.

With a spectacularly beautiful World's Fair in the city's midst, occupying a man-made island in the middle of the bay, it was only natural that the troupe of children pay it a visit with full press coverage. We were photographed sampling, viewing, riding in and on everything imaginable, but the entire day was climaxed by an exciting trip over the Fair in the Goodyear blimp. For children, it was breath-taking fun, even though we had to split-up into groups. It is doubtful that anyone of us has ever forgotten the thrill, or for that matter, a few of the Moms. Yes, Virginia, there really are Stage Mothers ...

... In actual fact, I think most of us enjoyed the hotel elevator as much as anything. A group of us stayed at one hotel (to get a special rate), and the elevator operator, when he got to know us, would let us pilot the thing to very bumpy and scarey "landings" at various floors!

Kaufman and Hart had written a hilarious comedy entitled The Man Who Came to Dinner and sent a copy of it to our star, Carol Goodner, begging her to appear in it in the role of an actress said to be a caricature of Gertrude Lawrence. She agreed, and Homer Curran permitted her to take it, which closed our play,* but not before Anne O'Neal, myself and others of the Family cast crowded into Sam's hotel room 'til dawn to hear him give a one-man reading.

He was so brilliant as Sheridan Whiteside and all the other characters, we laughed until we cried. Years later, he played Whiteside on the stage of Hollywood's El Capitan Theatre. He was Laird Cregar and a movie-star-on-the-rise by that time, yet good as he was, I could never forget hearing him play all the parts that wonderful laugh-filled night in 1939 San Francisco!

☆ ☆ ☆

It had been very difficult to go back to George Washington High School after cavorting on stage, but I did, contenting myself with appearing on radio every week on 108 stations of the Mutual network in a show entitled Dramas of Youth. I had won a spot with this very talented juvenile stock company when I heard the show in 1938, contacted the Director/Writer, Marion Ward, and asked for an interview for a radio column I was then writing for my highschool newspaper. She invited me to attend the very next broadcast, and over a milkshake afterwards, told me that one of the group was leaving because he was getting so much movie work. As she wrote a part for each member of the company every week, not to be able to count on this young man created problems. When I told her I had appeared on KGFJ and KGER and KMPC as a member of a school dramatics club called The Washington Radio Guild, she insisted I audition. I did, and was a regular cast member from August, 1938, until the spring of 1941, when the show left the air following the death of the amazing Miss Ward.

Publicity for the show got me a nod from producer Sol Siegel for a screen test at Paramount. He was doing a series based upon the hit radio show The Aldrich Family and was recasting the two leads, as Jackie Cooper and Eddie Bracken were getting too mature to portray youngsters believably.

Jimmy Lydon had signed to play the new Henry Aldrich and I

* Dorothy Peterson was scheduled to take over.

MUTUAL-DON LEE BROADCASTING SYSTEM - PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT 12/12/41

For Immediate Release

DICKENS' "A CHRISTMAS CAROL"
TO ENLIVEN YULETIDE SPIRITS
IN SPECIAL MUTUAL MATINEE

If ever a man was born at precisely the right time -- for a written work produced at the right time -- it was Charles Dickens, and the work "A CHRISTMAS CAROL". Though it's hard to believe, the institution known as "Christmas" was fast-dying-out in England and this little piece not only made Dickens master of English letters, but revived the Christmas Spirit as we know it today.

Written in 1843, Charles Dickens' delightful "A CHRISTMAS CAROL" story lives on and is reenacted each Holiday season. In this time of war and hatred, the Mutual-Don Lee Broadcasting System does its part in maintaining the yuletide spirit with a coast-to-coast presentation of Dickens' classic on December 23, 1941 at a special time aimed at young listeners: 12:30 to 1:00 p.m. PST.

Charles Dickens' "A CHRISTMAS CAROL" was especially adapted for radio by Donald Chapman. The presentation will include in its cast: Rolland Morris as Bob Cratchit, Helen Thomas as Mrs. Cratchit, John Ericsson as Tiny Tim, Irvin Lee as Fred, Roy Gardner as Marley's Ghost, with Peter Rankin, Barbara Eiler, Geraldine Nolan, Louise Ericsson, Charles West, Jean Lang and Donald Chapman as Old Scrooge himself.

A LAST HURRAH

The original of this Press Release was so yellowed and faded, it wouldn't reproduce. I was so delighted to find it tucked into a scrapbook because it lists the names of all the "DRAMAS OF YOUTH" stock company who were invited to return to Mutual microphones for a last loving broadcast together.

DON CHAPMAN'S hobby -- if it could be called that, for it was an obsession if anything, was Charles Dickens. He had first appeared as "Scrooge" in a highschool performance of the Christmas fantasy. Not only was his vocal characterization incredible, but his performance faultless.

The photo at right is reproduced from his Christmas card 1942. It was taken before he entered the Army that year. He died in the snows of the Battle of the Bulge and is buried in Belgium.

- (Photo by Christy-Sheppherd)



Taken in 1941 / Age 19

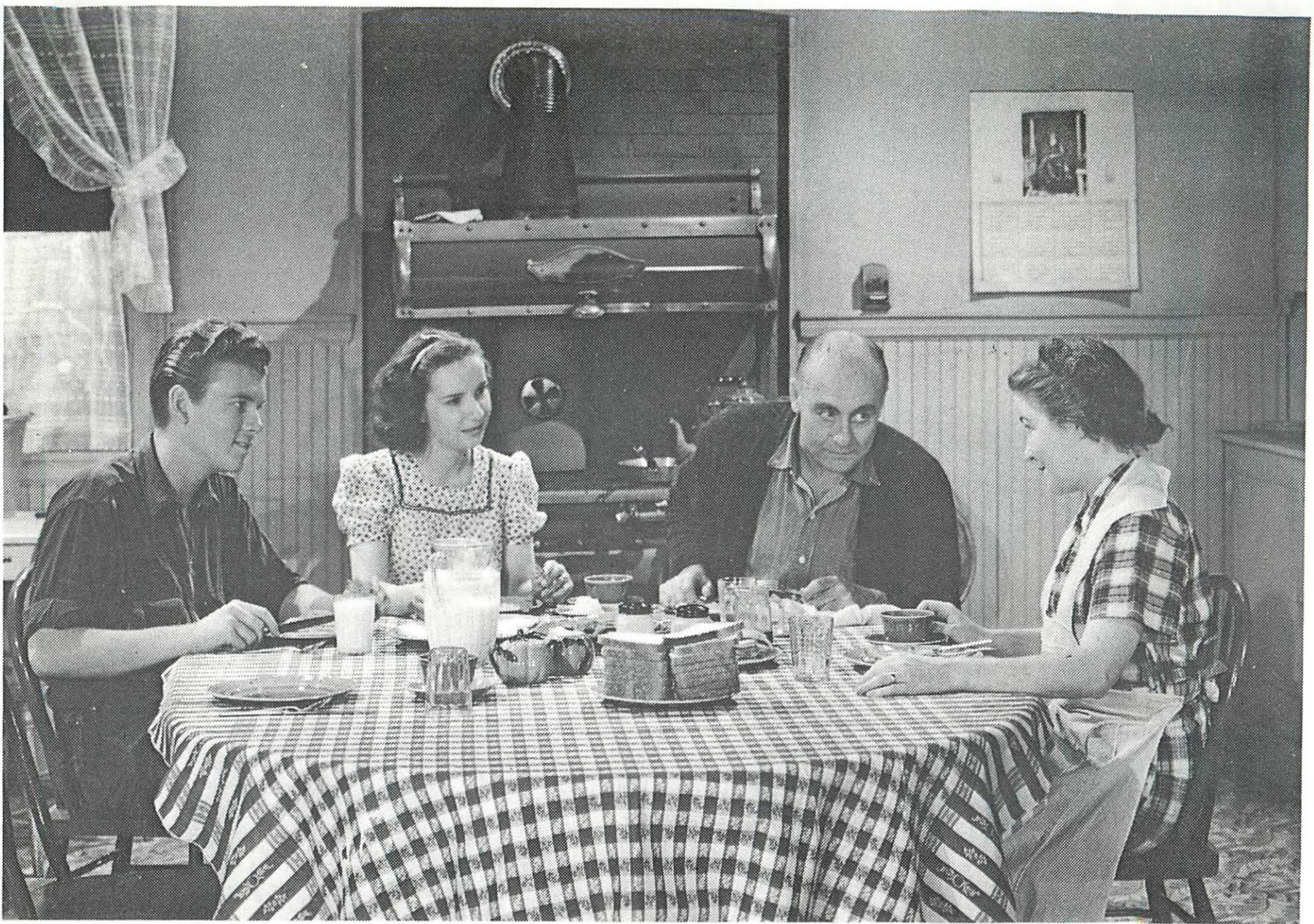
and three other fellows were tested for his pal, "Dizzy". Coming from a radio background, I was voice-oriented, so did my best to imitate Eddie Bracken's delivery. William Russell was the director and should have throttled me. Sad to say, he didn't, but let me persist. The results were ludicrous. I was far better looking than Jimmy Lydon and should have been playing Henry, but up on that screen one saw this younger version of Jackie Cooper talking in a raspy voice whining in a Brooklynese dialect. Dreadful. Casting Executive Bill Meiklejohn agreed and I never even got to be an extra in any of the subsequent films. Did I care? Very much. In later years, I've never been able to believe that so-and-so was a \$75 dollar-a-week actor at Fox or MGM, for the contract my parents signed for me at Paramount was for \$250 per week. In 1941, that sure wasn't popcorn.

☆ ☆ ☆

On the strength of having a major studio screen test, I was signed by Agent Jack Easton, perhaps the nicest agent I ever met ... he got me into the movies and a membership in the Screen Actors Guild all-the-while treating me like a kid brother. Sad to say, he wasn't a letter-writer, and this so hurt my feelings during World War II, I didn't re-sign with him when we both came back.

Jack talked me into an important role in a picture called The Light of Day which was made by the Detroit-based Jam Handy Organization for the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. They were called commercial films in those days and were widely shown in schools, trade fairs, sales meetings and even theatres in some instances. The sales pitch was very low-key, but a great many corporations spent millions on them, including General Motors, Goodyear, Coca-Cola and others.

Our story was not terribly exciting, being that of a farm boy who cared so much about crops and soil conservation that he talked his father into buying a new tractor with rubber tires. Tires for farm equipment was a new marketing development and Firestone, with a special patented tread design, was leading the field, so no expense was to be spared. Above all, there was to be no "stereotypical casting" of so-called farm types. As a result, Curtis Cooksey and Leona Powers, both with many years in the legitimate theatre, spoke



RUSTY MORRIS, GLORIA GOODE, CURTIS COOKSEY and LEONA POWERS breakfast in a farm kitchen built on Grand Boulevard in the Detroit Studios of The Jam Handy Organization, 1941. This was my FILM DEBUT, fresh from L.A. City College and a screen test from Paramount. I have a print of this film that I run once a year on my birthday for Auld Lang Syne.

(Photo Courtesy Jam Handy)

with almost British accents, and I, with carefully-nurtured remnants of my Paramount finger-wave piled high, was deemed the least-likely farmboy in America (surely), so was put aboard an overnight flight to Denver. California to Denver, overnight? It was 1941, so it was suppertime before I got to Chicago and bedtime before I got to Detroit. I was airsick all the way!

Because of production problems I wasn't privy to, my one week "guarantee" grew into four -- most of the time spent on location in a pleasant farm community north of Detroit known as Romeo. Romeo is in the heart of the Peach Belt, and in addition to the two movie houses, the Romeo and the Juliet, it sported a dairy store where one could get a fresh Peach ice cream cone for a dime that seemed to contain a pint of the most delicious ice cream I'd ever tasted.

Lenore Lornigan played my sister and was great fun. In a "Baby Snooks" voice, she told me outrageous stories about touring in the play Philadelphia Story, playing Katharine Hepburn's kid sister. I also recall riding Clydesdale horses bareback with the two children whose pets they were, incredible farm breakfasts, character actors Vic Potel and Roscoe Ates and getting to know marvelous Leona Powers.

Since there were sequences neither "Ma" Leona nor I were in, we contented ourselves with becoming fast friends for the following twenty years or so. In personality and appearance, she was much like film star Fay Bainter, her nemesis. When Lenore was replaced by a lovely Detroit singer named Gloria Goode, there were further delays and a week of retakes, all adding to my bankroll. Leona urged that I treat myself to a visit to New York City, since it was so close.

☆ ☆ ☆

Not eager to be airsick again, I took the Greyhound Bus and was car-sick, or was it bus-sick? Right off the farm, with \$1,000 in my jeans, I found New York City an incredible magical place and quickly extended my one week visit. How many times would I get the chance?

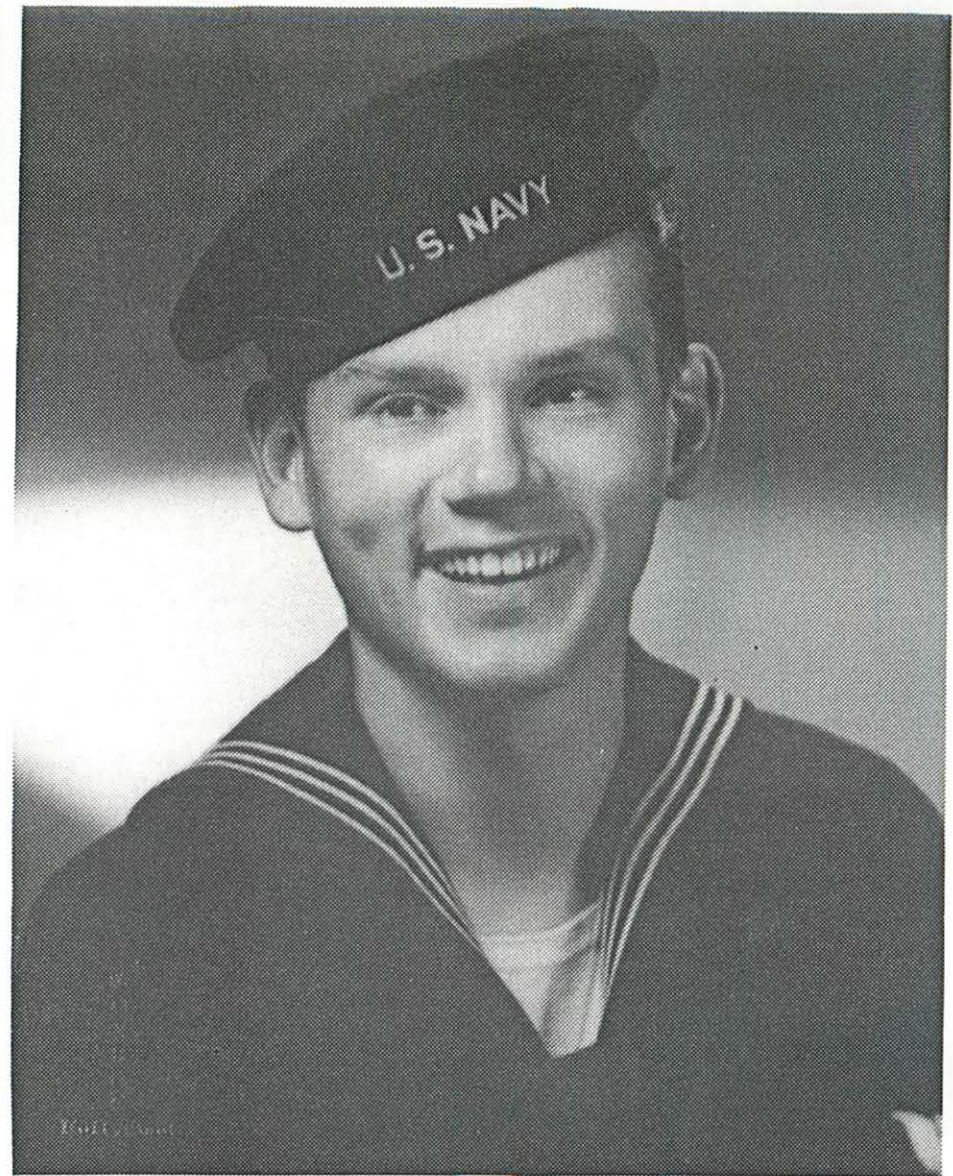
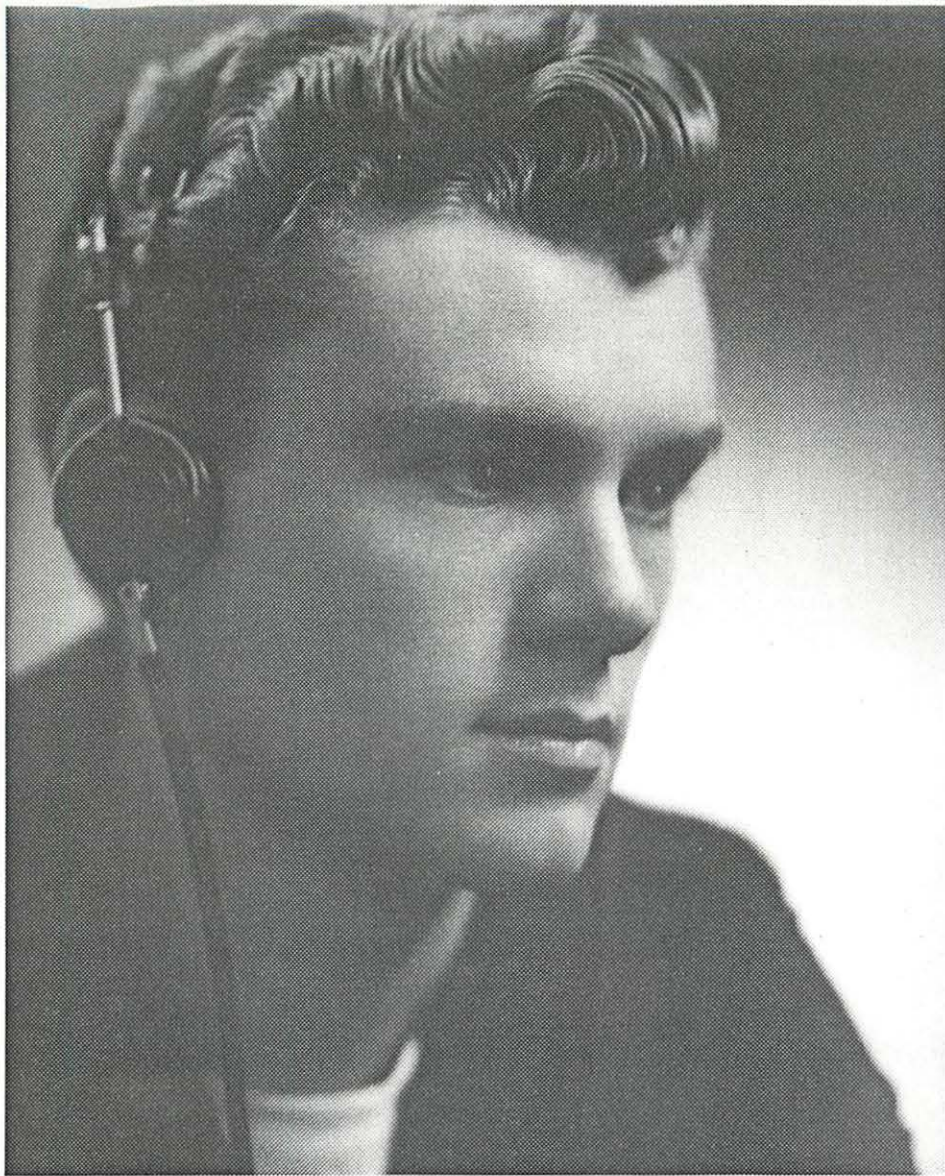
Though she closed The Great American Family, I was so fond of her, I contacted Carol Goodner, then appearing in a war play called The Wookey, with Edmund Gwenn. As I'd hoped, she arranged a house-seat for me, insisting I meet her for an early before-the-show meal.

It may be difficult to believe now, but I was staying at the Hotel Knickerbocker just off Times Square in a room as nice as anyone could ever want, for only \$16 a week. It was just a few blocks from where I was to meet Carol -- a restaurant in the basement of an old brownstone. She told me it had originally been a speakeasy. The owners were friends of her's and for that reason, we were dining before it opened for regular customers. I thought it was great, as they permitted her to bring her Bulldog, "John Adam". He ate what we ate from a dish and placemat on the floor near her chair.

Carol was to me the ultimate professional, gracious and charming and tres theatrical. An American, she had achieved considerable fame in London, but was more than willing to accept Homer Curran's bid to appear in The Great American Family "when they started to build bomb shelters in Hyde Park, darling." Effusive, husky-voiced, she was fun to be with and insisted that if I had a problem, including running out of money, I was to contact her immediately.

I enjoyed not only The Wookey very much indeed, but also Life With Father, Claudia, Arsenic and Old Lace, Pal Joey, The Corn Is Green (though I felt Miss Barrymore was a bit tipsy), and especially Watch On The Rhine and Lady In The Dark. Single seats downstairs were easy to come by on the night of the performance. Lady In The Dark I saw twice, it was so enchanting to the eye and ear. I also loved the spectacular ice show at the Center Theatre, next to the Radio City Music Hall I could hardly believe! Subway fare was only a nickel - breakfast of bacon, eggs, toast and coffee was about 50¢. A \$2.75 dinner was as nice as any you might find today for \$10. Even so, I had to borrow trainfare from Carol Goodner, repaying her from my final movie paycheck the studio had sent to California.

With war imminent, it was a time always to remember, including a couple of radio shows. In those days, radio was far more glamorous than television has been -- the audience sat in great comfort in lush show palaces to see The Aldrich Family appearing in formal dress at Rockefeller Center, surely 2,000 people in the audience, for it was a top-ranking program. Wonderful too, was The Fred Waring Show -- only fifteen memorable minutes live-on-the-air for Chesterfield, but also an "after show" for the studio audience.



I WAS A CUTE SAILOR, IF I SAY SO MYSELF. When I awoke to the fact that all my Boot Camp buddies had been sent away to school or to sea, I made inquiries (on a Friday, as I recall). I was told that my aptitude tests referred me to Aero-grapher's School at Lakehurst, New Jersey, with assignment to an aircraft carrier almost certain (and everyone knows how aircraft carriers fared in that war). Seems a "clerical error" had omitted my name from the list. In exasperation, I asked to be sent out on the very first draft leaving the following week. I was given two choices: Signalman's School in Farragut, Idaho or Radioman's School at the University of Colorado at Boulder -- I chose Boulder because I had some relatives in Denver. So I spent the winter learning Morse Code. Or trying to. My aptitude there was zilch - only the fact that I could already fly a typewriter saved me, for my two hours a day in typing class were spent instead dotting and dashing (and cursing).

(Photos: Monroe)

U. S. S. PC-779
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

YOU WALK OUT TO THE PROW OF YOUR SHIP,
YOU KNEEL, THEN SIT, FACING INTO THE WIND.
IT SENDS YOUR HAIR FLYING, RIPPLES YOUR SHIRT.
IF YOU OPEN YOUR MOUTH (AND YOU DO FOR FUN),
IT PUFFS OUT YOUR CHEEKS.

THE WATER IS CALM TODAY, AND UP FORWARD HERE,
THERE'S NO SOUND SAVE FOR THE SWISH BELOW
AS YOU KNIFE THROUGH THE WHITE CAPS;
YOU'RE ALL BY YOURSELF FOR A MOMENT,
IN A WORLD SET APART.

YOU CAN THINK UP HERE, AWAY FROM THE OTHERS.
AS YOUR EYES FOLLOW THE HORIZON AROUND,
NOTICING HOW MUCH BLUER IS THE SEA THAN THE SKY,
YOU WONDER HOW ANYTHING MIGHT RISE UP OUT OF
THAT BLUE WATER
OR COME OVER THAT DISTANT HORIZON AND KILL,
OR WHY GOD LETS THERE BE WARS - AND BOYS FROM HOME.

THEN YOU LIE DOWN IN THE WARM SUN AND SOFT WIND,
A LITTLE NAP BEFORE GOING ON WATCH - A LITTLE SLEEP;
A LITTLE TIME TO DREAM OF HOME
AND THE PEACE THAT TOMORROW'S TOMORROW
MUST SURELY BRING.

= RUSTY MORRIS, RM2c · USNR
JANUARY, 1945

☆ *Written on the way
to Iwo Jima - when
tomorrow's tomorrow
was very much in doubt ...*



IWO JIMA, 1945 - My best highschool buddy went to Farragut and became a Signaller who was loaned-out to the Merchant Marine and spent the war crossing and re-crossing the North Atlantic / rough duty.* I found this out while I was up in the Aleutians getting acquainted with Kiska, Amchitka and Adak. Even so, I didn't envy him! The next winter was spent in Hawaii, then we bounced out to Eniwetok, Guam, Saipan and Iwo Jima. I like to keep the clothes-washing shot around to remind me that no matter how bad it is, it has been worse, including haircuts. With more hair, I visited the simple monument erected to honor those who raised the American flag on that spot atop Mount Suribachi. Shadows are coming from a nearby radar tower. The bronze plaque recreates the Pulitzer-Prize-winning photo of the event ...

* We joined the Navy together; were separated the first ten minutes

(Photos: Abe Schenier)

Nothing was ever the same again after Pearl Harbor, though I managed three radio appearances from the San Diego Naval Training Station on a Mutual Network show called Anchors Aweigh. On one, I portrayed a Navy Radioman whose ship had been blasted by attacking enemy planes. They had killed my buddy, and there I was, treading water, waving a fist at them, screaming through my tears, "You've killed him -- you've killed my best friend!" A large on-stage band conducted by Leon Leonardi fortunately drowned out the laughter coming over the footlights ... for all those 5,000 fresh-off-the-farm sailors to see one of their own losing his marbles over unseen airplanes, screaming as the sound-effects bombs burst and the machine guns rattled only from speakers, was surely the strangest and funniest thing they'd enjoyed since slopping their pet pigs.

My emotional performance was highly praised by all the brass and I was certain my career in the Navy was going to be a glorious one after that! Henry Fonda was there at the same time, and got the Red Carpet treatment (except in his book), but I got sent to Naval Radio School in Boulder, Colorado, and subsequently spent the next three years losing my cookies into a bucket I stood watches with. Just like the kid in the radio drama (!), I was assigned to a PC, a patrol craft that only drew nine feet of water, so it went over the top of everything. Airsick and bus-sick was peanuts compared to being seasick, for like all good sailors should, I saw the sea -- from the Aleutians to Iwo Jima. How sad that my experience in radio wasn't utilized in Armed Forces Radio, where I could have been useful.*

☆ ☆ ☆

The war over, I returned to radio acting. My first show was Dr. Christian. This time, I fell in love with Rosemary DeCamp, who is without peer. All the good things about show people are wrapped up in this one dear darling lady. A perky little cutey from Glendale named Helen Koford played my girl friend; she later went into films as Terry Moore and is supposed to have married Howard Hughes.

Mayor of the Town and A Date With Judy were other shows that

* My sole contribution of value to the war effort was my appendix, in an Adak, Alaska quonset hut, 1943

came my way. Meeting Agnes Moorehead on Mayor was a genuine delight as she, along with Jeannette Nolan and John McIntyre (both of whom I was to later meet and play opposite!) were the legendary stars of the Cavalcade of America shows during my high school days.

So often, radio shows were thrilling to be a part of, featuring superb top-drawer actors and actresses to work with, live in-studio or on-stage orchestras to get the adrenalin pumping and very often, favorite movie stars to get to know. This would ultimately include Bob Hope, Irene Dunne, Lionel Barrymore, Claudette Colbert, Gregory Peck, Eleanor Powell, Jimmy Durante, Gary Cooper, Virginia Bruce, Pat O'Brien, Mitzi Gaynor, Fred MacMurray and Robert Young.

It also included Jeanne Cagney (from my youth), on a Family Theatre show with Beulah Bondi. I finally got to meet and work with the very gracious Fay Bainter on Premiere Performance. Of all the shows I appeared and reappeared on, This Is Your FBI was a top favorite because of the professionalism of dynamic producer-director Jerry Devine. Another special thrill for me was meeting and working with Ronald Colman on his wonderful Halls of Ivy show. (He had been host and narrator for a program called Favorite Story, on which I played "Marco Polo" - my first leading role in big-time radio, but his portions were added later).

Every actor coveted a part on Lux Radio Theatre. I appeared on several, including one with Rock Hudson and Piper Laurie, whom I found to be utterly natural and unassuming and friendly as anyone I'd known for years. I was invited to come see a preview of Rock's new movie, Magnificent Obsession, after the broadcast.

To my surprise and joy, I got to work a Lux show with a former highschool classmate, Esther Williams. It was "scream-and-grab time" and she even called me by my school nickname: Rolo, which I had very willingly exchanged for Rusty while in the Navy.

There can't be a former student of that period (1939) at George Washington High School in southwest Los Angeles, who didn't feel they knew (and were in-love-with) "Essie" as she was called then. Tall, beautiful, gracious, she was active in all the best student organizations: Ladies, Vice-President of her Senior Class, the Cabinet, Tri-Y Club, a Sealbearer, Torchbearer and one of the most popular

and well-liked girls on campus at that time. I remember being in total awe of her beauty and poise and following her around like a modern-day groupie.

As a member of the GWHS Stage Crew, I often stayed late to help set up a show for the following day -- a memory I treasure is helping Essie Williams trim a Christmas Tree for our "Tin Can Show", admittance to which was a can of something suitable for a needy family's Christmas Dinner. I was on a ladder and she would hand up everything to me and tell me where to hang it for best effect. We worked until almost six o'clock and I was sorry it didn't last a lot longer, such was my school-boy crush at 17.

So, on Skirt's Ahoy, we had a lot to catch-up on and spent every possible moment talking. Finally, Lux Director, Earl Ebi, came over to me and chided me for "shining-up" to Miss Williams in such an obvious manner. He enjoyed hearing the reason, and let us carry on for Auld Lang Syne. Esther especially wanted news of her old pals, Jeannie Messenger and Twila Belle Spencer. About both, she said something poignant: "They dropped me when I got into the movies -- I didn't drop them!"

The Lux stint I recall with the most enjoyment was one starring Bette Davis and Jimmy Stewart. Because of its one-hour air-time, there was a lot of extra rehearsal time for Lux (which made it a nice paycheck), and Stewart, wearing bedroom slippers throughout, was great fun, teasing Bette Davis at every opportunity. She was a mess and very distant, giving the impression she'd much rather be anywhere but there.

The days of formal dress for the cast members and orchestra of a network radio show had passed with the war. None-the-less, since this was presented "live" from the Lux Radio Playhouse on Vine Street, (now the Huntington Hartford Theatre), before an audience of 1,000, the cast was urged to appear in dark suits and cocktail dresses. We all wondered what Bette Davis would do to make her look like something other than a cleaning woman.

We needn't have worried. Some magician accomplished miracles and with all of us assembled on stage in our best, including Jimmy Stewart in shoes, on came Bette Davis looking every inch the movie

Mon., Aug. 29, 1949

DAILY **VARIETY** DAILY

SAG TURNS DOWN PLAN FOR ONE BIG TELE UNION

Screen Actors Guild has turned thumbs down on proposal to establish a new AFL union, tagged Television Authority, which would have jurisdiction over both live and film television. Eastern unionists devised plan, under which new group would come within Associated Actors and Artistes of America.

AAAA met here several weeks ago, on invitation of SAG, in attempt to work out some form of jurisdiction over actors in video. Nothing came of this. Now proposal now has been turned down by SAG, because latter asserts it would create a new union of actors in motion pictures, compel ex-members to pay dues for privilege of doing same work that they now do under SAG.

SAG also claims new Guild would be governed from N.Y. and Guild directors would sometimes be unable to attend. Eastern branches thus would be in control, outnumbering film branches five to two. AAAA will hold further sessions in N.Y. in pitch to iron out jurisdictional difficulty.

UI Pacts Fregonese

Hugo Fregonese signed a term pact with UI over the weekend. Argentine director's first assignment will be "Death on a Side Street." Leonard Goldstein will produce. Lawrence Kibla is writing script from his own original.

GEO. MURPHY FIRED; VICK KNIGHT QUILTS

(Continued from Page 1)
netted him \$1,250 a week, was settled and he was paid off for the five weeks remaining of the first cycle. Knight's pull-out was voluntary on his part and Al Hollander, v.p. of Lou Cowan, Inc., packaged the giveaway for. He take over is producer. Permanent successor is

Taking Bows

LUX RADIO THEATRE

Tonight at 6, One Hour
KNX-CBS

Starring Bette Davis and James Stewart in "June Bride," with Raymond Roe, Ruth Perrott, Sandy Lynn, Roland Morris, Eleanor Audley, Rhoda Williams.

Producer: William Keighley.
Director: Fred Mackaye for J. Walter Thompson; assistant director, Carl Harwood, for CBS.
Writer: Sandy Barnett.
Music director: Lou Silvers (35).
Announcer: John Milton Kennedy.
Sponsor: Lever Bros.
Network: 149 CBS stations.

CLUB 15

Tonight at 9:45, 15 Mins.
KNX-CBS

Starring Dick Haymes and Ann Sothern.
Producer: Diana Bourdon; director, Ace Ochs for Ward Wheelack Agency.
Writers: Carroll Carroll, David Gregory.
Music director: Jerry Gray.
Announcer: Del Sharbutt.
Sponsor: Campbell Soup.
Network: 153 CBS stations.

MY FRIEND IRMA

Tonight at 7, 30 Mins.
KNX-CBS

Starring Marie Wilson and Cathy Lewis, with John Brown, Gloria Gordon, Hans Conried, Alan Reed, Donald Woods, Sandra Gould, Bea Benadaret, Ed Max.
Producer: Cy Howard; assistant director, Lucian Davis, for CBS.
Writers: Parke Levy, head, with Stanley Adams, Roland MacLane.
Music director: Lud Gluskin (12).
Announcer: Wendell Miles.
Sponsor: Lever Bros. (Pepsodent).
Network: 145 CBS stations.

BOB HAWK

Tonight at 7:30, 30 Mins.
KNX-CBS

Starring Bob Hawk.
Producer-director: Don Bernard for William Fox; assistant director, Joe Allabough.
Music director: Irving Miller, and Crew Chiefs quartet.
Announcers: George Barclay, Charles Lyon, Bob Lemonard.
Sponsor: R. J. Reynolds (Camels).
Network: 147 CBS stations.

On Air Waves

Joan Davis starts her Ro-Tan CBS show, "Leave It to Joan," next week with a top flooper rating, but her summer show behind medium's Monday nighter "ing, highest for



star! The hair had been coiffed and she was wearing a black bouffant gown which was very flattering.

I had a scene with just the two of them, and although there were two microphones, I'd been directed to share the one they utilized. Stewart was on one side, Davis and I were on the other side facing him. As I began my first line, I felt a strong left arm go around my waist and pull me close until my shoulder was butting directly against hers! It was Bette's arm, of course -- most any other actress of her prestige would have pushed me away, but not she. I was in her scene and, by gosh, she was making darn sure I was on-mike as well! It was a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

☆ ☆ ☆

We were broadcasting a radio version of one of Bette's pictures, June Bride. Oddly enough, I had been one of the juveniles chosen to test for a featured role in the film version at Warner Brothers. Bretaigne Windust was the director and a kinder, more helpful man I've never met. He taught me whole courses in acting for the camera in a matter of minutes. Working with me in the scene, and also up for a featured role, was lovely Ann Todd, nervous as a kitten and just as adorable.

It was an unusually elaborate set-up for just a test, it seemed to me, and as Ann and I sat on the couch we shared for the scene, I asked one of the crewman why they were going to such pains lighting a painting on the wall behind us. "Because it's a Bette Davis picture, that's why -- we need all the practice we can get," the man answered with a grin. The Script Girl later told me that the picture's leading man, Robert Montgomery, had watched the filming of the scene and nodded his head to Bretaigne Windust and said, "He's the one."

Not only wasn't I the one, Ann wasn't either.

Moreover, when my agent and I went to the studio screening room to see my test, the lights dimmed, there was a long pause and then the telephone rang. The projectionist announced the film can with my name on it was empty. There was no test to run. We never learned why. A great shame, for Windust cared and it would have been a very

useful casting tool. In those days, tests were passed around from one studio to the other, and sometimes good things could happen as a result. Ann's test, of course, was assembled to favor her in close-ups and so forth, so was of little use to me.

Someone, for reasons unknown, didn't want my test to be seen; the footage was never found. But that's show business, as the saying goes. Others might put it under a heading I dislike: Paying One's Dues.

☆ ☆ ☆

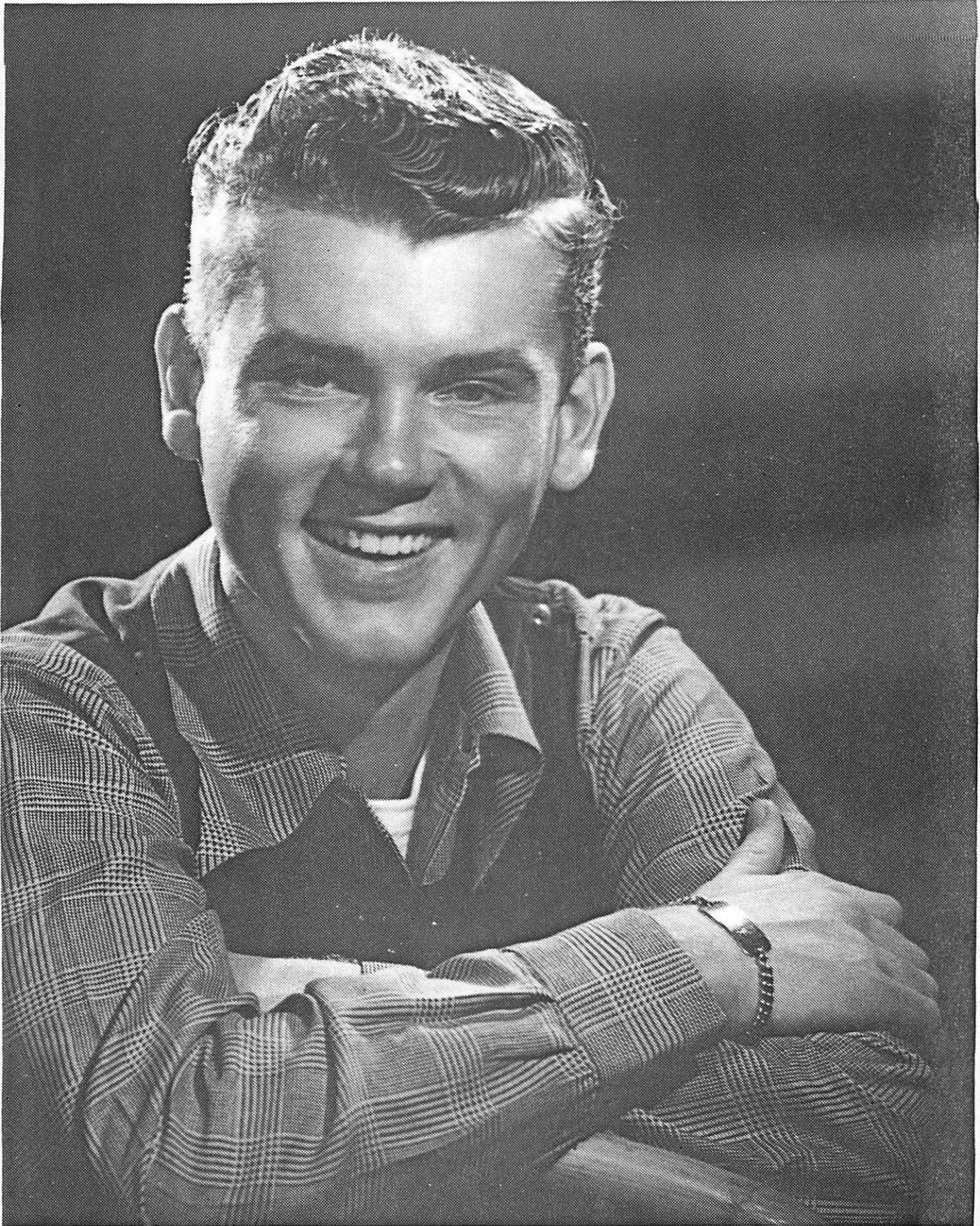
Although Bretaigne Windust had directed Life With Father on Broadway, the movie version was directed by Warner Brothers' stalwart, Michael Curtiz, and that IS show biz!

Fresh from the Navy, I weighed perhaps 140 pounds and easily passed for a seventeen-year-old when, without an agent, I wangled an interview with Warners' Casting Director, Phil Friedman. A newspaper article told of their search for red-heads to play the sons in Life With Father, a big new film. I sent in my photo, and as a result, I found myself being escorted to a vast sound stage to meet Mr. Curtiz.

A screen test was in progress -- an unusually elaborate test in Technicolor. The actress being tested for the role of the mother was none other than the legendary Mary Pickford! A bell rang and everyone settled down and was quiet, as one-by-one, the much brighter and bluer-than-ordinary lights blasted the set as this tiny little woman in her tiny little voice pleaded with her husband to get baptized. The take was okayed, the big lights went out and the camera crew bustled about to shoot everything from another angle. I was ushered into the presence of Michael Curtiz and, without realizing it, Mrs. Clarence Day, who had supreme say-so over every aspect of casting.* As I recall it all, neither were especially cordial, but there was obvious interest and I was okayed for a screen test to be filmed in color the following week.

A few days later, I received a phone call from Phil Friedman, telling me that Mrs. Day had decided I was too old. There would be

* The film was adapted from the long-running hit play which was based upon the life and times of her real-life husband's mother and father.



HOW OLD IS THIS GUY? Warner Brothers Casting Director Phil Friedman thought I looked only seventeen and called me in to be considered for one of the sons in "LIFE WITH FATHER". The ravages of grim naval duty during World War II aren't apparent. Yet. Compare with the real age seventeen photo on page 53a.

(1946 Photo by Don Phillips-Amos Carr)

no test after all. Martin Milner got the part, and for years after that, we were on the same casting calls. I would arrive and find him waiting outside a producer's office, or vice versa. Although we looked enough alike to be brothers, we never spoke. That, too, is show-biz.

☆ ☆ ☆

Possibly I dislike the expression "Paying One's Dues" because it is apt to be associated with the hurts and disappointments that befall any actor along the yellow brick road.

Once I was cast in a role in a picture at Universal by a well-known director whose assistant at the time was Joan Hathaway, who had directed me in 1939 in the play The Great American Family. I was called out to the studio one Friday to meet with him and to then be escorted to the film's producer, who shall also be nameless under the circumstances. He okayed everything, including a copy of the script to take home. Cut and dried. I started to study my lines over the weekend, certain in my heart that this was my "big break" at last.

With egg-on-voice, the director phoned me Monday. According to him, the studio casting director, who was the producer's "best friend and a bitch on wheels" (according to him) had visited the swimming pool of George Cukor over the weekend and by the pool, had met a young man who was ideal for the role. There was, it seemed, no way to fight her on it as she held all the trumps. I was to give the script back immediately. Oh, yes, he said he was sorry ...

Knowing what I know NOW, I doubt very much that the so-called casting director had anything to do with it. Mr. Cukor had too much class to let her on his property, sophisticated as he surely was and kind as he surely was. But quite obviously, the director might come splash at any time. The picture was not a success, as it happened, but the actor has since become a star and cannot be faulted.

Too stunned by the whole incident to do anything but as I was instructed, I returned the script. I was never called for a possible job at Universal again. Later, I was to learn that the Screen Actors Guild would have stood behind me. Supposedly, a script is as good as a contract. Having been approved by the director AND the producer

and having received a script to "seal the Deal", I'm told I could have received my salary for the number of weeks I would have otherwise worked. Another example of an agent scared-to-death to make a few waves. If anything, I most regretted not working with Joan Hathaway again on a picture that starred Irene Dunne. Her final film, it proved to be a boxoffice bomb. Such a pity.

I hadn't exactly been fired, but that, too, had come my way and was a bitter experience which needn't have happened, or so I was ultimately informed by the playwright long after the fact.

☆ ☆ ☆

The play was known as The Gentle Ghost, later changed for legal reasons to The Story of Mary Surratt. Its formidable star was Dorothy Gish, marvelous in the role, portraying a real-life woman destroyed in the tragedy surrounding the assassination of President Lincoln. Tried by a U.S. Army Tribunal, Mary Surratt was convicted as a conspirator and hanged -- the first woman to be so executed in America.

Utilizing suppressed documentation, John Patrick's* sensitive depiction of this smudge on the history of a country whose Constitution guarantees a trial by jury, was very daring so soon after the war (1947). Except for Elizabeth Ross, who played Mary's daughter, Kent Smith headed an all-male cast that featured James Monks as John Wilkes Booth.

I joined the large cast a week after rehearsals were underway, taking over the role of Mary's son from another actor who had been hired for it in New York. I never learned why he was replaced. It was a very awkward position at best, for earlier, I had auditioned for the role of the daughter's beau, a part much more suited to me, yet genuinely portrayed by a fine young actor, Bernard Thomas.

As John Surratt, I was required to be a surly brat, moody and unpredictable. Moreover, historical evidence revealed that a tawdry homosexual affair existed between Mary's son and John Wilkes Booth. Possibly because of this, James Monks avoided me at all times. He

* *The Hasty Heart, Curious Savage, Teahouse of the August Moon, etc.*

would not run lines with me, much as I needed the practice, so our rehearsing was limited to the time we shared on stage together in a very difficult scene which had to convey Booth's cruel egomania yet his honest affection for the naive young man he insisted leave the country at once.*

Heartbroken, the young man does as he is ordered, discovering that money he has been given by Booth is missing from his carpet bag. Confronting Mary Surratt, he becomes almost hysterical, snatching at her sewing basket, suspecting the money to be hidden in it. Finding it there, he shouts at her as he leaves in a flamboyant manner he had seen Booth utilize in the theatre, that henceforth, she must always think of her son as dead.

We opened at the historic Lobero Theatre in Santa Barbara -- although Miss Gish and Betsy and Kent Smith and the inventive set by Samuel Leve were highly praised, nothing else was. A detailed questionnaire was passed out with the programs and scientifically evaluated by a respected audience research organization. It was determined that the homosexual relationship between the young man and the dashing actor-assassin made the audience squirm.

Next stop, San Francisco, where the scene was emasculated and the son became only a spoiled malcontent with an unexplained and irrational attitude toward his pathetically suffering mother who seemed guilty only of loving him. The same newspaper reviewer who, back in 1939, said I "displayed the stuff of which all good actors are made," didn't mince words in his 1947 review of Mary Surratt. This time, he said that I was "atrocious" (along with Mr. Monks).

Unhappy from the beginning, I felt unwanted, and as a result, instead of teaming up and sharing economical living quarters with any of the others, I indulged in a long-held desire to stay at the glamorous St. Francis Hotel. The Company considered me a snob and had nothing to do with me. Many nights I walked the streets almost in tears, running and re-running my lines aloud, trying with all my heart and acting skills to uncover why I was atrocious. It was a dreadfully unfair and totally punishing experience - totally rotten showbusiness inconsideration - totally wasted as it later developed!

* In real life, John Surratt escaped to Canada and from there to England. Years later, he made a good living touring the United States on the lecture circuit defending his mother.

There was no one to turn to for help. Unfortunately for me, our well-meaning, but dilettante director, was also the playwright. In my opinion, based on their actions, the producers were devious rascals,* and Miss Gish wasn't exactly my idea of a lady. In desperation, I contacted my agent and told him I wanted out of the play before it got to Los Angeles, that I hated the role and preferred not to be seen as an assassin's young punk! My agent then was gregarious Jack Fife, of the Paul Kohner office. He wired back: "Who are you to quit a Theatre Guild play?"

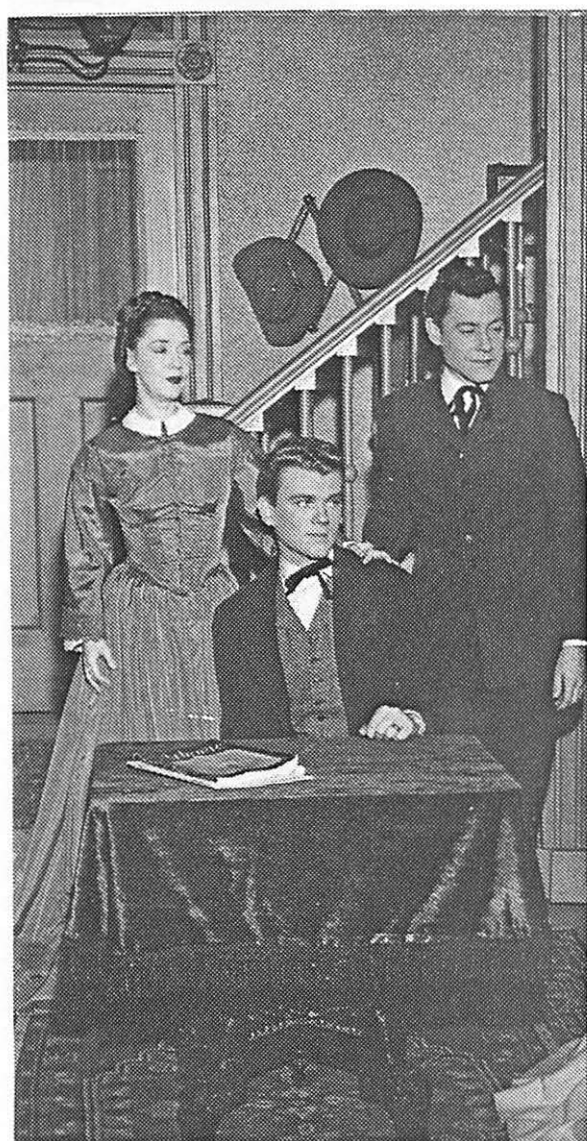
At the end of our second week in San Francisco's decrepit Geary Theatre, I was fired.** A letter from co-producer Howard Young was delivered to my dressing room by an Assistant Stage Manager informing me that I was doing myself harm appearing in the part and that I was too old to be believable as Miss Gish's son (I was half Gish's age; according to published statistics, she was born in 1898).

The following Monday, an actor arrived from New York, letter-perfect in his lines, rehearsed all afternoon with Dorothy Gish and Betsy Ross and the taciturn James Monks, then went on that night in my place. Actors Equity rules required that, for the remainder of my final week, I was to report backstage and stay in readiness for the duration of Act One. I avoided meeting my replacement or even watching his performance from the wings. I didn't want to "bug" him and certainly didn't envy him ... I had been in his shoes. So I spent the time in the Wardrobe Mistress' office and in the course of things, got to know the rest of the cast at last. Far from being unfriendly, they were charming and kind and seemed to regret that I was leaving.

Later, I learned they all had been told I quit to take a movie job! I also learned that my replacement was perfectly acceptable even though he was almost four years older than I, and that he and Mr. Monks became very good friends indeed. The Story of Mary Surratt closed in New York prematurely, due to a mysterious hassle involving backers. As a result, salaries were held up by Equity, but Dorothy Gish personally loaned money to those cast members who wanted to return to their homes in California. The most regrettable aspect of the whole thing is that it was never made into a motion picture as planned. Surely, it would have been Bette Davis' finest!

*The producers kept the homosexual aspects a dark secret from me and my agent;

**I had insisted on a Standard Contract rather than Run-of-the-Play, having no intention of going to New York if movie interest materialized during L.A. run.



A PAGE FROM MY SCRAPBOOK gives the Civil War flavor of John Patrick's beautiful play. In the top photo, Elizabeth Ross talks to her devoted mother, portrayed by Dorothy Gish in a bravura performance. All else is publicity for the newspapers. In the play, I never had any feelings about my sister's beau, well played by Bernard Thomas.

(Photos by Rothschild)

A couple of years later, my telephone rang one Sunday morning. It was playwright Patrick, who divulged that his conscience hurt him and was it possible for us to get together for a talk about The Story of Mary Surratt? Of course we could.

Over dinner that evening, he shyly told me that I had ~~not~~ been fired for any reason connected with my performance. He apologized extravagantly for ruining the part with the hasty rewrite and was even sorrier that the published version of the play had to be "as performed" and therefore couldn't utilize the original lines. He told me co-producer Russell Lewis was furious at having to pay me so much money (\$100 per week) to be in only the first act, so he did everything he could to find fault and I drove him "crazy" each performance because I would instinctively shift up the legs of my trousers so as not to stretch them when I knelt to get my carpet bag from under the staircase. "The reason" for my bravura exit was never explained to the audience who didn't realize I was a very good actor portraying a ham actor, the same curse that hurt Mr. Monks -- but with so much demanding his time as director, he had no time and no mind for the rewriting of the roles. Moreover, as star, Miss Gish had delivered an ultimatum they could not ignore. It seems that every night I would cry real tears in our scene together (dreadfully unprofessional!) and would tug the sewing basket from her hands with such force, it became damaged and had to be replaced constantly ... so I HAD to go!

So much for sincere letters from co-producers delivered by assistant stage managers. So much for actresses who play your mother in a show speaking to you only during the scenes you rehearse or play together. So much for actors who won't have a thing to do with you off-stage. I thought of Miss Gish's total indifference, James Monks' cold-shoulder and of the lies that had been spread about why I was leaving the show. I also thought back to that POOR DAMN FOOL who used to walk the dark streets of San Francisco worrying and caring and how sad it was that Mr. Patrick had decided to be a friend--indeed now that the need had passed!

All the unsettling news did not in any way prevent me from enjoying a play that evening with Pat. It was the Pasadena

Playhouse production of The Curious Savage, and until you sit next to an author of a show during a perfectly splendid production of it, you haven't lived.

He insisted on going backstage to express his pleasure. Imagine how his arrival was received by a cast who had assumed it was "just another Sunday Night performance." When they learned he was out-front and had come backstage, they all poured out of their dressing rooms into the Green Room where, with a distinct catch in his voice, he was able to tell the entire company how thrilled he had been with their show. It was a very touching moment.

☆ ☆ ☆

Selling a play to the movies can provide interesting complications, I was to learn from another footlight experience, this one a play by Robert Smith entitled Strike A Match. It was 1952, and the previous spring, the play had been a smash hit in La Jolla, starring Eva Gabor, Pat O'Brien, Richard Egan and Tom Brown. Actor Mel Ferrer was again director of the comedy melodrama which was to tour, prior to a New York opening, to San Francisco, St. Louis, Houston, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Austin, Dallas, Shreveport, New Orleans, Memphis, Milwaukee, Chicago and points east. (We closed in Memphis in absolute triumph).

Setting of the play was a New York bar where Pat O'Brien was the amiable bartender. Gabor and Egan portrayed sweethearts who rendezvous there. He leaves, his car is involved in a fatal accident and he's sent to prison. The rest of the show involves Gabor's detective work in tracking down the real killer. I played an actor in a television show, who with my crony, Joel Marston, visits the bar -- our light-hearted confrontation with Gabor provided the play's only fun.

The night we opened in San Francisco under the auspices of Alexander Hale, programs were passed around to each dressing room. I received word that Pat O'Brien wanted to see me.



RUSTY MORRIS, EVA GABOR, PAT O'BRIEN, JOEL MARSTON in a scene from Robert Smith's "STRIKE A MATCH", directed by Mel Ferrer, which toured ten cities back in 1952 after scoring a hit in La Jolla.

(Photo by Barney Peterson)

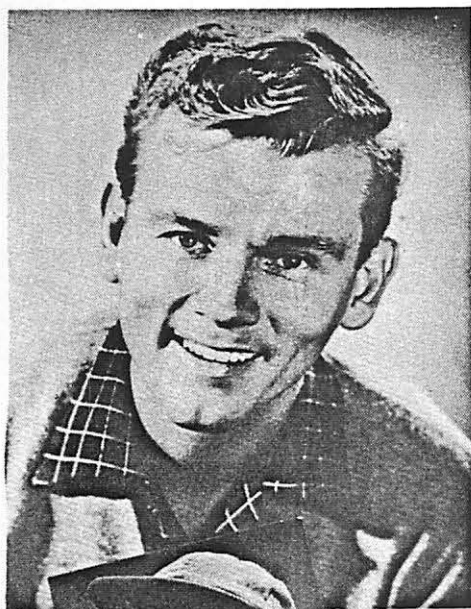
"What's this, me bucko?" Pat questioned with false concern, "Who is this toney fella, this Rolland Morris, the program claims is appearing in your part?" I explained, and he, one of the dearest men I have ever met in showbusiness, told me "As one Irishman to another" to drop that name like a hot potaytah. He suggested I had a perfectly swell name for the acting profession as "Rusty" and to take his very heartfelt advice, and use it. "Call it a hunch, you won't be sorry," he advised.

Never in my experience had I met anyone like Eva Gabor. We had originally met at Paramount before the war, but I never told her so as it would have made her as old as I. This lady wasn't physically well, but worked with such fervor and dedication she was inspiring to the entire company. In fact, she was working with as much steam the night we closed to an ovation in Memphis as she had at any time during the run.

In those days, she didn't talk with an accent, though "darling" was sprinkled throughout her conversations. As the only woman in the cast, she was given star treatment and deservedly so. She was an angel to everyone. One night I tried to kiss her as she was ironing her dress and she threatened me with her hot iron. She was only playing as she was cooperation itself because I had brought along my Rolleiflex and was shooting a documentary of the show-tour.

Charles R. Meeker took the show on the road and as luck would have it, when we got to Dallas, where most of the backers lived, the weatherman did us dirt. Nine inches of snow covered the city and business was the poorest of the entire run. We were, all of us, nearly physically sick when the show was cancelled. O'Brien wanted to continue it through the rest of our bookings, claiming he could get the backers, mentioning Greer Garson and her husband Buddy Fogelson, etc. It was then that we all learned that RKO had bought the property for a movie and thus a Broadway Opening was totally unnecessary.

Eva called me later, to thank me for all the photos I'd sent her. She was at MGM working on Gigi, darling. A few years later, in New York, she didn't recognize me, but that's another story.



EQUITY Since 1939
SAG Since 1941
AFTRA Since 1941

A NEW NAME: . . . *Rusty* MORRIS

(Formerly ROLLAND MORRIS)

SCREEN:

SHE'S WORKING HER WAY THRU COLLEGE, STRANGERS ON A TRAIN, ON MOON-LIGHT BAY (Warner Bros.) — FRANCIS GOES TO WESTPOINT (Universal) — I WANT YOU (Goldwyn) — THE WELL (Popkin-UA) — FLAT TOP, FIGHTER ATTACK (Allied Artists) — SEA OF LOST SHIPS (Republic) — BATTLE CIRCUS (MGM) — PAID IN FULL, THE ACCUSED (Wallis-Paramount) — DOG OF THE WILD (RKO) — AS YOU WERE (Lippert) also features for Cathedral Films, John Sutherland, Jam Handy and Graphic Films

STAGE:

"Ozzie" in MEL FERRER PRODUCTION of "STRIKE A MATCH" with Pat O'Brien, Eva Gabor, Dick Egan — 1952-53 in San Francisco, St. Louis, Houston, San Antonio, Austin, Fort Worth, Dallas, Shreveport, New Orleans and Memphis ★★ "John Surratt" in "THE STORY OF MARY SURRETT" with Dorothy Gish — 1947 at Lobero, Santa Barbara, Geary, San Francisco

TELEVISION:

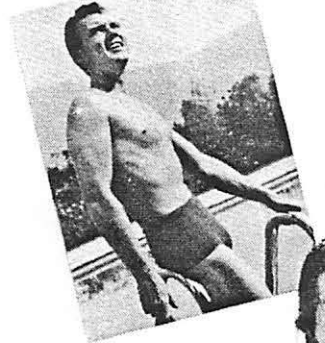
OMNIBUS (with Jack Benny) (CBS-TV) — RAY BOLGER SHOW (ABC-TV) — ANN SOTHERN SHOW (CBS-TV) — THE RUGGLES (ABC-TV) — THE SUM OF SEVEN (Jerry Fairbanks) — THAT'S MY POP!, RETURN OF VAN SICKLE, CHRISTMAS FOR SWEENEY, BEAUTY IS A JOY (Revue) — RACKET SQUAD (Hal Roach) — plus HALLMARK CARDS, EASTSIDE, PABST, FALSTAFF, OLDSMOBILE, WHITE RAIN and CAVALIER Commercials

RADIO:

FATHER KNOWS BEST — RAILROAD HOUR — HALLS OF IVY — LUX THEATRE — STARS OVER HOLLYWOOD — DOCTOR CHRISTIAN — SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS — THIS IS YOUR FBI — FAMILY THEATRE — LET GEORGE DO IT — WOMAN IN MY HOUSE — TARZAN (and many more since 1938)

MODELING:

EASTMAN KODAK — UNION OIL — GOODYEAR — CHEER — LUSTER CREME — BUICK — PEPSI COLA — BUDWEISER — RHEINGOLD — GANTNER — JANTZEN (3 Years) — CATALINA — MAY COMPANY — BULLOCK'S — DESMOND'S — ANDREW LOOMIS — "MEN'S WEAR" — "CALIFORNIA MEN'S STYLIST" — "ESQUIRE APPAREL ARTS" — 8 M.A.G.I.C. STYLE SHOWS, Ambassador Hotel, plus Clothing, Photos and Shows for EVERY MAJOR MEN'S APPAREL MANUFACTURER IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



Age: 29 Height: 6'
Weight: 165 Hair: Red

GET ME THRU



REGISTRY

Though Robert Smith's charming mystery was never filmed, it was, I understand, a summer stock favorite in subsequent years. A scene between Eva Gabor and Richard Egan was one of the most magical I've ever witnessed on a stage -- though seated in a tacky bar, the lovers talked of things other than their true feelings, but in a way that left no doubt about how they really felt. I made a point of seeing every performance from the wings. She can be very special.

With Lenore Coffee, Smith had written the screenplay of the very successful Joan Crawford vehicle, Sudden Fear. Required to be in almost daily attendance during shooting, he had a plentiful supply of anecdotes about the volatile star, all complimentary or in fun. I was glad I had one I could share ...

The son of a mutual friend had spent the weekend at Crawford's home as a playmate for her son, Christopher. We had gone to collect the boy and were taken into the den of the Bristol Avenue home in Brentwood. Drinks were served all around; our bartender, thirteen-year-old Christina, was rightly proud of her know-how. As Crawford had lived there ever since her second marriage to Franchot Tone, I was curious and just rude enough to take a look around.

I left the others and was standing in what I remember as an all-white living room, appreciating a painting over the fireplace, when Christina entered. In a voice both bold and apprehensive, she told me: "We don't come in here!"

I returned to the den just in time for Joan to make an entrance in a svelte black gown with an impressive jewelled collar about four inches wide, worn Cleopatra-style all around the neckline. But one really couldn't notice anything but that face, that mouth, those eyes. Was there ever such a voice?

Drink in hand, she settled into a comfortable chair to regale us with a four-letter-worded explanation of her Sunday, which had been spent on her hands and knees scrubbing the kitchen after paying a woman a perfectly good salary to do it Saturday. During all this, a thick volume of stills from her latest picture, Sudden Fear, was passed around. I found it especially fascinating, for it was the entire movie in splendid 8" x 10" glossy photographs bound in sequence. I took advantage of a suitable lull in the conversation to observe that the retouching was extremely well-done.

It was an innocent enough comment on my part -- I was rather a good photographer and had studied retouching at nightschool, so could appreciate good work when I saw it. Crawford, of course, knew none of this and if looks could kill, I would be long-gone to my glory.

"Yes, isn't it?" she hissed, "a woman who has been with me for years!"

About that time, the twins were paraded before the four of us, beautifully groomed, beautifully dressed and beautifully mannered. Scared to death, they curtsied before each of us, murmured "How do you do?" and each offered a white-gloved hand.

Crawford announced she was late for dinner at the Schenck's and after making a phone call explaining she would be late, we all trooped out. I was last, reluctant to leave, and was also keeping an eye on Mary Alice, a dachshund belonging to one of our group. Crawford had crawled behind the wheel of a big black Cadillac, and as we came by, she ordered: "Hand me the dog!" The driveway was crushed white rock causing me to fear the dog's little paws would powder-mark her dress. "I couldn't care less," she commented, "hand me the dog!"

I did so, knowing she had always adored dachshunds from her days with Franchot Tone. As I watched in subserviant silence, I saw Mother Goddam suddenly turn into an absolute Madonna as she held and loved and kissed that willing dog. The curtain dropped with a clang, she handed the dog back to me, tears in her eyes, said nothing, slammed the door and drove away.

Later, I was to correspond with Joan Crawford, along with perhaps thousands of others, for no one was more zealous about writing letters to fans than she. She even wrote one to my dachshund, Murphy, praising him as the most beautiful one she had ever seen.

That all came about because the Los Angeles Mirror, now defunct, ran a headline on its front page: JOAN CRAWFORD, QUEEN OR TYRANT? I was outraged and wrote them a letter saying so. I also sent a copy to Joan Crawford -- after all, I had visited her home and remembered the address.

The reply is a special keepsake, as I believe she typed it herself. Both the paper and typestyle differs from any others I was to

426 NORTH BRISTOL AVENUE
LOS ANGELES 49, CALIFORNIA

May 26, 1954

My dear Rusty,

You are the dearest friend anyone in the whole world ever had. And believe me, you were a friend in need at a time when I really needed it.

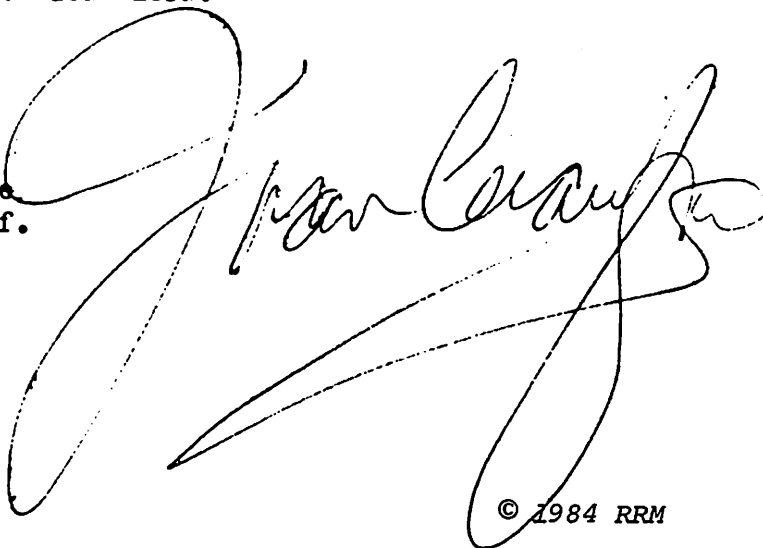
Bless you for your sweet letter. Not only to me, but, to Mr. Pinkley...I hear nothing is doing any good that is being sent to Mr. Pinkley or Mr. Shawhan...I hear it has to go to Mr. Chandler of the Los Angeles Times. Isn't it a pity? Oh well, it's over...at least in the papers, but not in my soul.

You're a wonderful, wonderful, human being to take the time to do what you did...and from my grateful heart I say thank-you.

I'm off to Texas for ten days...perhaps we can have cocktails or dinner, or both, when I return. The number is Arizona 8 4279.

Thank you so much. God bless.

Rusty Morris
4112 Garden Avenue
Los Ang. 39, Calif.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rusty Morris', is written over the typed name and address.

© 1984 RRM

subsequently receive from her. It suggested we get together for drinks or dinner or both and listed a phone number.

I didn't have the nerve to call.

People like Joan Crawford - I was to learn - do not extend their friendship only to have it drip down a well. They're too used to those "climbers" who take advantage of them and anyone who refuses their gratitude is some kind of nut.

At just about that time, I flew to Chicago to work on a film for the Milwaukee Community Chest, and wrote to Crawford accordingly -- it was a way of explaining why I hadn't taken her up on her offer. Well, she not only wrote back to me, she wrote that she had contacted a dear friend of her's in Chicago, an auto dealer of considerable prestige, named Charles Baron. He dutifully telephoned and invited me to lunch at his club, an experience I'll never forget. The dining room, the food, the people, were all out of an MGM movie. He insisted that I do him the favor of letting him know at any time, and he would personally lend me a convertible, a station wagon, whatever, to explore the city and the neighboring areas.

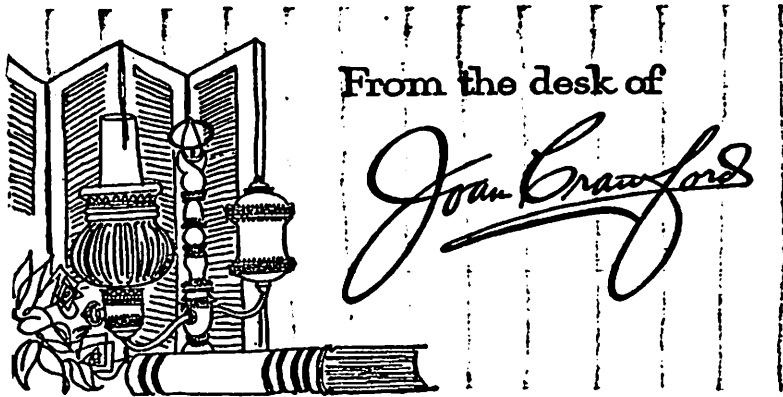
Of course, I never had nerve to do that, either.

Later, when I moved to New York and had a charming apartment in the very building where Louisa May Alcott had written her early books, I not only had the nerve to invite Joan Crawford to come to dinner, but had a roommate who was practically a professional chef. I bought a very expensive set of china, called Fairwood just for the occasion. I even bugged the apartment with a spy network of hidden microphones so that every word uttered by Joan Crawford would be tape recorded to capture the evening for all time (and my mother).

Then I lost my nerve. Again.

I wrote that I felt it unwise for her to appear at Third and MacDougal Streets in the heart of the heart of Greenwich Village and a tourist-trap to be sure, unless she came in a disguise. She had already ordered the menu in a handwritten note, but later wrote her regrets, with I can imagine, genuine regret.

How dreadful of me not to arrange to pick her up at her apartment and accompany her down to ours! I've never forgiven myself.



From the desk of

Joan Crawford

I just returned
from the tropics
and on off to
Washington and
California -
Please forgive the

brief note - but
I have to pack
& travel fast.
will be back
after Easter
Love - Pork chops -
Cheese soufflé
& Salad -
See you soon
J.C.

Great cook that he was, my roommate was actually on the public relations staff of a large New York City department store, and when the store gave an "autograph party" in honor of Joan Crawford's autobiography Portrait of Joan, he welcomed her on behalf of the store, told her he was buying a copy and would she mind autographing it as a gift for a friend. Of course she wouldn't mind, and he didn't have to buy a copy, it was to be her gift. "Who's the friend?" she inquired. He told her it was Rusty Morris. "Oh, Rusty!" she gushed and signed the book: "To Rusty - With my love - Joan."

I read it, was keenly disappointed, and rather than write a sychophantic thank-you note, I wrote it all as a book review that is, on the whole, very positive though filled with regret that such an amazing movie career could be treated so superficially. It ended:

"Portrait of Joan picks up steam and much heart in the later chapters covering her happy marriage and life with Alfred Steele, of Pepsi-Cola. Obviously, this was a period when Joan-the-Woman reached fullfillment, genuine contentment, and the reader is happy for her because it is so evident and seemingly so deserved.

Meanwhile, the real portrait of Joan has yet to be written."

With it, I sent a color print of a slide I had taken while living in Chicago. It was taken on a typical wind-swept day along the lake-front. All is blue in various tones, the sky, the water. On the horizon, only a tiny figure against the sky, a woman walks alone, her hat and jacket a touch of red over a black dress. It's a haunting picture and I had always called it "Sing Me Not A Love Song."

The print I sent was matted for framing. Not one word of her restrained thank-you letter mentions the book review, but oh, how she sings the praises and thanks me for the photograph!

Later, I was to send her just a simple Polaroid snapshot of a theatre marquee on New York's Upper East Side ... the theatre's manager, obviously an old-time showman, had ordered only these words to grace his picture palace:

JOAN CRAWFORD
THE BEST OF EVERYTHING



In 1954, "THE CAINE MUTINY COURT MARTIAL" was to tour, starring Paul Douglas and Wendell Corey. I borrowed a friend's uniform, took these pictures in my garage with my faithful Rollei, then sent them to Producer Paul Gregory along with a professional resumé. I was interviewed, read for the role of Willie Keith and won it. But he wouldn't pay me my established "STRIKE A MATCH" salary: "You're only on-stage ten minutes, you ----!" I left that week for a movie job in Chicago that developed into the busiest, happiest, most profitable eight years of my life. The play flopped ...

"Nothing is forever," wrote Helen Deutsch, "always is a lie." My distant friendship with Joan Crawford came to an end so far as I was concerned, after I had written the two women who had founded Caedmon, a prestigious record firm specializing in the spoken word.

Crawford had by that time hosted several Hollywood Palace TV shows on ABC in exemplary fashion. High-style fashion in fact, and on one, she'd read an opus written by Milton Geiger. Listening to it, I felt that if ever a voice had been created to record the poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay, it was the Pepsi-Cola Princess.

So I wrote to Caedmon urging them to please consider the idea, smugly sending a xeroxed information copy to Crawford. Caedmon was intrigued, but Crawford, not always sober at that time, returned my xerox. Across the bottom was scrawled:

"I already have a recording contract. With RCA. JOAN."

☆ ☆ ☆

I was about to make the observation that I never made any records but that's not true, for all of us in radio ultimately made a lot of records after Bing Crosby got NBC to agree to air tapes of his weekly show, made at his convenience, not the network's. Until that time, radio was "live" and most shows were done twice, once for the east coast and once again for the west, on a highly restricted schedule.

All shows for the Armed Forces Radio Service were recorded and I appeared in a lot of them, produced with all the splash and penache of the best the networks had to offer.

The most elaborate taped show I ever participated in was the Screen Guild Playhouse production of the radio version of Twelve O'Clock High. It was a large cast featuring most of those who had appeared in the motion picture, except Robert Arthur. I got to play his role, that of young Sgt. McIlhenny, opposite Gregory Peck and Hugh Marlow. For reasons having to do with the musician's union, there was no orchestra on-stage for the taping. Instead, on the night of the broadcast, a live studio orchestra played as required under and between all the recorded scenes - quite a feat and exciting to hear.

☆ RATE = Radio Artists Telephone Exchange



Screen:
PAUL KOHNER, Jr.
Jack Fife

Say! THIS TIME - TRY CASTING

ROLAND MORRIS

RADIO-SCREEN ACTOR "...for THAT Juvenile"

Dial Hillside 0101 for the Young Actor who has Specialized in "Young America" types during 9 years behind the microphones of all major networks (including 39 months a Navy Radioman) Plus Screen, Stage and Television Appearances. Range: 16-25

RATE

EVERYONE IS ASKING

- ★ WHO IS HE?
- ★ EVER HEAR OF HIM?
- ★ WHAT DOES HE DO?
- ★ CAN I USE HIM?

(Read the Answer in)

"57 - VARIETIES KID!"

RADIO LIFE MAGAZINE
MARCH 7th ISSUE

Miss Mary Ellen Ryan
Raymond R. Morgan Agency
6233 Hollywood Blvd.
Hollywood 28, Calif.



Invitation
TO LISTEN!

NAME OF SHOW HERE
STATION - TIME
DATE



CASTING CARDS - Once upon a time in the USA, you could mail a postcard for a penny. It was an easy and inexpensive way to invite job-giving producers and directors to listen to an On-The-Air performance. It also gave ME a chance to get involved in a printshop ambiance, practicing some of the education I had received in highschool of a commercial art nature.

CARD #1 (top) was a general card in two colors that was used to remind people I was hanging-in-there. The reverse side provided additional space to plug a current accomplishment. CARD #2 (bottom) also in two colors, sprung from my drawing board and permitted space for a typed insertion of the name of the show, the date, time and role portrayed, if known.

HOFFMAN 1949 FOOTBALL Telecasts



"Better halves" - Between halves
HI. 0101

feature
MARIAN RICHMAN and ROLLAND MORRIS
as "Mr. and Mrs. U.C.L.A."

Sept	16	Nov	12
	30		19
Oct	15		
	29		

KECA-TV
Channel 7



Hello I AM A FRIEND
OF *Lane Howarth*

This summer, a Paramount picture entitled "BITTER VICTORY", starring Robert Cummings, Lizabeth Scott, Diana Lynn and Eve Arden, will be released in your locality. In it, I portray "Bunny Howard", fun-loving boyfriend to Miss Lynn.

Because it is my first screen role, I am anxious that it be well-received. Therefore, I am asking that you please save this card as a reminder, and when you see the picture, kindly write me care of HAL WALLIS PRODUCTIONS, HOLLYWOOD, and tell me your reaction to my performance. Thank you!

Rolland Morris

MEMO:

Screen:
PAUL KOHNER Inc.
Jack Fife

Currently In Rehearsal

ROLLAND MORRIS

★ as "John Surratt", featured juvenile opposite Miss Dorothy Gish, in the Theatre Guild's forthcoming presentation of John Patrick's new play "The Story of Mary Surratt". Watch for it at the Biltmore - Soon!

RATE

MIDDLE: A clever (?) idea to send out to everyone I knew, including relatives, to plug my up-coming appearance in a Hollywood movie. Sent six cards to each person which they were to sign and circulate. "BITTER VICTORY" was shelved for 2 years. BOTTOM card explains a professional absence.

TOP card was a cooperative effort actress Marian Richman and I conceived as we had won the title of "Mr. & Mrs. U.C.L.A." and appeared live in the commercials for Hoffman TV Sets on day of UCLA games - "Better Halves Between Halves" was Marian's cute idea. Yes, I drew the card ...



Need A "Teen-Ager"?

**ROLLAND
MORRIS**

"...for THAT Juvenile"

TH. 2146

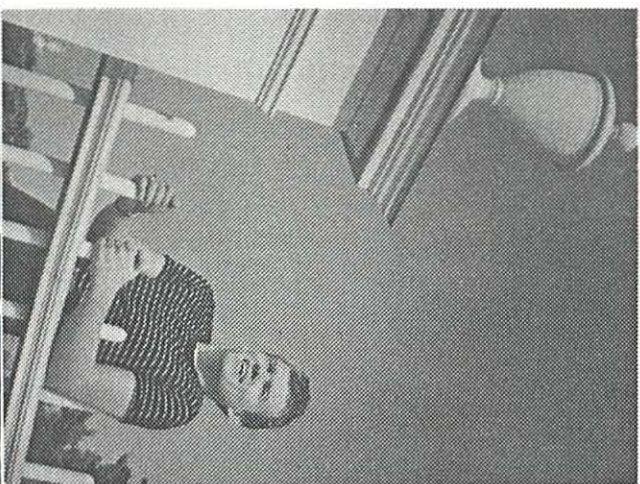
HL. 0101

"The Boy Next Door"

**ROLLAND
MORRIS**

WHO REMINDS YOU ...

**THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE
FOR EXPERIENCE!**



"Young America" Types

**ROLLAND
MORRIS**

*"... AMONG THE VERY
BEST IN THE BUSINESS"*

—RADIO LIFE Magazine



MOVIE CASTING PEOPLE and COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS received a photo reminder card which I printed in my darkroom, washed and dried and then turned-out on a hand-fed KLUGE printing press a local printer (Max Wolf) let me use. The logo was hand-drawn and a cut was made -- the rest was individual hand-set type Max showed me how to set.

I repeated three slogans: "...for THAT Juvenile", and "There Is No Substitute for Experience" and of course, "...Among The Very Best In The Business". The leading line was tied into the photos, which were, more often than not, self-portraits.

☆ I had a theory that, whether the cards were seen or read by the addressee or not, they caused talk. Even if they were glimpsed briefly on the way to the waste-basket ROLLAND with two L's was obviously busy and it was my feeling that it was the working actor who worked. The way I was received by secretaries and casting personnel very often included a small tribute to my clever imagination. I never regretted my enterprise...

One of the reasons, too, was that the show could be recorded on Sunday, when many of the stars might otherwise be working on a film. When I worked with Claudette Colbert and Robert Ryan, I don't recall the name of the movie we dramatized (only that it was RKO), but I'll never forget talking with Miss Colbert during a break. She sat on a high stool, eating home-made cookies out of a paper bag. When she offered me one, I asked her if she had made them which she thought was pretty funny with that throaty laugh. All the while, I was studying her face, trying to determine what was wrong with the right side that she never permitted to be photographed. I can report that, from where I stood, it was just as pretty as the left side, which we all know and love. The cookie wasn't bad, either.

Family Theatre was a show liberally sprinkled with movie stars, and I enjoyed a lot of call-backs. I can remember only one where a star (William Gargan) seemed stand-offish and unfriendly, but then, I had the best part! The night I played Bob Hope's brother was a bit sticky because Katherine Grayson was then married to singer Johnny Johnston, who hopped out of the control booth at the slightest provocation to let her know she was reading her lines improperly and would then show her how. Very "uncomfortable", but Bob Hope was a joy, though his lip must have been bitten blue.

Dr. Christian was a show where a broadcast to the east coast was presented "live" before we all took our supper break. On the one mentioned where Helen Koford (Terry Moore) played my girl-friend, I had to see her to a train and wonder aloud to the good doctor if I'd ever see her again. Jean Hersholt did the entire show sitting at a table with his personal microphone. He often fumbled in his own dear way but could adlib back to the script, so when I wondered if I would ever see Helen again, and got no reply from him, I quickly glanced over at his table and saw that he'd settled back in his chair and was gazing out at the studio audience. So far as he was concerned, his scene was over. So just as if I had good sense, I interpolated his lines in with my own to finish the scene. I was assured of many fat parts thereafter from a grateful Neal Reagan, who directed the shows and is now the President's happily retired brother.

The scene was jinxed. On the later broadcast to the west coast, as I said goodbye at the depot, my microphone started slipping down into its stand and I ended the scene on my knees to the bewilderment

of the amused studio audience. Audiences loved to come to radio shows in those days, especially to see the big-name movie stars. There was a spark of electricity when it came close to air-time, in full view of the audience in most cases was a large orchestra and often a choral group, and of course, the sound effects crew, always doing something fascinating.

When Marvin Miller bellowed: "Ladies and Gentlemen, The Railroad Hour!" and that music swelled as the train effects thundered, one could feel as excited as being in any Broadway playhouse! I loved that program and will never forget getting to play Alan Adale in "Robin Hood" opposite Dorothy Kirsten and Gordon MacCrae.

Lux Theatre put the on-stage orchestra behind a scrim so that the actors stood-out better as the stage was generally very crowded. Audiences were always especially entertained by fight scenes or swordplay or scenes of great struggle as when Ronald Colman climbed back to the Valley of the Blue Moon -- the grunts and groans from contorted faces and swinging bodies, each actor gripping a script -- totally incongruous and amusing to watch. Blowing up a bridge, wrecking a car or breaking windows were special treats. I remember being on one show which had a guillotine and the soundmen had assembled large melons they chopped open at the proper moment with great glee.

Most shows with live orchestras had specially-written scores. One of the most remarkable being Favorite Story, on which I played "Marco Polo". The orchestra was magnificent, and for technical reasons, was down the hall in a separate studio where balances could be very carefully controlled and effects augmented. Dr. Christian and a soap opera, Woman In My House, were the only shows I ever worked that clung to the pipe organ, which was always in another studio.

Woman In My House was a Carlton E. Morse property I won a part on, to my great pleasure, for a running-part on such a show could make car payments and so forth. As it happened, I also got a part in a movie, so my first (and last) appearance on that show was necessarily tape-recorded about 7:30 a.m. Everyone resented it and my character, though often referred-to, was never heard again.



▲ **"SET YOURSELF UP** in business as a juvenile type," producers have told specialist Rolland Morris. He's twenty-six years old, and he's making a radio comeback after four years in the Navy, but Rolland's enactments of kid brothers, romantic young swains—and delinquents—are still among the very best in the business.



28a

▲ **SELF-PORTRAIT** of Rolland Morris, average citizen, by Rolland Morris, photographer—publicist—actor. Regarding himself as a commodity, Rolland takes many of his own publicity pictures with a set-meter on his camera, and as something of an artist as well, he has made an entire book of his best work to show to his agents and contacts. This particular picture struck us as exceptional for good lighting, expression and naturalness, in spite of being a "time exposure."

"57 Varieties" Kid

Rolland Morris' Opening Words Suggested His Story-Title. His Contention That an Actor May Be Versatile Though "Typed" Cinched It!

By Judy Maguire

THIS IS NO trade secret. But an actor is crazy if he doesn't look upon himself as a can of soup."

Likable Rolland Morris means every intriguing word of it. He is twenty-six years old, and after nearly four years away in the Navy he is making the efforts of the typical talented veteran to re-establish himself in his now "cornered" profession. Being a business-headed as well as enthusiastic young chap, however, Rolland has made an analysis of his own prospects—which is admirable.

Youth Is Commodity

"Let's face it," he invites. "As an actor, I'm a commodity. I look and sound youthful . . . after all, everyone's voice has certain limits and mine seems to range between fifteen and thirty. So my specialty is youth, and that's what I'm selling."

Then he doesn't mind type casting?

"Not a bit. Look at me," he de-

mands. "What could I be but somebody's kid brother, college son or heart-throb? I've been a *radio* married man once in a radio part!"

Rolland recently met Barton Yarborough (for fifteen years "Clifford" on "One Man's Family"). "Look, son," Yarborough pointed out, "you have a nice young quality which is worth a million dollars to you. Don't try to lose it simulating something else." Producer Ted Bliss has offered much the same counsel. "Set yourself up in business with that type. It's a natural, and there are too few of you capable of it."

There's great diversion in remaining one age limit, Rolland insists. Young emotions are among the most multifold and complicated in human experience, and they require as sensitive dramatic and dialect interpretation as complete character changes.

Being "sold" on his theory, therefore, Rolland's resultant sales campaign is delightful. While it is

rather abashing, at first, to be confronted by the pictures, biographies and "Meet Rolland Morris" brochures which this boy has put out on himself, it is also far from unpleasant.

Behind the Camera

Rolland once wanted to be a commercial artist. He has compensatingly become a first-class photographer, (recently he's sold seven of his pictures, with an accompanying article, to "Popular Photography"). Printing night in his home dark-room (set up in the family kitchen) is Saturday, at which time he develops new pictures and makes reprints for his agents and contacts. He takes many of his own publicity shots with a set-time meter on one of his cameras, and collaborates with a friend on others of more difficult set-up.

His work is neat and attractive. When he is appearing on a program, he sends a cleverly engraved personality card to a complete list of producers, inviting them to hear his performance, should the time be convenient.

"That way," he adds, "nobody is badgered into listening to me. I've always hated to make a professional nuisance of myself. Upbringing, maybe. I never make phoned or personal calls to production offices. If they keep seeing my name on a card, and keep hearing what I can do, that

(Please Turn to Page 32)

RADIO LIFE MAGAZINE was sold at checkout stands much like TV GUIDE is today and listed all the radio programs for the coming week. It started out selling for 2¢, then became so popular (40-50,000 weekly circulation) it went to 8¢ when this article appeared back in 1948, thanks to interest of dear Editor, Evelyn Bigsby. It meant a lot to me . . .

"57 Varieties" Kid

(Continued from Page 3)

ought to be enough to make them remember me."

Performance Credits

This courteous forthrightness is refreshing to hear about. It also seems to hold water. Rolland's energetic promotion, plus his follow-up ability to come across, have boosted his credits (since his return from the service) to include a great range of shows, typically: "Rexall Theatre," "Date with Judy," "Lux," "Dr. Christian," "This Is Your FBI," "Mayor of the Town," "Family Theatre," "The Cisco Kid," "California Tales," "Favorite Story," "Conquest" and "Premiere Performance." Producers who have worked with him show no reluctance in making endorsements. Dave Titus, who produced a gala air feature, "Anchors Aweigh," with Rolland in the starring role while he was still in the Navy, says at once: "Finest performance that any juvenile actor has ever turned in for me." Similar boosts may be picked up from any of many directors... Dave Young and Neal Reagan among notables.

But despite his obvious success at "selling soup," Rolland, in unbusinesslike spasms, hints himself to be a split personality. He has a loud genuine "Ha! Ha! Ha!" laugh, which riots unexpectedly into serious conversations with "break it up, break it up" hilarity. He is apt to lean whimsically across the table, while you are studiously going over his pictures and typewritten personal facts, and rasp: "What a way to make a living, huh?"

From these interruptions, it's rightly apparent that Rolland would like to be considered an entirely different person away from his profession. Which he is. Only with tongue in cheek could he be classed "the Hollywood type." He lives at home with his parents, and his best friend is his dachshund. His biggest dislike in life is understandably wholesome... he hates to go to bed early. He reads the funny papers regularly, and his favorite is "Gordo." He spends as much time as possible at the beach, trying to prove that red-heads can tan (so far, they still can't).

Personal Goals

On too personal questions, he retains a humorous evasiveness. Girl friends? "She went that-a-way!" Marriage? "Perhaps around 1950, if the world is willing." Any definite plans for the future?

"Well," he says soberly, "I've read that one of the cardinal rules for success is to be fairly certain of exactly what you intend to be doing five years from now and work toward that goal."

"I prefer to be realistic. To my mind, with the world in the unsettled condition it is, such a program is impossible. During the war, I got into the habit of living for the mo-

Page Thirty-two

ment, enjoying everything as much as I could. Therefore, at the present time, I have to say that I hold no plans for the future. I've been lucky so far in my work, and I hope to continue to grow a little until a certain financial security level is reached. Then? ... anything might happen!"

"People Love Gimmicks and We Love People"

(Continued from Page 7)

"We did, too," grinned Frank, "and here we are. Guess it takes a good Northwesterner and a good Texan to make a pair. What Van doesn't think of doing, I do, and it works out swell."

"Sure, and you know when neither Frank or I have a show, do you know what we do?" questioned Van. "Why, he picks up Dorothy and I pick up Betty and we take off for the ocean, where we and our wives sail, fish and swim as much and as often as we can."

"Incidentally, Van, who is president of the Graham-Des Autels outfit today?" queried Frank.

"Guess you are today, Frank," stated Van. "Remember our pact—if things are going great, you're president! If things are giving us trouble, I'm president! Say... come to think about it... I seem to be getting the rough end of this deal... Maybe we should work it this way..."

★ ★

MOTIVATION

Spinning discs for KHJ's "Melody Matinee" recently, jockey George Martin Jr. found himself being drowned out by the janitor, who had started taking up the rugs outside the studio with loud bangs and thuds. The process of elimination might have disconcerted less accomplished mikemen, but George happily ad-libbed to his listeners: "This music's so hot, they're cutting a rug out there in the hall."

★ ★

STILL GOING STRONG

Actress Cathy Lewis ("My Friend Irma's" friend Jane) regularly uses a 150-year-old sewing machine, an heirloom in the family and first used in Wales.

Contests and Offers

"PEOPLE ARE FUNNY," KFI, 6:00 p.m. Fridays—"You can win a \$20,000 future!" says Art Linkletter, "by answering the new Raleigh Riddle, the eleventh of a series." Full prize consists of a new three-bedroom Kaiser home with double garage, fully furnished throughout; \$2000 for a suitable lot in Los Angeles County; a 1948 Kaiser four-door sedan; and a new job in any of a number of Southern California industries. Write a letter of hope and encouragement for a needy European family and send it, with a cash contribution, to Art Linkletter. Letters judged "most sincere and inspirational" will rate a phone call for the writer and a chance to answer the riddle. All contributions go to CARE.

Anybody Seen "Miss Duffy"?

(Continued from Page 4)

into the mike, "What're they gonna do—start asking for my autograph next?"

The following girl read the part absolutely straight. "You don't sound at all like the character," Ed told her.

"How could I?" smiled the auditionee. "I've never heard your program!"

The girls who showed a possibility of fitting the "Miss Duffy" role were few and far between. When a promising candidate read—regardless of her age or previous experience—she was asked to leave her name and phone number and alerted for a final audition. Ed's "Are you from Noo York?" began to sound like a cry in the wilderness.

We felt that we had seen enough of the audition to know that we would never be able to play "Miss Duffy," so after cautioning Ed Gardner to let us know the minute the show found its feminine star, we elbowed our way through a new crowd of "Miss Duffys" and left.

Later we learned that Helen Eley, Sam "Schlepperman" Hearn's talented little wife, had won the "Duffy" audition. We had our story down on paper when NBC called us with the news that Helen was still in the show, but that the "Miss Duffy" role was to be re-cast. The next communiqué informed us that Margie Liszt, a real live descendant of Franz Liszt, (and undoubtedly inheritor of her ancestor's talent) was the new and final "Miss Duffy." We re-wrote our story.

A couple of weeks later, Florence Halop had the part. Florence, you may recall, played the "Miss Duffy" role for quite a while after Shirley Booth, the original, had left the cast. In returning to the program, Florence proved that she was as indestructible as "Miss Duffy" herself. A radio actress since the age of five, she has been heard on the shows of Jack Paar, Kay Kyser, Joan Davis and Kate Smith. She has been a sales-girl and a Powers model. As a student at UCLA, she was a member of the swimming team and a law student—with ambition to be a judge! Her brother is Billy Halop, the handsome member of the "Dead End Kids" group. Florence's secret ambition is to be a musical comedy star on Broadway—some day.

And to Ed Gardner's oft-repeated question, "Are you from Noo York?" Florence's reply is "Are you kidding?"

★ ★

RATTLING THE CHAINS

It's the Andrews Sisters themselves who supply "those sound effects" on their latest rendition of "Feudin' and Fightin'" on CBS's "Club 15." Patty does the "ping!", LaVerne the snort, and Maxene the whistle.

A person generally got a part on a radio show by (a) knowing the director, or (b) auditioning for the part in competition with other actors, or (c) auditioning for the part in the director's office, with him or her reading the other lines, or (d) doing a "general audition" at a time set up for such events by a director, usually on a monthly basis.

For as long as I could remember, I had admired the work of English actress Edna Best, a lady of great talent and a wonderful personal quality. At one time, she was directing two radio shows in Hollywood: Sherlock Holmes and Corliss Archer. I could do a very acceptable English accent and didn't hesitate to audition for Holmes. I read a speech from "David Copperfield" which made her cry, she admitted to me on the talk-back, adding: "You could never make me believe you're British, but I want to use you on Corliss."

Not long afterwards, she telephoned me and said a part was coming up on Corliss I'd be perfect for, what's more it would appear from time-to-time. I was to expect a script in the mail and report to an audition "for appearances only" at the specified time. Okay. It smacked of favoritism, but I was perfectly willing to be a favorite of Edna Best! I appeared as requested, sailed through the scene and was ill with disappointment to discover Janet Waldo, who played the darling Corliss, was nowhere on the premises. I was told to go home and await a phone call. Edna Best called to tell me that the Sound Effects Man's wife was going to have a baby, so he had been given the part to make some extra money and there wasn't a thing she could do about it.

Her husband was an equally respected man named Nat Wolfe, and I was always lead to believe I got to play the college newspaper editor on The Halls of Ivy on the second show of its spectacular run, thanks to a recommendation from Mrs. Wolfe. What a thrill to at last meet Ronald Colman and his wife, Benita Hume. The cast was top-drawer all the way; Ken Carpenter was announcer. In the male chorus which sang the theme song was another old highschool chum, Les Baxter, later to become a top orchestra leader and composer.

When the part of the Editor came up several times later in the Ivy series, it was played by Nat Wolfe's secretary's boyfriend -- and that's another way to get ahead in showbusiness!



News

SUNSET AND VINE • HOLLYWOOD

JANUARY 12, 1950

- 29a

EDDIE CANTOR, JACK CARSON, BILL GOODWIN TO BE FEATURED
ON SPECIAL NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL DINNER BROADCAST

* * *

NBC star Eddie Cantor and film stars Jack Carson and Bill Goodwin will be featured in a special NBC broadcast from the National Safety Council Dinner Monday, Jan. 16 (NBC, 9:30-9:55 p.m., PST; 11:30-11:55 p.m., CST). Carson will be emcee.

The program, which will originate in the Cocoanut Grove, Los Angeles, will salute Maj. Gen. Philip B. Fleming, general chairman of the President's Highway Safety Conference and Jim Bishop, president of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Council.

The president of the National Safety Council, Ned Dearborn will fly to Los Angeles for the dinner.

Music will be by the NBC staff orchestra, the Los Angeles City College Choir, and The Mellow Men.

-oOo-

Rolland Morris, who has the role of Jared Buckley, editor of the Ivy college newspaper, on NBC's "The Halls of Ivy," is one of Hollywood's better-known amateur photographers. In the strictest sense of the word, however, he's not an amateur for he makes his hobby pay dividends as evidenced by the printing of his second story in six months in the current issue of "Popular Photography." The young actor not only authored the piece which is titled "Your Own Studio at Home," but his own photographs illustrate the article.

- an NBC filler-fact

An assignment that gave me an enormous amount of satisfaction was a chance to appear in a featured role on the very popular NBC comedy series, Father Knows Best. The cast was truly an ensemble group and it was something of an honor to be able to work with them. As I recall, it was presented in one of the two new audience studios completed as part of the giant NBC complex following WW2. Though they were soon to be ravaged and converted into TV studios for Dinah Shore and other shows, they were really posh as concerned the very latest for radio productions. During the break following dress rehearsal, I timidly knocked on the door of Robert Young's dressing room (one of the unusual aspects of this new studio complex's beautiful design) and asked if I could speak with him. He was every bit as nice as one might expect him to be, informal and very cordial. I managed to tell him that, over the years, he had been my favorite male actor and the kind I hoped to one day become, delivering dependable performances, time after time. It wasn't an easy speech and I doubt that I convinced him of sincerity, but I meant every word and felt the better for telling him.

As a radio listener, I would have to say that One Man's Family was my favorite show, hands-down. Oddly enough, I was always glad that I never got to work on it as an actor. To see with my own eyes that the fabled Barbour Family home in the Seacliff Area of San Francisco was, in actual fact, just another very ordinary small NBC studio (filled with aluminum folding chairs!) at the corner of Vine and Sunset would have ruined everything. That show was classic radio.

I did meet and get to work with Barton Yarborough, who portrayed "Clifford Barbour" for years. Like so many of the true radio actors of that era, he was an especially nice person, highly regarded among his peers. He worked only on One Man's Family and I Love A Mystery, or so I thought until he and I and other cast members, along with a sound crew and orchestra, were flown to Salt Lake City by CBS to do a special Saturday night remote from the stage of the University of Utah's campus theatre. The program was Hedda Hopper's Hollywood, presenting a radio version of the new movie Ramrod, starring Joel McCrea and Veronica Lake. It was a spectacular experience!!!

Eager to crunch about in the snow, Barton Yarborough, gifted and versatile actress Peggy Webber and I utilized some free time to

walk around the Mormon Tabernacle area. In her mink, Peggy was the only one dressed for it, so perhaps to keep our minds off the chill, we talked shop as actors are apt to do. I had been a deep-dyed fan of One Man's Family for years and especially admired Bart's work on the show for its genuiness and sensitivity. I mentioned that I was terribly concerned that my voice hadn't "matured" as it should have and that I seemed destined to forever portray sons, brothers and boy-friends, juvenile delinquents and the like. Bart urged me to make a specialty of it, "Never change that juvenile attitude," he warned, "you have a wonderful quality that will make you very commercial. Bank on it. The more you do, the more they'll come to depend upon you, and like me, you'll be playing characters half your age for the rest of your life."

No wonder I remember his comments so well, because back on-stage, I wrote them down on the back of my script while still fresh in my mind, they meant so much to me. None of us could have guessed that Bart would die much too soon, or that radio as an art form employing thousands on both coasts, was itself doomed -- that the warm, friendly little groups gathering around a rehearsal table, standing in pools of light before microphones that were so dear to us, would cease to be -- that radio actors, as a tribe, would scatter and their like and their work would become anachronistic. I've known no graveyards nearly as lonely and bereft as what I saw at NBC high atop the Merchandise Mart in Chicago, or at CBS on New York's Madison Avenue, where, thanks to dear Frances Von Bernhardt, I was to appear for a week in 15-minute episodes of dying Backstage Wife. (I was cast as a young attorney, then subsequently caught a head-cold. Frances insisted I play the part and had them put me on a filter-mike to make it sound as though I were telephoning. On my final show, I was well enough to try my best at sounding like Orson Welles).

However, my "official swan song" was a delightful charade at CBS' Columbia Square with a winning and captivating Mitzi Gaynor on Stars Over Hollywood, in April, 1954. We had to do it twice, as it happened. Taped at Mitzi's convenience, for some technical reason, half the show was lost. All of us trouped back and happily did it over, it was such fun - and such a wonderful cast: Janet Waldo, Harry Bartell and Fred Shields. I was in Seventh Heaven, for I got to play the co-lead and "kiss" Mitzi -- a shame there was no studio audience for that

as we were on separate microphones at least six feet apart. It was such a pleasure, for all the players had been personal favorites of mine in other shows, even Irene Tedrow, who played a home economist during one of the commercials for Carnation Milk.

That was a month to remember, for I also performed my first lead role in a filmed episode of Death Valley Days for television, and I was sure I was at last on the right ladder going up!

All of us in Hollywood's radio community had expected that television was going to be our professional province. What could be more natural? Television was also a broadcast medium. No one could have dreamed in their wildest nightmare that all of us who got in on the ground-floor of television would eventually be shoved-aside by the avalanche of movie actors suddenly free of their studio contracts.

My experience in television went all the way back to W6XA0, the Don Lee experimental station before the days of World War Two. I had appeared as "Bramwell", brother of the Bronte Sisters, in a half-hour dramatization by Marion Ward, presented from the Cadillac building at 7th and Bixel streets in downtown Los Angeles. It had been predicted that, because I had auburn hair, I would never have a career as a video actor. (I didn't understand it then, and still don't).

I had enthusiastically participated in several postwar live telecasts, most notably The Ruggles, on ABC, a very popular 1950's show starring Charlie Ruggles and Erin O'Brien Moore. I played their daughter's boyfriend, a sort of archeologist who spouted words a mile long. Charlie Ruggles was an awfully nice man and a joy to work with, his befuddled attitude carefully studied. Erin was an angel whose promising career had been tragically interrupted when she was caught in a fire. Persevering through many painful skin grafts, her beauty was restored and she was gallantly starting over. We worked in an all-but forgotten and abandoned old silent movie studio which featured a complete theatre interior Jolson had used for The Jazz Singer and Warner Brothers had utilized for sequences in their Busby Berkeley musicals. ABC had revitalized it and at that time was using it for Lawrence Welk's programs as the stage was larger than anything to be found in an actual theatre. It boasted a giant 1920's-era light board, heater units on the back wall and a legitimate-sized scenery fly. There was even a lower balcony out-front!

Rusty MORRIS

• 4112 GARDEN AVENUE
NOrmandy 1-3425

LOS ANGELES 39, CALIFORNIA
SAG-AEA-AFTRA

STAGE PLAYS

for: MEL FERRER
HOMER CURRAN
LEWIS AND YOUNG

October 1984

SCREEN SINCE 1941

MGM
WARNERS
PARAMOUNT
RKO
GOLDWYN
UNITED ARTISTS
UNIVERSAL
ALLIED ARTISTS
REPUBLIC
HAL ROACH
CATHEDRAL FILMS
ROLAND REED
JERRY FAIRBANKS
JAM HANDY
JOHN SUTHERLAND
WILDING
DALLAS JONES

NETWORK TELEVISION

OMNIBUS
RAY BOLGER
ANN SOTHERN
DEATH VALLEY DAYS
THE RUGGLES
STARS OVER HOLLYWOOD
CHEVRON THEATRE
RACKET SQUAD
BIGELOW THEATRE
HALLMARK Cmc's
CAVALIER Cmc's
FALSTAFF, PABST Cmc's
OLDSMOBILE Cmc's

RADIO SINCE 1938

LUX RADIO THEATRE
SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS
FATHER KNOWS BEST
RAILROAD HOUR
HALLS OF IVY
THIS IS YOUR FBI
STARS OVER HOLLYWOOD
DR. CHRISTIAN
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and many more

SLIDE FILMS
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AUTO SHOWS

•
See Advertisement:

ACADEMY DIRECTORY
EQUITY PLAYERS' GUIDE
Hollywood AFTRA GUIDE

Manuscript Reader
Home Network
1984 Anywhere Avenue
Everywhere, USA

Dear Reader:

If they wrote producers at all, the actors I knew used whatever stationery they felt was personal.

I was able to type my letters on letterhead I had designed myself as a frustrated commercial artist and printer.

When a producer or director heard from me, he or she got a "business look" I felt was very important at the time. They may have felt it rather ostentatious, but they got a "message" on the paper itself that gave them my record of experience at that time.

I got lots of compliments on it and I know it got looked-at, if not read, simply because no one else had anything like it.

I think this may be the last sheet of it, but there were hundreds in the mail when it had to count -- I like to think that it did.

Sincerely,



Rusty Morris

Enclosure: File Photo
Professional Resume

PS: The printing was in French Gray ink, so that the typing was more important in impact.

The Ruggles shared its refurbished and huge sound stage with a daily afternoon show called Space Patrol ... it was fascinating to spend free time sitting in the rocket ship mock-ups and examining a wide variety of space-age props.

Another ABC show very popular then was The Marshal of Gunsight Pass. It was a rootin'-tootin'-shoot-'em-up western produced indoors with real horses -- and it was "live", so anything might happen and often did, especially during the bar brawls.

Those of us who didn't ride were often pushed into a scene by out-of-camera-range wranglers. One might mount a horse and find out it wouldn't move an inch, or if it did, knowing a non-rider was in the saddle, it would go off in the wrong direction. A lot of laughs for one and all, especially the co-star, Roscoe Ates, with whom I'd first worked on the 1941 Firestone film, and who, as casting director, called me for several enjoyable episodes.

I'll never forget one of them, because I was the young hero who had been trapped by the villains and tied to a tree. The "tree" was actually the shell of a real one cut in such a way and hollowed-out so it could be wrapped around one of the pillars supporting the studio roof. I had been especially kind to my horse, petting and talking to her at every opportunity. To keep them calm in the confined quarters, they were kept away from as much of the rehearsals as possible -- so, don't you know, when we went "On the Air" and they had tied me to the tree and I was struggling for my life -- my horse, in full view of the camera, politely walked over and started nibbling on the ropes to free me! Not a dry eye in the house ... it was more than any of us, including the wranglers, could believe.

But even in those days, shows were being "canned" as they called it. Heresy, but some entrepreneurs felt that film was the wave of the future, that live television, with its involved camera juggling and expensively long rehearsal periods, wasn't cost-efficient. None of my business, I worked where and when asked, including co-starring with Mary Stuart in Beauty Is A Joy, the first film MCA-REVUE made for television. MCA is now Universal, largest in the business, but I couldn't get on the lot unless I bought a ticket for the tour.

We rehearsed as we went along, starting early, of course, and

going straight through the night, our meals brought into us. It was shot on such a penurious budget that they utilized 16mm film stock! As it grew towards midnight and later, panic set in that there wasn't enough film stock left to finish what had to be done, but I got away at 4:00 a.m., glad it wasn't my worry.

I got \$50 for my work, playing another boyfriend. Mary Stuart played a willful beauty contest winner who quarrels with her father, runs out of the house and drives off. I manage to get into the car, she wrecks it and I am blinded. She is never told however, until the very end, when we are reunited. Her face was scarred in the accident, but to my blind eyes, she would always be beautiful. Sweet story and my performance was highly praised ... George Stern, the MCA-REVUE producer, who later became a high-ranking Universal executive until his retirement, walked me to the door of the Hal Roach soundstage where we shot the film, promising me they'd keep me busy.

They did, sort of. I appeared in two more MCA-REVUE films, made at the old California Studios on Melrose: Christmas for Sweeny, with Bruce Cabot, and Return of Van Sickle with Charlie Weaver. Then, as it was bound to happen, all the people in production were boosted up the ladder and became Executives and I was left with my promises -- and a mimeograph boy who became Casting Director and directors like Richard Irvine. A sychophant I wasn't.

Other more realistic chores came about on such as The Ann Sothorn Show and Racket Squad and Chevron Theatre, where I finally got to work with darling Ann Doran. I co-starred with Ray Bolger on his show, playing his former Army buddy who descends on him and causes a lot of bother. I had to laugh all the time as part of my characterization; it was very tiring and I couldn't possibly have carried it off without Bolger's loving assistance. What pro - what a guy!

A marvelous part came along on a show called Bigelow Theatre, on which I was co-starred opposite Victor Jory in a tense little college drama called The Sum of Seven. I was the leader of a group of seven students given a special test and am accused of cheating on the exam. Wonderful part -- a bouquet tossed in my lap by a wonderful director named Frank Woodruff, who had directed one of my early radio credits, The Hedda Hopper Show.

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL, MEMPHIS, DECEMBER 31, 1950

Television Reception Now Reaches

Nets Expand Far In West

Restrictions Are Likely To Be Placed Due To Emergency

By WAYNE OLIVER

NEW YORK, Dec. 30. — (AP)—Television in the past year has nearly trebled its viewers and now reaches one-fourth the homes in the United States.

Around 3,750,000 sets were in use as the year began and final 1950 production figures are expected to show nearly 7,500,000 new sets made during the year. The total number of homes with television now is believed to be more than 10,000,000. That's after making liberal allowance for sets in public places and unsold sets still in warehouses and stores.

Big Year For Radio

It also was a big year for radio. Manufacturers turned out around 15,000,000 new sets—third greatest production in industry history—to bring the Nation's total close to 100,000,000 sets in use.

And combined—radio and television, broadcasting and manufacturing—they became a \$3,000,000,000-a-year industrial giant yielding tremendous influence on the Nation's way of life.

But it was not a year of unmix'd blessings.

In common with other businesses the radio-television industry faced—as the year came to a close—the prospect of sharp curtailment of its normal activities in favor of defense efforts. Some manufacturers predict cutbacks of as much as 50 per cent in set production in 1951.

A freeze on permits for new television stations, imposed by the Federal Communications Commission Sept. 30, 1945, remained in effect with no prospect for an immediate resumption of licensing of stations. Thus it appeared that few if any new stations were likely to take the air in 1951.

Better Programs

And year end found a bitter



The new Thursday Theater will make its debut at 10 p.m. Thursday on WMCT, The Commercial Appeal television station, with the presentation of Rolland Morris (left) and Victor Jory in "The Sum of Seven."

Our New To Laugh

WMC Has Neat k By Young Artists On New Ja

TOMORROW being when we all are things, the writer wi

We wish to resolv in one of Groucho M

Fortunately it is publicity men kindly radio editors through

The only reason for tion is that the writer alone, gloomy and sor the Groucho gags. Ev in Memphis seems to terrific. The writer t terrific too.

THAT'S A PRETTY WMC and WMCT have for presenting the mu of the area in their deb by radio and television, are recommended by the faculty of the college We're going to hear WACs now. Jean Castle publicity staff has be to active duty . . . Mi who will be heard regu Jack Carson show on this week, is a stormy Two of her hit, rec "Looks Like a Cold, C and "A Rainy Day Ref New York publicitv ma

Today's Radio And Television Progra

WMC—Program of Mozart, Wagner, Dvorak, Chopin and Prokofiev by First Piano Quartet at 1:30 p.m. "State Fair" on Theater Guild of the Air at 7:30 p.m. New Year's roundups late.

WMCT—Upkeep of the family canary will be explained on Zoo Parade at 3:30 p.m. Jane Froman and Maureen Cannon on the Paul Whiteman Show at 6 p.m. Eddie Cantor and his wife, Ida; Danny Thomas, Sigmund Romberg, the Irving Field trio and Charlie Cantor on Comedy Hour at 7 p.m. Vicki Cummings in "Leaf Out of the Book" on Television Playhouse at 8 p.m. Lauritz Melchior guest on Ed Sullivan on Toast of the Town at 10:20 p.m.

WMC (99.7 megacycles) duplicated throughout broadcast day.

WREC—Erica Morini, violinist, will with the New York Philharmonic-Symph noon. "The Challenge of the '50s—Years with Edward Murrow, Bill Costello, Ric telet, Ned Calmer and Eric Sevareid a. Frank Sinatra at 4 p.m. New Year's ro

WMPS—"Flight Into Egypt," on Gre Ever Told at 4:30 p.m. Jimmy Wakely Ginny Simms Show at 9 p.m. Pre-g Bowl dinner at 10 p.m. Dance bands un

WHBQ—Whodun through afterno. Young in "The T Angel" at

THE SUM OF SEVEN got a panning from trade reviewers, who claimed it was "stagey" and "talky". One singled out the lead student as excellent, along with Victor Jory, but didn't mention the lead student by name. My sister was pleasantly surprised to find me in her Sunday paper; she watched the show and thought I was "great". I did, too. PS: I don't remember photos being taken - a cinch we never got any!

They attempted the "new" revolutionary system of shooting with three cameras running film at the same time, at the Jerry Fairbanks studios, which I think, might have been a converted market, so the sound stages weren't exactly huge. With eight people in almost every scene, it was a genuine nightmare to get us all blocked and in focus with mike coverage. We rehearsed a week and shot it in one day. It is a gem of a little picture and to this day I'd love to own a print. I was interested in working with Victor Jory, who had made his reputation playing heavies (Gone With The Wind, etc.) and who, of course, was a real pussycat. He told me that it had been his experience in showbusiness that the people "you love to hate" are generally the nicest people off-stage and off-screen.

By contrast, Death Valley Days was a dreadful experience for me, though by that time, S.A.G. had jurisdiction and we actors were making lunch money. I was in almost every scene without let-up and certainly without a stand-in. The "Simon Legree" masquerading as a director was relentless in his demands until I blew my stack and read-him-off in front of everyone. Unforgiveable, but I got a chance to sit down once in awhile! Without any rehearsals except camera run-throughs, we shot it in two and a half days at the KTTV (Nassour) studio, now enlarged and operated by Metro-Media. It's a charming little film and I am very good in it, running around in a towel most of the time, having bet my fiance's father that I could start without a stitch and wind up with money in the bank and a car at the curb in just one week. It was based on a true story of Old San Francisco and fittingly enough, was entitled Mr. Godiva.

I split my salary between the trade papers Hollywood Reporter and Variety plus cuts made for the half-page ads to run on the day the show ran on CBS. I WAS NEVER INFORMED! Seems the show was so well-liked, they used it as the Season Opener. I was in Chicago at the time, knee-deep in a film for the Sinclair Refining Company, and never got to see Mr. Godiva, learning it had aired only because I saw my picture on the TV page of a newspaper the following day!!!

I rented a typewriter and wrote a steaming letter to the Screen Actors Guild, who "promised" me that it would be part of their forthcoming contract negotiations that leading players would be informed of the date their film would be shown on television!!! (I think Jack



"MR. GODIVA", a charmingly entertaining episode in the DEATH VALLEY DAYS TV series, stars RUSTY MORRIS as "Sam Swift", who bets his prospective father-in-law that he can begin without a stitch on his back, and in three days, honestly earn enough to support a wife and buy her luxuries of early-day San Francisco. He wins, and how! A 16mm PERSONALLY OWNED SOUND PRINT OF THIS FILM IS AVAILABLE FOR AUDITION VIEWING

Webb had always done this, plus furnishing stills to use).

I also wrote William R. Wilkerson, publisher of The Hollywood Reporter, who used my plight as the subject of an editorial on the front page. I also wrote Maggie Ettinger, head of the show's publicity firm, but she ignored me. I also wrote Dorothy B. McCann, head of the McCann-Erickson Advertising Agency, whom I had met on one or more of their Dr. Christian shows. She apologized, explaining my show was so good it was rescheduled to open the season and if I were to contact Neal Reagan in Hollywood, I could obtain a 16mm print of the show and run it to my heart's content.

Even though I could run it in their offices on my own personal 16mm sound projector, I could never get anyone in New York to look at it: "What do we want to look at film for? Get into a show and we'll come see you!" When I got back to Hollywood I got similar crap: "It's almost ten years old -- and in black and white!"

But there was more television in my future after that film was in the can, but most of it was to be commercials: live, film and tape. I have appeared in 53 commercials for 35 different products. That's an interesting arrangement of numbers, but it's true.

The silliest was having to dance all day with a box of American Family Flakes in my arms. (They even had a choreographer). And for Oldsmobile, I had to drive into a gas station sitting on a box in a hand-made prototype. For Gillette, I had to fall out of a hammock all day and could hardly move the next. We all got absolutely giddy drinking Busch Bavarian Beer in the days when you could drink on-camera. Seems a company man was unhappy with the bubbles so we had to do it all over and over again as they tried detergent after detergent to get the glasses crystal clean. The lights on the set of the Hallmark Card commercial were so hot they almost melted our fingernails so they could stop-down their lenses and get every card in focus. Some of them were "live" presented during football games and it was pure hell to sit there in the studio waiting for the red light to go on and get excited over Hoffman TV sets. The one for A.T. & T. was filmed on the largest sound stage available in New York City. Using nine players, we were told it was the most expensive commercial ever made up to that time. It ran twice -- at least, that's all I got paid for ...

I loved going on interviews for commercials in New York, for one never knew what to expect. It was always an adventure. Once, I thought I'd regale company representatives about how we used their product, Lavoris, to spark up our drinks when I was out on the road with a play. Gathering in a hotel room after a performance, we'd share our liquor, if we had any. Sometimes there was precious little and no place to go at that hour to obtain more. Once I got the idea of spiking gin with Lavoris and it was very successful. Those at the commercial interview in NYC looked funeral. Oh, well. I'm a non-smoker, but was assured by my agent that I could light up a cigar and get away with it as a person doesn't inhale. So, I got a cigar and my roommate showed me the proper way to hold it, lit it for me and I felt very clever. On the interview next day, I got a company cigar, but had to light it myself. Due to a war injury, I have limited vision in my right eye, thus poor depth perception. Believe me, they all howled watching me try to find the end of my cigar with a lighter! On another never-to-be-forgotten interview, the smart-ass director urged that I read the copy again, only make it "conversational". Rusty is apt to speak the truth. Without any malice, I replied: "But it isn't written that way." Whereupon, the director introduced the man on his right - the writer!

Another commercial involved a new cold remedy represented by Young & Rubicam, a prominent advertising agency. The girl and I both felt we had found the pot-of-gold at the end-of-the-rainbow, for such a new product was bound to get heavy exposure in the market place. It involved a wonderful rocking chair, in which I sat, being administered the magic potion by my "wife". Everything went well, but we were called back to do it all over again - the label had been changed on the bottle due to some requirement of the FDA. At that point, they offered us what was/is known as a "buy-out". This is a lump-sum paid up-front, plus a signature on a release which gives a company unlimited use of the commercial over a certain period. I was offered \$1875 and I took it only because I wanted a 16mm Bolex movie camera to play with. My "wife" thought I was mad and turned them down. The check arrived for my day's work, plus another check for the buy-out. The product was never marketed, so the girl got only a day's pay and I got my camera!

RUSTY MORRIS

SAG
AFTRA
AEA

SIZE 39L · 40R

HEIGHT 6'

WEIGHT 170

WAIST 32

INSEAM 31

SHIRT 15-17 Med

HAIR Auburn

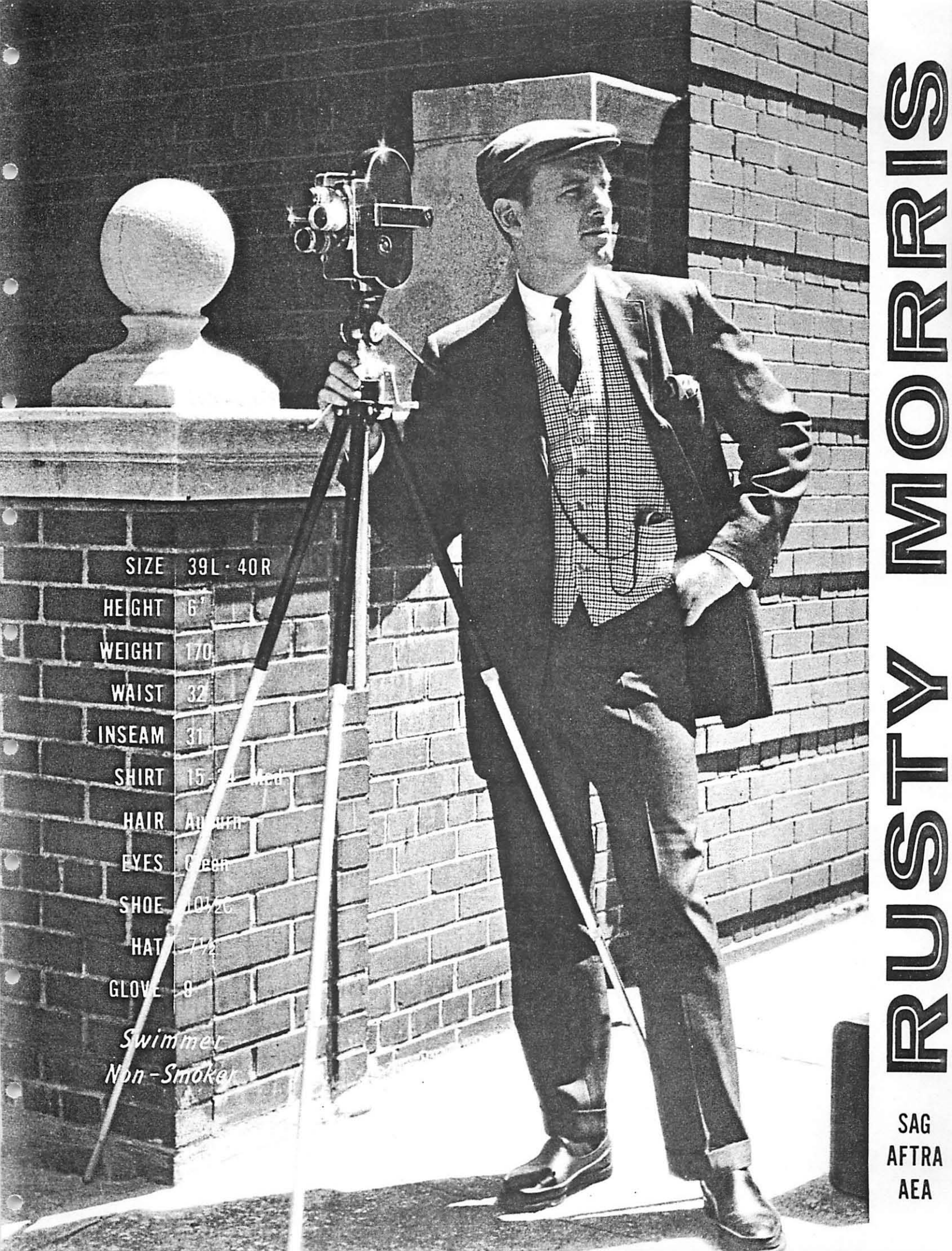
EYES Green

SHOE 10-12

HAT 7 1/2

GLOVE 8

Swimmer
Non-Smoker

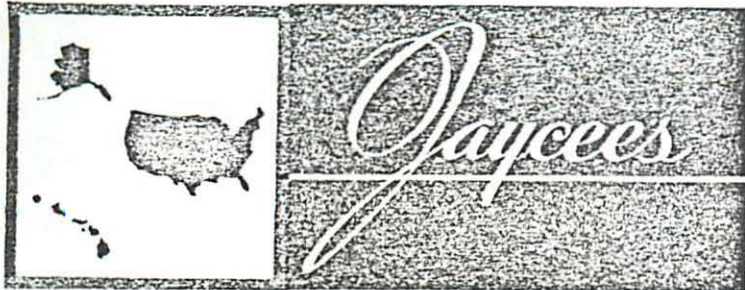


What I DIDN'T GET was any sort of notification from Y&R that the product was never to hit the market. So what? Well, I had signed an "exclusive" with them that I wouldn't appear in a commercial for any competing product for a period of one year -- and during that time period, I had repeatedly turned down offers to audition for such other cold remedies as Dristan and Vicks to name just two.

In a fit of pique, I registered a complaint with the Screen Actors Guild against Young & Rubicam! There are those who would say I was a "trouble-maker", but as a S.A.G. member since 1941, I never hesitated to report any infractions of rules or unprofessional on-the-set practices -- agents be damned. In my case, at that time, I was with Charles B. Trantum, the best in New York City and as it was out-of-pocket for him, too, he stood behind me.

S.A.G. contacted me with the news that advertising agencies in future would have to notify actors and actresses that the products had been withheld and release them from their exclusive. IF that is happening today, and that's a very large "if", the credit belongs to me. One cannot help wondering about the professional integrity of a so-called honorable union that would permit (a) an actor starring in a show and yet not be notified when it was to be aired, or (b) letting an actor sit-out an exclusive as detailed above UNTIL some one lone member stood up to be counted!

In Chicago in 1957, Dallas Jones Studio was exceptionally late in paying me off for my work in the film we'd made together for the U. S. Junior Chamber of Commerce in spite of the fact that I had kept myself available to them over a period of months, with no real obligation to do so without a "standby fee". Unprofessional of me to do so (and stupid), but they were a small company and I could fit them in between modeling assignments. To hold up my pay, wasn't very nice of them, all things considered. My complaint to S.A.G. was countered by Dallas Jones Studio staggering me with a statement that I had often reported for work late (never), hadn't studied my script (absurd!), botched the voice-over narration I recorded (I was a network radio actor with top credits), and worst of all, I had often reported for work inebriated (I didn't drink). This sent me to an attorney and finally got S.A.G.-Hollywood involved. Dallas Jones retracted and I was paid-off. (The film was a hit, I understand).



UNITED STATES JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

AFFILIATED WITH JUNIOR CHAMBER INTERNATIONAL
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS • BOULDER PARK • BOX 7 • TULSA 2 • OKLA • LUTHER • 241

October 3, 1960

Mr. Rusty Morris
132A MacDougal Street
New York 12, New York

Dear Mr. Morris:

"The Jaycee Story" film you have inquired about is in such demand that we can only promise you a showing in December. Therefore, we are reserving December 19-24 for your use of the film.

If you would prefer to purchase a print of your own you may write to:

Dallas Jones Production
1725 North Wells
Chicago, Illinois

The price of the film is approximately \$150.

✓ You can be proud, indeed, of the part you played in making "The Jaycee Story" film such a success. The film has helped promote the Jaycees throughout the country and has proven to be our most popular film.

Let us hear from you if we can help you further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "Jane Dunn".

(Miss) Jane Dunn
Film Librarian

My luckiest TV commercials were for Ivory soap and they kept me in comfort for a number of years. In 1961-62, I worked a total eleven days and played the rest of the time, making trips all over the area: to Chicago, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Williamsburg Virginia, Boston, Nags Head, North Carolina - where I visited Kitty Hawk to see where the Wright Brothers first flew. I took hundreds of color slides using two cameras, which nobody ever wants to view.

One commercial features an angelic little girl with sculptured eyebrows everyone now swears is Brooke Shields. It is known that she did a lot of Ivory commercials and print work, but it is claimed she was born in 1965, and this commercial was made about 1961. It was so popular it was also shown in Canada. For the commercials, we used a bar of soap made of wood so the lettering would stay rigid and tons of lather whipped-up off camera by a special machine. They were always a lot of fun to do because the director was so great to work with. He's now gone on to directing Hollywood features.

In Hollywood, back in the dear-dead-days of "live" television, the commercials were live too, and that often made for a lot of fun for everyone. I recall doing several Eastside Beer commercials at NBC during fight coverage. NBC had blitzed their two newest radio studios, tearing out the seats and leveling the floors, installing lights everywhere. It was heartbreaking to see, remembering what the studios had once been. (Now it's all a parking area).

Hollywood's fair-haired boy in those days was Director Ralph Levy, who won deserved praise and applause for doing two shows, the Burns and Allen program and Jack Benny, both "live". So, when Benny was asked to recreate his famous Horn Blows at Midnight for Omnibus on CBS, it was only natural that he insisted Ralph direct.

Ralph made it a pleasure for everyone. Vital and inventive and extremely likeable, he would bound out of the control booth to talk privately to an actor, rather than push the "talk-back" and direct with a disembodied voice from the ceiling. Benny was so nice -- the sort of man who had worked with everyone, assuming everyone knew him from his long radio exposure. No "star complex" whatever. I remember complimenting him on some argyle socks he was wearing and he told me his daughter had knitted them for him -- she must

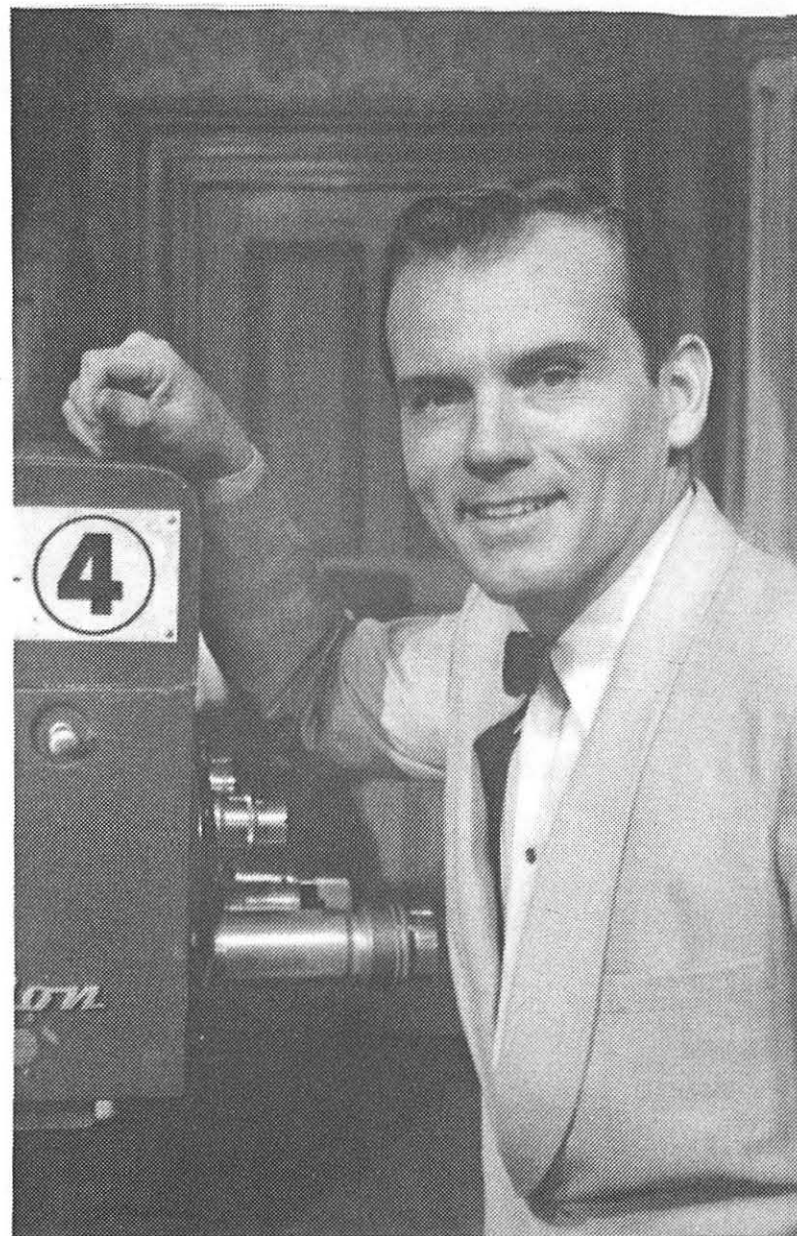
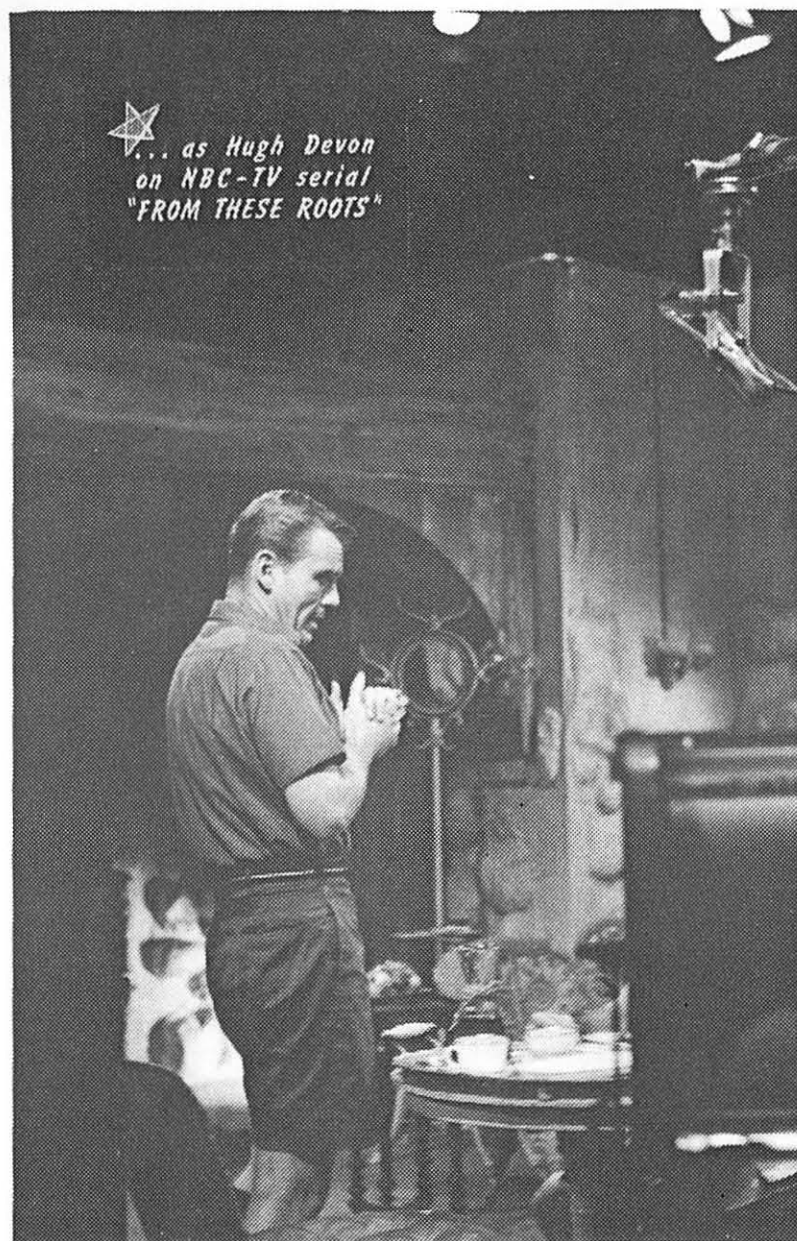
have made a lot of them, for that's all he ever wore during the week's long rehearsal. I never really cared for him as an artist until I got to know him as a man. He was all the good things they say about him and that's not always the case, alas. It was a very expensive hour-long show with a large cast that included (as I am able to recall) Dorothy Malone, Jeff Donnell, Ann Doran and Lee Millar, among others. I had a cute scene as an elevator operator alone with just Benny, so had plenty of time to watch the rest -- it was a landmark "live" show, superbly produced and directed.

Much as I enjoyed and miss those live dramatic shows like Philco Playhouse, Armstrong Circle Theatre and Playhouse 90, having worked in movies, "live" television seemed complicated and disorganized, so I avoided it whenever I could afford it. But I agreed to appear on a live daytime soap opera while living in New York, called From These Roots, on NBC, starring Ann Flood and Robert Mandan.

On it, I was to appear as the drunken husband of Joan Wetmore, a charming English actress a few years (I think) my senior. I never knew why I drank, but felt it might be the result of an unhappy marriage. Rehearsal the first day went well. There was a break for the crew before airtime, and the producer (nameless here) asked me into a sponsor's booth. He thereupon did the most unprofessional thing anyone had ever done to me as an actor. He totally destroyed my characterization, insisted I adopt a new one, that of a "wolf on the make", no more self-pity typical of so many drinkers, and then compounded it all by giving me line readings.

Disaster. I went back into the studio in shock and did it as I had rehearsed it. The writers seemed to like it, for the part became more and more written with certain by-play between my older wife and myself. Of course, the so-called producer never spoke to me again as the part continued through seven weeks.

It was pressurized chaos as far as I was concerned. The actor is constantly memorizing and running lines to himself. I not only had to pretend to be inebriated in a friendly sort of way, but had to sound like Errol Flynn! Actually, I remember trying more for a James Mason. Once, I was standing in the sun-room of the gym I went to almost daily running my lines - "woodshedding", as we used to call



From Polaroid Originals ...

RUSTY MORRIS

Charles Brannum INC. 

TALENT REPRESENTATION

603 MADISON AVENUE NEW YORK 22, N. Y. PLAZA 1-3884

it in radio, so that one's tongue wraps comfortably around words written by someone else. The guy next to me overheard my muttering and poked me with his elbow and asked: "Are you singing, or saying your prayers?" Love it.

In the story, Ann Flood and Robert Mandan were on their honeymoon in the Bahamas, staying at a hotel operated by me and my wife. During my weeks on the show, I bought yet another camera, this time a Polaroid 110-A, just like that of the scenic designer and now a collector's item (if they continue to manufacture the film). It was the only kind permitted on the set and we had a great deal of almost child-like fun with it -- lovely mementoes, but heartaches that it had to be such a crushing experience when it needn't have been at all, I could never have come through it without the friendship and support of Ann and Joan, I'm sure of it. Those who, like Bob Mandan, could come in and breeze through a difficult sustained role every day on a live show earned my heartfelt admiration. It was a GREAT learning experience I'll always remember ...

I had gone on to New York after three busy and successful years in Chicago, where I appeared prominently or as the lead in four motion pictures: Milwaukee Community Chest, United States Junior Chamber of Commerce, Sinclair Refining Comany and The American Feed Manufacturers Association, plus an Industrial Show for Quaker Oats that toured to Akron, Ohio, St. Joseph, Missouri and New Orleans. I had even worked at Chicago's spectacular Auto Show as a spokesman for Pontiac - a job of great prestige under the circumstances.

Consequently, the idea of appearing in an Off-Broadway show at a then top salary of \$45 a week, or even have my name in lights on Broadway earning \$250 a week tops, hardly appealed to me -- Broadway, by comparison to where I'd been, was penny-ante and yet they were "so grand". I laughed - I could make a Broadway salary in one day as a photographer's model for such products as Bell & Howell, Dodge, Dr. Pepper, Frigidaire, General Electric, Greyhound, Hertz, Jantzen, Miller's Highlife, Pepsi-Cola, Plymouth, RCA, United Airlines, TWA, and dozens more. Stupid, in the professional sense of real prestige to be sure and prostitution of all I knew and had done before, but the banks didn't mind at all. And neither did I.



EXASPERATED BROTHER in "SUNDAY IN NEW YORK"? No, actually, I wore this outfit in a Lipton Tea television commercial, received permission to return it to the costumer, hurried home and set up lights in my living room and let my magic Rolleiflex do its thing!

Writer-Director Garson Kanin was one of hundreds to receive my photo and resumé in the course of things. Best of all, he opened his mail and invited me to come see him in his offices just off Times Square. He was sweet and informal; it was rather like an interview for a radio show. One might have thought him to be an old family friend who just happened to have a part available in a Broadway play.

Next stop was the Booth Theatre where A Shot In The Dark was running. When I turned up at the requested hour, no one else seemed to be waiting to read, as is usually the case. Assistant Robinson Stone took me onto the fully-lit set (!) and down to the apron of the stage to introduce me to famed producer David Merrick, whom I couldn't see (nor Mr. Kanin, if there) because the balcony rails were on, plus the lekos in the boxes right-and-left. BROADWAY. I was there! Mr. Merrick may have murmured a "hello", it hardly mattered, for I soon became all-too-aware that I was there only to "feed" lines to a very lovely young actress who was obviously the focus of interest. She was worth it.

The play was Sunday In New York. I was asked to read "cold", a surprise (insulting) under the circumstances, but as an old radio actor, cold-readings were my forté, so I sailed into it, playing a big-brother airline pilot advising his wayward sister -- I could see my name in lights after every utterance, I was having such a good time. (Actually, it didn't matter that I could speak English; Conrad Janis played the part when the show opened, an actor as far-removed from me in type and style as possible -- but I loved the whole wonderful nonsense of it all, somehow it was the typical showbiz shit-pile, and no pony could I find. Good experience, though.

I was brave enough to sing for a part as a cop in Fiorello! -- they stopped me, thanked me for coming, and said: "We need a big voice." I read twice for a show called High Fidelity, which closed in Philadelphia without me, in spite of the sensitive directorial talent of a man I recall as Gene Regotsky, who told me I belonged on the stage: "You've got the height, the coloring, the voice, the presence - what the hell do you want to waste time on anything else for?" Eventually, I read for the part of another brother in Call Me By My Rightful Name. Beautiful role, but I turned it down in a real dispute over salary when I found out they also wanted me to be an

assistant stage manager. They thought I was crazy.

I was perhaps, but they didn't know why. I had purchased a red male Dachshund puppy I named "Murphy", and I wasn't about to leave him. I'm convinced that, if it hadn't been for his presence in my life, I wouldn't be here to write down these words -- he was sent to me, and every ounce of love I gave to him was returned to me when the world fell apart and I needed a friend the most.

When I returned to Los Angeles in 1962 (November) to take care of my mother, I got a special dispensation from the TWA Main Office in Kansas City to bring him with me in my seat -- not once, but three times, as the first two flights had to be cancelled. When I finally boarded the jet and was told he had to stay in his carrier, I made a scene and in a very loud voice announced that he did not, that I had a special pass for his being aboard from TWA, which was more than anyone else could say. Two Stewardesses blanched and ran forward to bring back the Captain, whose name was Lindbergh! I gave him the facts, showed him the papers from the Kansas City Public Relations Office and told him in a voice clearly heard to the tail: "He stays in my lap, or you can stop this plane and let us off!" Since we'd been cleared for take-off, he seemed to accept what he'd read and my attitude and gave in.

However, I was so furious at TWA I will never fly them again. After three written applications, all accepted and approved by high authority, what was my eventual seat assignment? Next to a woman with a baby, who was scared-to-death of the dog. She was German and so loved Dachshunds, so told the kid to cool-it. Things went fairly smoothly until the two Scotch-and-Water drinks I'd imbibed on take-off called me to the men's room. I went aft, in the process, carrying the dog proudly for everyone to see, knowing they'd heard everything. I passed a Stewardess who said, "You can't do that!" I ignored her, of course. In the lavatory, to close the door, I had to set him on the throbbing deck. He promptly scurried back down the aisle, with me in hot pursuit. Same Stewardess, this time with eyes darting fire. "Don't you dare open your mouth!" I flung at her as I passed.

The poor dog clung to me all the way across America on my very first jet flight, making me feel guilty and miserable -- evidently,



PRINCE VON MARLIN was born in Florida (hence the fishy name) of prizewinning pedigree but his name was "Bubaleh" when I discovered him tied to a parking meter outside of a Village market. His owner let me know she would be selling him as her marriage was over and she was not only going back to work, but moving. So His Highness became all mine on September 21, 1961 -- to be known as "MURPHY" from that moment on ...

He was seven months old, extremely intelligent and very affectionate. There are no words to express all he meant to me until his untimely death in 1972.

(Photo by Sue Seay)

he "heard", something we couldn't; all he did was tuck his head under my arm and moan. I hated it with all my heart, not only for him, but for me. I'd just left an entire way of life behind me forever.

TWA's Main Office heard from me in pointed detail. A waste of time and postage, for I received a one-page form reply that said: "Thank you for flying TWA - we are happy your trip was such a pleasure, etc." Total Twentieth Century Executive TWAddle ...

Dear "Murphy" became the cooperative star of my home-movies in New York: I photographed him in the tub, playing in snow, covering himself with his electric heating pad, swimming in a pool on a summer afternoon in Connecticut. I always regretted being unable to handle him and a camera on our trips uptown, where he visited Abercrombie-Fitch, Hammacher-Schlemmer and Saks Fifth Avenue's pet shops. ASPCA's nightschool Obedience Course soon found him hitting his marks, but unfortunately, on his graduation night, I had to work Armstrong Circle Theatre as a loud party-drunk (a no-line bit), so my roommate and his friend, Sue Seay, took "Murphy" through his paces without me or camera.

Sue Seay was a Senior Editor on LOOK Magazine. She added a lot of spark and excitement to our lives. Through her, we paid a private visit to the White House one Sunday morning during the Eisenhower's tenancy, were VIP visitors at Williamsburg one wonderful orange-tinted fall, and in the next spring, frolicked on the sunny beaches at Nags Head. She wanted her very distinctive East Side apartment photographed and devised a plot to hang the pictures on, as she'd always wanted to see herself on the silver screen. The 16mm movie camera would show her welcoming an off-screen visitor to her Early American living room, then serve him a drink from an armoire converted into a bar. Only a hand, french-cuff and dark suit sleeve were to appear. (The "magazine cover" kitchen and bed-sitting-room had already been filmed in setting the scene). Finally, in the hallway, the hands draped her shoulders with a fur wrap and she stepped out of the frame, followed by her date, actor Tony Perkins. We shot it all successfully but without Tony, who was out of town on career obligations.

Because of her subsequent illness and hospitalization, the little scene was never completed -- though for all of us, Tony paid a final visit to Sue, dying of cancer in her mother's Norfolk, Virginia, home at the age of 37.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

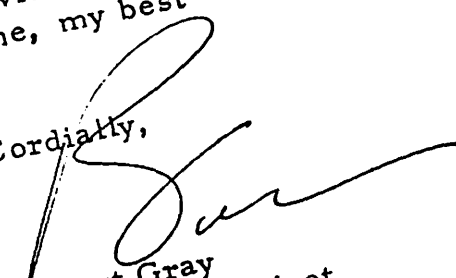
November 29, 1960

PERSONAL

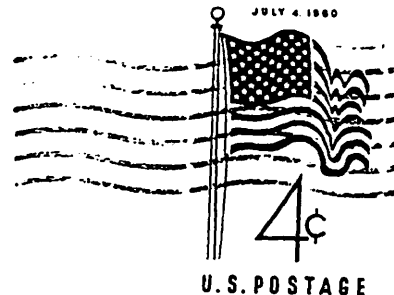
Dear Rusty:

It was certainly a pleasure meeting you this past weekend and I hope we will have future opportunities to get better acquainted. New York is not so far away that you can't come back to Washington on a day during the week and play tourist when our city's sights can be seen from the inside as well as the outside. I hope you will visit again soon and, in the meantime, my best regards.

Cordially,


Robert Gray
Secretary of the Cabinet

THE WHITE HOUSE



Mr. Roland Morris
132-A MacDougle Street
New York, N. Y.

I had acquired two excellent Contaflex 35mm cameras, one of which I outfitted with a telescopic lens attachment, so was always ready for anything. I shot hundreds of color slides, from the air, and on the ground and high atop skyscrapers, on boats and planes and trains. I wanted the movie camera because to me, New York was movement at all times. Still photos didn't seem to do it justice.

16mm movie film cost only half what it does today, so I was able to take movies all through mid-town Manhattan, everywhere but on the subway. The NYPD were not very supportive and as I was too-often hassled for not having a permit, I wrote the Chief of Police to explain my beef, giving specific details of my non-commercial intent. On Police Department letterhead, I was furnished with a very official sounding reply stating no permit was required under the circumstances, except in Central Park. I carried it in my camera bag and enjoyed showing it to every cop who bugged me, seeking a pay-off.

For Central Park, I utilized a shoulder-supported bracket which carried the camera-weight very nicely, limiting the use of the tripod to footage where I was making montages, or fade-ins and fade-outs, dissolves or titles. The Police Chief Letter magically curtailed all problems and I have priceless footage as a result, much of it devoted to the life around me in Greenwich Village, the annual Art Show and a specific shop-by-shop "tour" of both sides of MacDougal Street, on which I lived. A treasure.

I mentioned using the Polaroid on the set of the NBC television show, but it was always a lot of fun at parties to take a series of shots and present them to the host or hostess as I left. A much-appreciated present. Other photo activity included Rolleiflex shots of actors and models and interiors of apartments, about which, more later. With the Rollei and its built-in timer, I was using it to take all my own publicity, casting and modeling photos.

Though I began by using Modernage Labs, I later lucked-out and was able to rent a fully-equipped darkroom in which to produce my own prints. Hard to believe, but I assumed the \$20 per month rent that a man was paying for a converted storage room in his office building on Union Square at 16th Street. He in turn, let me use all his dark room equipment. I spent many an hour there, happy-in-hypo, walking home with "Murphy" at 2:00 a.m. - wonder if it's possible today?

After living one block from Oak Street Beach in Chicago's Near North side area (on lush, tree-lined Elm Street), I was dismayed by the overwhelming dirt and disarray of New York City. The heat. The humidity. The pace. The crush of humanity everywhere one went. Yet, once I got settled-in, I became a New York Booster. Some magic transformed the things I thought I hated into an excitement that was intoxicating. The characters I saw and the voices that I heard added to the wonder of it all eventually -- and Greenwich Village was a vital force in bringing it all about.

And photography.

Any person who reads up on the history of a place and of the interesting sights-to-see and then goes out to capture some essence of it all with a camera and film -- along the way, both coming and going, is sure to see a great many things unexpected, fascinating and rewarding. I know it worked for me in Chicago, San Francisco, New Orleans, Boston, Philadelphia, Denver, Washington, D.C. and everywhere else I've been lucky enough to explore, such as West Point Military Academy. I saw more, enjoyed more, than I ever would have without a camera. In fact, in Washington, D.C., I bought still another one, a 2½ x 3½ Graphic press camera, then a favorite with White House Newsmen. By today's standards and usage requirements, it's a Model-T. But in those days, with my new strobe light, it made me look very professional indeed in the company of Julie Andrews and others I'll be discussing in pages to come.

☆ ☆ ☆

Leona Powers, my nice mother of the Firestone Movie (1941) still lived on Sheridan Square, Greenwich Village, and had suggested that, on my arrival in New York City, I check into the 63rd Street YMCA as it was much less expensive than any hotel. Being just off Columbus Circle, it was a good central location, within walking distance of most of my commitments. It was an appreciated suggestion. Never before New York had I worn a soaking-wet necktie, such was the heat and humidity. So I didn't mind having a swimming pool in my basement one bit -- or, for that matter, a pleasant air-conditioned cafeteria that was easy on the food budget!

Not to my surprise, I experienced a reaction to checks written on a Chicago bank. So right away, I decided to make arrangements to have funds transferred to a New York City bank and the one that seemed more "New Yorkey" than any other, was the Chase Manhattan Bank at Rockefeller Center. Their checks carried a watermarked illustration of the RCA Building and their advertising assured us that "You have a friend at Chase Manhattan."

My friend in New Accounts made no bones about it: "We don't encourage actors' accounts at Chase Manhattan."

In one of my best suits, my tie had hardly become damp, but I began to steam. "What's wrong with \$2200.00?" I inquired.

"Why, nothing -- nothing at all." He hesitated. "I suppose you are a member of one of the actor's unions?"

"What's that got to do with anything ..." I answered, laying not one, but three fifteen-year-old cards in front of him: Actor's Equity, Screen Actors Guild, and AFTRA.

"How nice." Looking trapped and hardly enjoying any of it, he dealt his King: "You say you've been here only about ten days -- is it possible you've opened any charge accounts in town?" He managed a sickly smile.

What a jerk - an out-of-work actor, new in town, living at a YMCA, opening a charge account. I almost choked. "As a matter of fact, I have."

Where, may I ask?"

I dealt my Ace: "Abercrombie-Fitch!"

He was flabbergasted. Drumming fingers a moment, he picked up the phone on his desk and called Abercrombie-Fitch from a list he just happened to have handy for such purposes. "Credit Department, please ... this is Chase Manhattan Bank calling, checking on the account for Mr. Roland Morris ... really? ... how long?"

I had gambled that my Von Lengerke & Antoine account in Chicago, a store operated by Abercrombie-Fitch, would be on record. It was and from his expression, I gathered my rating was good,

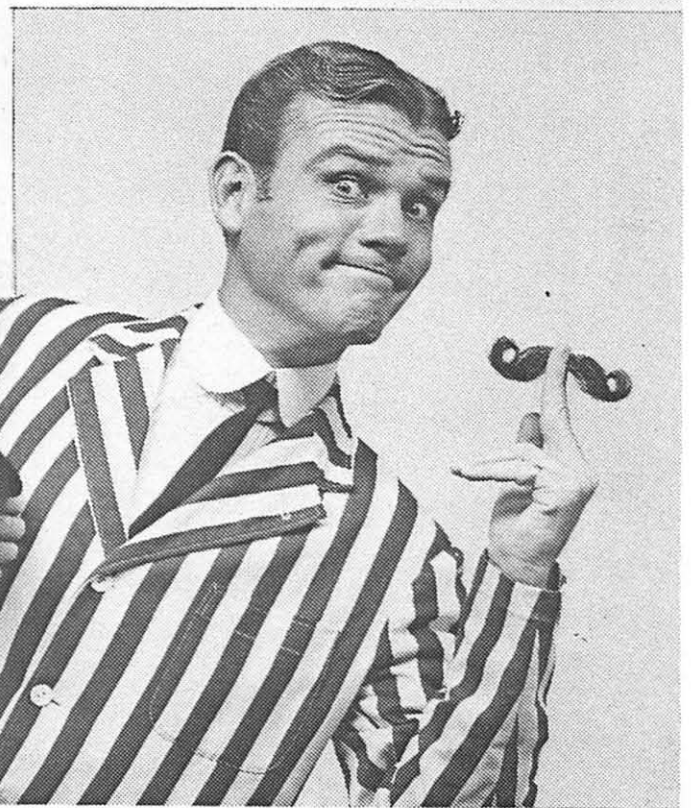
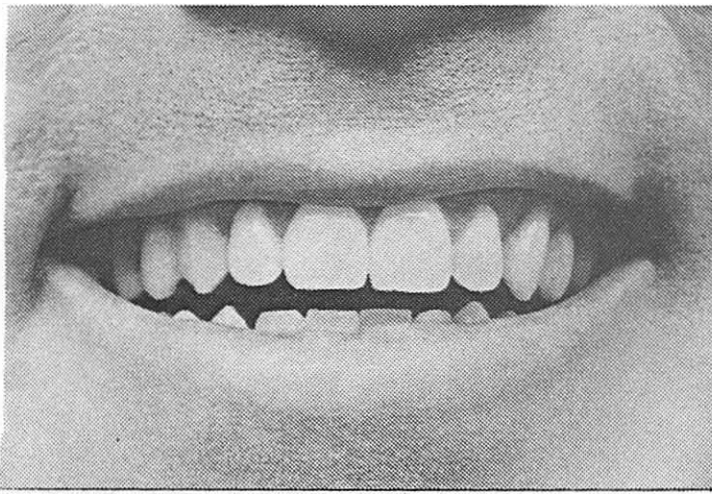
He signed me up.

I kept this new friend only until I learned that City National Bank & Trust on Park Avenue at 46th opened at 7:00 a.m., a great convenience -- and for the record, when I moved back to California, I still had an account at Abercrombie-Fitch, as well as B. Altman, Bonwit-Teller, Bloomingdales, Macy's, Gimbel's, Henri Bendel, Sax Fifth Avenue, Hammacher-Schlemmer, Peerless Camera, Willoughby's, Lord & Taylor, Bonnier's, Paul Stuart, Brooks Brothers, Wallachs and Whitehouse & Hardy. Not bad for an actor.

Meanwhile, I had to find a place to live, for I had things somewhere in storage with Mayflower, who had moved me out of my Chicago place at 1:30 in the morning after promising to be there at 6:00 p.m. so I could attend a farewell party in my honor. Things were such that I had to stay home in order to let them in -- but that's another story.

Fortunately, I didn't let them move two suitcases of basic clothing items, nor my little RCA television set. A "portable" set was a novelty in those days, and I had eagerly bought one for myself at Van Lengerke and Antoine, complete with zippered carrying case. On it, I had enjoyed Judy Garland's first TV show, among others, as well as the triumphant tour de force accomplished by Mary Martin and Noel Coward, in October 1955. But I especially loved it for bringing me Kukla, Fran and Ollie, which I had not seen until moving to Chicago.

Everyone I knew watched it and talked about it the next day, with good reason. It was only a fifteen minute show, on about 5:45 p.m. as I recall; something everyone seemed to turn on when they came home from work (or school, as it was a great favorite with children, of course). Having moved from NBC, it was then on ABC and one could go visit the Loop studio about 5:30 and be a part of the appreciative audience of all ages for the live show. I had been a patsy for puppet shows all my life. Wanting to know how everything really worked, I poked my nose backstage after the first show I attended. Burr Tilstrom, the real star of the show, was busy signing autographs, so I was not expecting to find anyone in back of the set, but there was Joe Lockwood, Burr's very amiable and quiet-spoken assistant. (To be sure, when one hand is operating a puppet "on-stage" the other hand can't very well slip into another puppet without help).



MY FIRST NY COMPOSITE included this page in consideration of advertisers needs for (a) good teeth, (b) good hands, some folks made a fortune with them, (c) comedic ability. The camera is one of nine I own, a Contaflex 35mm.

(1957 Photos: John Chapman & Bacon-Tirschel)

Typically, I had my camera round my neck, a 35mm Contaflex, the first of the through-the-lens reflexes. He was most interested, and divulged that he had a Rolleiflex and a darkroom set-up of his own on Division Street, just one block from where I lived. So began a very pleasant friendship I'll always revere, for although he was active in a most successful phase of show-business and surely spoke the language, he was very much a "civilian" and therefore, an awfully nice companion to associate with in my free time. (I've not been lucky with actor/actress relationships).

I had barely arrived in New York, when a letter from Joe told me that there was a good chance Kukla and Ollie would be coming to Broadway -- that Burr Tilstrom was negotiating to do a midnight show in a cunning little theatre in the Astor Hotel on Times Square. If so, Joe thought it would be a lark for us to share a place in Greenwich Village. He had always wanted to live there and sharing would save us both money (sharing living space is a way-of-life in New York, especially in the theatre). He urged me to try to find a place with a large kitchen which could be utilized also for a darkroom, as he intended transferring his enlarger and all his photo equipment.

A large kitchen is an anomolous item in a city where most of the kitchens are converted Murphy-bed closets and so forth! Looking for a place that had one got me acquainted with the layout of Greenwich Village, a picturesque collection of low-rise housing dating back to the early 18th Century. When a yellow fever epidemic broke out in Old New York, those who could afford it, fled north above the city wall (now Wall Street) to escape illness. The original trails and cowpaths of that era account for the rambling pattern of the Village streets today. During the 1920's, artists, sculptors, actors, playwrights and assorted geniuses (real and imagined), had migrated to the Village, attracted by the low rents for its garrets and walk-up flats. I was captivated by its charm and the "escape" it provided from the mid-town rat-race. Living there for the next five years was without doubt one of my happiest life cycles.

But finding a suitable, or rather acceptable place, seemed just hopeless until I chanced to pass a Realtor's office. Like so many business operations in the Village, she worked out of her living room and in those quaint old Federal-style houses, the family living room

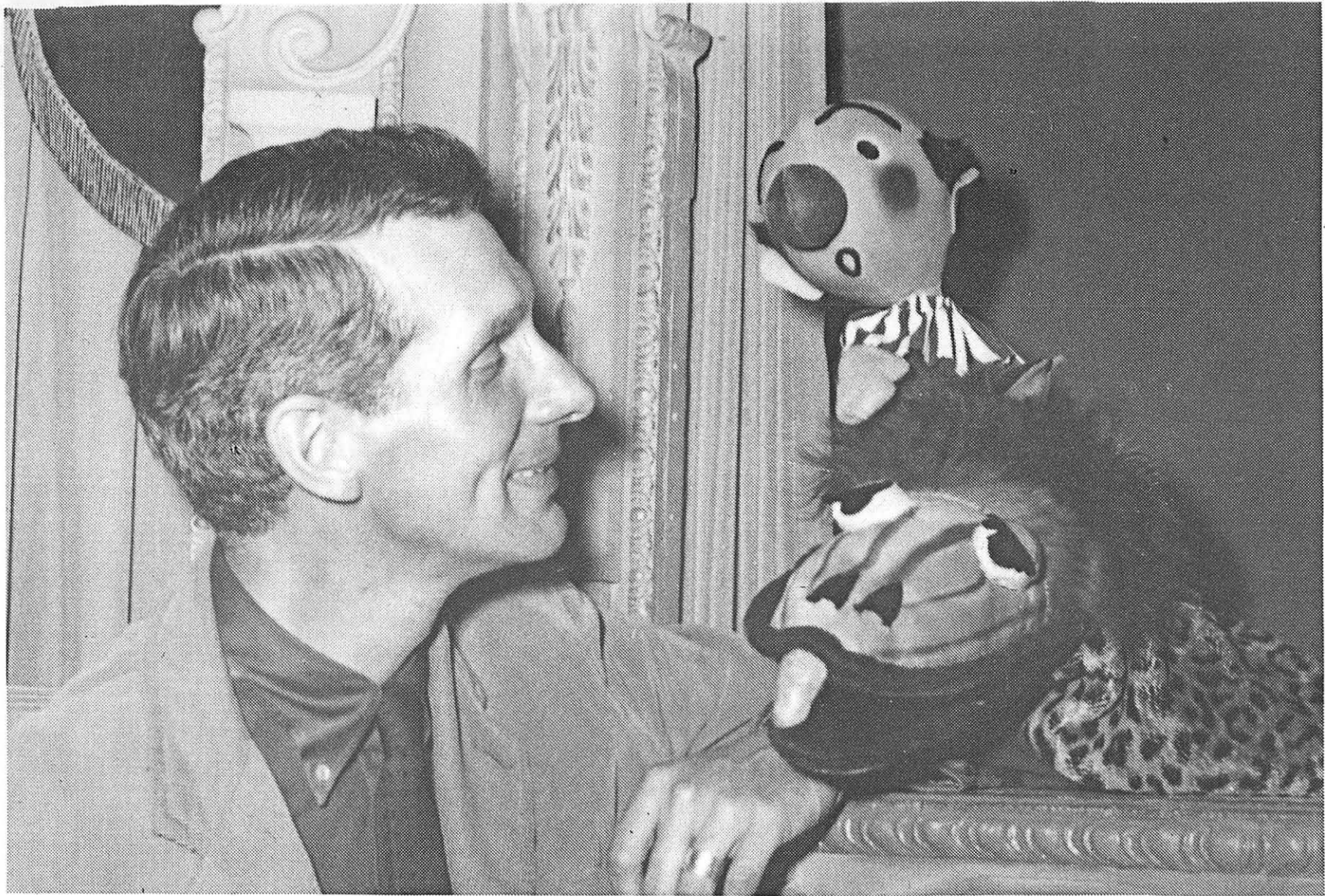
was only a step or two off the sidewalk. Janet Perry was her name and she had a highly-respected reputation. She also had an apartment with a large kitchen in a house 130 years old near the corner of MacDougal and Third Street, not only in Greenwich Village, as Joe had insisted, but in the heart of the Village, only a short block off famous Washington Square!

What I especially liked was that it was close to three subway lines, the stop for the most-used was just around the corner (8th Street Station, with an entrance on 3rd) What I didn't like was the rent.

The \$100 per month rent was designed to keep out 1957 riff-raff. The owner had just had a bad experience with the previous tenant -- who, as it happened, had evidently been a photographer, judging from the trash and debris he left behind him, photo chemicals and so forth. The place, in today's terms, was a "fixer-upper", a challenge I was delighted to take on. Sarah Marcus, the owner, lived upstairs and bowing to my enthusiastic charms, agreed to let me create magic -- at my own expense, of course. Starting with the bathroom, I told her I was going to paint it front-to-back, top-to-bottom, repair the fireplace, add pegboard to the kitchen wall, with wonderful before-and-after photographic coverage.

The apartment, just-off-the-sidewalk and down about four steps, was termed a "semi-basement" apartment, with modernized kitchen and bathroom, a fair-sized living room, entry hall and clothes closet, AND a kitchen about 10 x 10 feet. Stove and refrigerator furnished. To both Joe's and my own delight, it was an historic landmark, for at one time, the building had been owned by Louisa May Alcott's uncle, and it was in the second floor front bedroom that Louisa wrote her famous novel, Little Women, still a best-seller.

The first things I bought for it were a folding cot on which to rest my weary body after busy days looking for work and busier nights painting the place, and an ironing board to eat off of and to keep my clothing looking decent. The movers had delivered my wardrobe trunk and four footlockers, but to my amazement, nothing else had been packed-up as promised, not even in brown paper. My bed pillow was so filthy I had to throw it away. (And I had appeared in their advertising, too! I felt betrayed to the teeth!)



JOE LOCKWOOD was never happier than when with his dear friends, KUKLA, the doll-like little clown with wit and enterprise, who not only dominated the show, but kept his buddy, OLLIE, from stealing it (with his gregarious personality, fur bangs and prehensile tooth). He never let us forget that he was a dragon, a lovable dragon, that is. Joe worked behind-the-scenes in a quiet dedicated way. I never knew him to be anything but affable, charming and wry. He had a unique way of listening intently to any problem, then twisting it in such a manner that a person laughed at himself, which solved the problem itself. A very good friend who died much too soon.

(1957 Photo: R. Morris)

On my brand-new telephone, I complained to a Mayflower rep about the loss of six brand-new hats, stating I wouldn't ship a dead dog via their company in the future. A true New Yorker, he calmly replied: "We don't ship dead dogs."

Plans for the cabaret show at the Astor fell through, and Joe Lockwood remained in Chicago, though he became a frequent New York visitor as Kukla and Ollie were frequent guests on the Perry Como television show on NBC. I was startled to hear Joe say he was "bringing the kids" on his way to see the Greenwich Village apartment for the first time. "Well, you can't expect them to be left alone in a hotel room -- even the Plaza!" So, in a carrying case possibly made for the very purpose, he arrived with Kukla and Ollie. When they weren't on stage before the cameras, they were his very special responsibility, riding in cabs, on his lap at the theatre, under his chair in a restaurant. He let me look out of curiosity -- the puppets were dear to my heart and cunning works of art, but without Burr's incredible genius to give them life, I couldn't bear to touch them.

On an expense account, Joe was eager for me to have Sunday brunch with him at the Plaza, where sure enough, Kukla and Ollie joined us. We both were ravenous and Eggs Benedict seemed the perfect thing to have. We each ordered two and they were truly delicious and beautifully served in this fashionable Empire-styled dining room with its impressive china and silver ... like eating in another century. When Joe was asked to sign the check, he was shocked to discover our eggs had cost \$2.50 each / \$5.00 per serving. (The mind reels at the thought of what the same thing must cost today at the Plaza!)

☆ ☆ ☆

As exciting as New York was, was to be, and forever shall be, I will always remember it with fond affection for making it possible for me to meet and work for the renowned actor-writer-composer-director-poet-producer-singer Noel Coward ... or more specifically, for his Secretary, Cole Lesley.

No Elderberry wine was served, though the two sisters might well have stepped from the pages of Arsenic and Old Lace. They were in fact, operating an employment agency from their West Tenth Street home -- one favored by New York actors seeking temporary office work -- again, at the kind suggestion of Leona Powers my NYC godmother.

It was 1957, and I had come to New York to seek my fame and fortune (as the saying goes), but I had to find a place to live and a part-time job to bring in some pocket money to pay for photos and composites and resumes and mailings to use in my assault on agents and producers. Since typing was a marketable skill, I registered with the eccentric but endearing matrons, who were careful to express doubt they'd get any calls for typing in the evenings. Soon, one of them telephoned me with a job assignment, explaining that, while it wasn't typing, it was connected with show business in a way, and well, it just had to be right down my alley.

It seems that a producer needed someone to come to his apartment that night to answer his telephone while he was out. The calls would be saying either "yes" or "no" to an invitation to come to the Opening Night of Nude With Violin, a new play starring Noel Coward. The pay was a most generous three dollars an hour, when half that was norm at the time.

Central Casting would never have chosen anyone as kind and placid as Charles Russell for a role as a Broadway Producer. A former actor, shy and English, he bid me welcome to his surprisingly humble East Side flat, gave me the run of the bar and kitchen and told me he'd be back around midnight. I read The New Yorker and kept a "log" of those who called, about a dozen people at most and very enthusiastic. Charles returned like Cinderella, as promised and wondered if I could type - if so, could I please come back about 10:30 a.m.

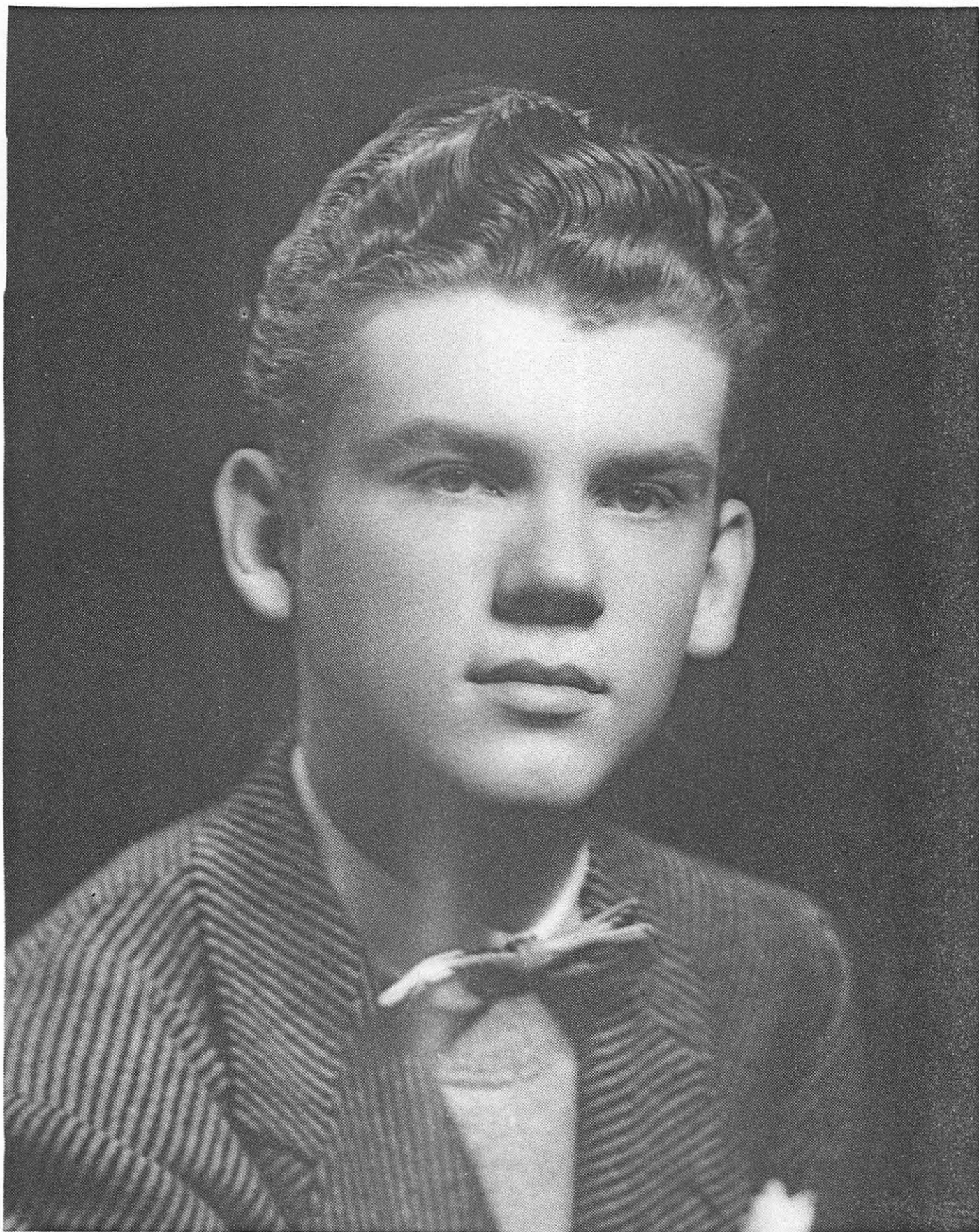
I was glad I could say yes, for it all seemed dream-like and there had been born in the back of my mind that, with luck, perhaps I could wangle a seat for myself at a performance of Noel Coward's new comedy. I had noticed an old Remington office typewriter sitting on a stand, both of them wobbly. Would Mr. Russell mind if I could bring my little Royal portable to work with, instead?

"Whatever makes you happy, old chap - be my guest," he agreed, leading me to the door, which upon re-entering that same morning, changed my life forever, as an actor, as a writer, most importantly as a person. Thinking back on it, it was the singularly most important thing to happen to me during the five years I lived in New York City -- yet, always, I was an on-looker. I'm grateful for even that.

☆ ☆ ☆

To put it all into its proper perspective, it is necessary to leave 1957 and 405 East 54th Street, New York City and segue in time and setting to the spring of 1938 and to Los Angeles and George Washington High School. I had been sent to this particular school instead of the one I and all my friends were scheduled to move on to as tenth graders (Fremont), due to the intervention of my homeroom teacher at John Muir Junior High School. Dorothy B. Harrison and her husband, Tom, also a teacher, felt I would benefit as a person, so the poor kid from the wrong side of the tracks took a streetcar and two buses every day for three years to live in a far better daily environment than I might have otherwise known.

Somewhat out of my element and eager to be accepted in a place where you had to wear a belt on slacks (no blue jeans) and where you could be sent home for wearing mundane tennis shoes, yet were not considered "strange" if you wore a tie (!), I dug in and my good grade average admitted me to an honorary organization known as The Torchbearers. As a reward for our efforts, we were invited to attend a program just for us. I'll never forget it. Some drama students from UCLA had put some tables over the backs of the auditorium seats and created a small elevated "island" down near the orchestra section. We were invited to gather close in the nearest seats. Atop the tables were four young actors seated before a portable screen which hid a phonograph from view. As they sat there, scripts in hand, they read to us a play entitled Private Lives by someone named Noel Coward.



RUSTY MORRIS AT AGE 17 - about the time he discovered the works of NOEL COWARD at George Washington High School. This was perhaps the only thing realized from an appearance in "THE GREAT AMERICAN FAMILY" after learning the hard way that actors who don't have a few photos to share with a play's publicity man, don't get into the newspapers!

(1939 Photo by Cagle)

Try to remember, radio was a very vital life force in those days of antiquity! We, young and old alike, LISTENED (a lost art), and we made up images in our minds. As these four talented young performers read the smart lines, we became spellbound. I thought it was a very funny and daring play -- and my, weren't we showing off our sophistication, laughing at things we barely knew anything about!

Hungry for more, I made a bee-line to the library and discovered that this Noel Coward fellow was a unique talent with lots of plays and songs to become familiar with. Best of all, a captivating autobiography I practically memorized: Present Indicative! A couple of years later, when I began collecting phonograph records, his were surely among them, a special favorite being a large one containing scenes from certain plays featuring a saucy actress who couldn't carry a tune in a bucket, named Gertrude Lawrence. I didn't care that she couldn't sing, she faked it very well. They were campy fun and epitomized the wild-and-wicked 1920's I'd lived through at my mother's knee, so didn't know a thing about, but wanted to.

Over the years, I read practically all of his plays, acquired his recordings, and had seen him in the movie The Scoundrel. Though his voice was hardly Bing Crosby's or Russ Columbo's, it was the typical tenor of another era and was most pleasant. (The English spoke differently, so far as I was concerned, they could sing in a different manner, too). Anyway, I was going to become a professional actor, and this man was theatrical! Effete, maybe, but so was Leslie Howard, a top favorite. Besides, during that period, a friend to almost every household in America was beloved radio raconteur Alexander Woollcott, and it developed that Noel Coward had been dubbed "Destiny's Tot" by Woollcott and that was good enough for me. Whatever it meant, (and I couldn't be sure then or now), I was a Coward fan, true, blue and very loyal.

It got me into trouble while in the Navy during World War Two. I was part of a group being assigned to a ship, and we had to travel from the Navy base on Terminal Island, near Los Angeles, all the way to Portland, Oregon. We were traveling under orders and everything was very military. I hated every moment of it, so when we stopped at San Jose to change trains, and there was time to get some lunch in town, I gratefully seized the chance to be alone.

Misunderstanding the time-limit set by the Chief Petty Officer in charge, I not only had lunch, but took in a movie, one I will remember for as long as I live, Noel Coward's stirring tribute to Lord Mountbatten, In Which We Serve. That movie gave me a sense of pride and purpose I doubt that I ever would have otherwise had and I relived its message of Duty, Honor, Country all through the war.

Emotionally spent at the end of the film, I was forced back to reality at the train station, where I discovered that the Draft of which I was a member had departed for San Francisco, and so far as local MPs were concerned, I was a deserter. As such, and in custody, I was put into a passing train's observation car for transfer to Oakland, where as luck would have it, delays had kept my gang intact, and (alas) I had to rejoin them.

Yet another segue in time to 1955, when I was driving my parents on a vacation trip to Denver Colorado, home of many relatives. We visited Boulder Dam, then did some more sightseeing in Las Vegas and finally settled into a motel. With slot-machine winnings, I dashed off to the Desert Inn to make arrangements to see Noel Coward, their big "In Person" attraction. I didn't realize, naive as I was in the wiley ways of maitré d's, that they were after high-tipping groups, not some Coward devotee perfectly willing and able to take an entire table for himself. "Nothing available, sorry," I was curtly told.

Disappointed, to say the least, I wandered through the lobby on out to the pool area, my heart as heavy as my winnings. Turning to walk back to my car, I saw Noel Coward sitting all alone by himself in a grassy area, splashing his lean shoulders with baby oil. There was no doubt it was him! I walked past, close as I dared, and then past again -- every instinct in me aching to say something, but I couldn't bring myself to open my mouth. How could he possibly care how I'd been introduced to Private Lives, or that I used to read Present Indicative to my girl friend late at night over the phone, until my mother would come in, turn out the light with the warning: "There's school tomorrow." Eventually, two men in business suits approached him, and after what seemed like an urgent talk, he picked up his blanket and reading material and hurried into the hotel, brown and shiney.

So, with that as a sketchy background, one might well imagine my feelings to be sitting in the living room of Noel Coward's Broadway Producer, my trusty little Royal portable typewriter on my lap. There were some cost estimates, salary lists, and some simple correspondence regarding handbags for the ladies in the cast and the creation of a hairpiece for the star.

I hadn't been typing very long when a rather skinny and quiet-spoken fellow appeared, told me in a very cultivated English accent that his name was Cole Lesley and that he was Mr. Coward's "Secretree" and, Good Lord, did I always type sitting on a couch? (It was his BED, actually, for I was later to learn that things were such that the Secretary of Noel Coward had neither an apartment nor even a room of his own).

Amused, I assured him I'd used a similar unit on my lap all through my school years, and while this was a post-war model, and somewhat heavier, I actually preferred it this way. "Well, then, you can jolly-well come over to The Master's apartment and do some letters for me! You can, can't you - do say yes, I need someone dreadfully." (He was David Niven's vocal double and every bit as polite and nice).

Further anxious discussion boiled it all down: he was up to his ears in paperwork concerning the business of Opening Night. Did I know the city? Could I carry things? Most of all, he needed someone to whittle down a pile of correspondence, working on the two matinee days of the show, Thursday and Saturday. Was I at all interested and available -- the pay would be the same beautiful three dollars an hour and the appreciation would be sincere in the extreme.

It was indeed, for on that day, at that moment, I made friends with a dear, kind, generous and gentle man who enriched my life for over twenty-two years. Our professional association lasted only twelve weeks, but our friendship was self-sustaining from all over the world, his letters so frequent that three arrived during the week following his death.

He seemed about ten years older than I, yet, he had enormous responsibilities as Noel Coward's secretary, valet, cook, companion

(later his esteemed biographer: Remembered Laughter, Knopf, 1976). When he learned that I was an actor, he wondered if I'd like to come see The Master (as everyone there called him) at a rehearsal performance of his play. He would make all the arrangements, meanwhile, when I was finished working for Charles, I was to come to The Master's apartment in the same building and get an idea of all that was to be done about the correspondence back-up.

Other work included that of allotting the Opening Night tickets to various famous names. There was a letter to be typed for each pair of tickets, along with an envelope, of course. It was finally necessary to make out a seating-plan to make sure no one unfriendly to another would be sitting too close.

That afternoon, I also met Charles Russell's charming (but over-effusive) co-producer, Lance Hamilton, who in conjunction with The Playwright's Company (Roger Stevens, Theatrical Manager) were presenting this Coward production on Broadway. "Ham" was bubbling with anticipation to show some new movie footage he had taken of their friend, Tyrone Power. An 8mm projector was set up, and there, on the living room wall, he ran off the worst home movie I had ever seen: out-of-focus, shakey camera and so forth, and ALL of the footage taken of one of the biggest names in motion pictures, grinning sheepishly and waving a self-conscious hand at the camera, just like everyone's Uncle Ken in Keokuk!

Another visitor was Hermione Gingold, who was every bit as she appears on television talk shows: gregarious, witty and rather bawdy. She referred to Coward not as The Master, but as "Nellie Chang". I was to get to know her much better in subsequent weeks and to take lovely color photos of her apartment. I found her to be a sentimental love, far more vulnerable than she pretends.

☆ ☆ ☆

In California, my little mama was in her second year of mourning my father's death. To cheer her and give her a sense of participation, I wrote fullsome letters, more detailed than they would have otherwise been, thanks to the handy typewriter. A year after her death in 1983, among her belongings I was sorting, I discovered

a box which contained, neatly typed and filed in sequence, diaries of my first two years in New York, 1957-58. Almost thirty years after they were written, they are going to provide details I would have perhaps otherwise forgotten. (Ultimately, we exchanged weekly tape letters to each other, but fortunately the first two years are still readable, on paper yellowed and fragile.)

Their pages tell that on that first afternoon, I was tidying up my "office mess" preparing to make a weary retreat at 6 o'clock, when the telephone rang -- it was for me, for a change. Cole Lesley was insisting I stop by Mr. Coward's apartment before going home and by the way, did I have plans for dinner? No, I didn't.

As I stood in the hallway in front of 15-G, I couldn't help but think back two years to that unhappy afternoon when I'd stood near the grassy plot in Las Vegas, mutely observing Noel Coward conferring with the men in suits. It was very possible one of them had been Cole Lesley. I took a deep breath and rang the bell; he opened it, urging that I call him "Coley" as everyone else did.

Stepping into a small foyer, I was struck first by an all-pervasive odor unlike anything I had ever smelled before. Not at all unpleasant, but difficult to identify. I asked what it might be and it was quickly explained that things had been sent up from the Jamaica headquarters and whatever this material was, the shippers used it for packing. So saying, Cole opened a hallway closet and, stacked among other items, were three cases of Haig & Haig Pinch-bottle scotch. Scraps of the spicey material lay scattered on the floor. The closest I could come to describing the smell is Cedar, but this had sunshine in it!

Opposite from the closet, an imposing bar set-up was dominated by a large oil painting of Jamaican natives going-to-market, heads piled high. All very "primitive" in the charming way that children display when they draw. I loved it and said so most enthusiastically before I noticed the name Noel Coward in the corner as artist -- certainly before I realized the artist himself was sitting within earshot!

With my drink-in-hand, Coley led me to the doorway of the living room, and there, sitting in an easy chair in the opposite corner,

looking like the wise old imp he was (only 57), sat Noel Coward.

He rose to bid me welcome, shaking my hand, urging me to relax and to be comfortable on a blue couch he and Mary Martin had used as a prop in their 90-minute live color television special on CBS. Coley had told him that I typed on my lap, which he found amusing, and that I was an actor and he was so glad I had come along, for Coley had "become beastly and unbearable."

I was invited to tell him all about myself -- the talk about me was in actuality a gut-rending confession of my admiration for him. To my happy surprise, he was every bit as good a listener as he was a talker, unusual in someone of his sophistication. He accepted compliments exceedingly well, with no false modesty, simply agreed and let it go at that. I told him about the highschool reading of Private Lives, the clandestine midnight telephone calls over Present Indicative, my record collection, becoming a "deserter" in the Navy over In Which We Serve and the keen disappointment of being denied seeing his wonderful Las Vegas nightclub act.

He had extremely kind eyes. They drooped a bit at the edges like my father's had and were similar in color. His face was extremely mobile - he used his eyebrows a lot. If he liked you, Noel Coward treated you as if he had known you from his childhood. He was angelic in his own sweet way, not at all "on-stage" for a moment. He assured me with all his heart that, had I only come up to him on the grass at Las Vegas and related my problem, I would have been his personal guest at ringside - the best table in the house. I was speechless, saved from very real tears by the ring of the telephone on the lamptable beside his chair -- it was Marlene Dietrich, who else?

He laughed and held forth on the telephone exactly as I had heard him do so many times from the speaker of my phonograph. Such beautiful articulate speech. Such a well-modulated voice. As they talked, Coley took me to the mantelpiece, where, spread out, were a number of engraved invitations to this affair and that. In the upper right-hand corner, in Mr. Coward's tiny scrawl, were various notations: "no", "nice thank you - no", "very nice thank you, no", "awfully sorry, no", etc. Coley explained that many could arrive

in a single day, and all had to be acknowledged. The Master's time was filled by the play rehearsals, so he socialized very little: Mrs. Roosevelt, Helen Hayes -- and Marlene, of course.

Coward unplugged the phone from the wall connection and paid no attention when it later rang in the bedroom a few times, letting Coley do the honors. When he got up to mix us another drink, he suggested we take off our coats and be comfortable. "I feel as though I've known you for years, anyway," he told me, "you have beautiful manners and I like you very much, indeed." I in turn, reminded him that we'd been the best of friends for exactly twenty years.

I behaved like Little Orphan Annie, I'm sure, but whatever I was, I wasn't phoney and Coward appreciated that. (Had I but known, he might have been studying my Amerrrrrican accent, which he could later imitate with hilarious accuracy). We talked about everything from Joan Crawford to Marlene Dietrich scrubbing their own floors, from his losing his mother at 91, to my losing my father. I told him about my sister living in Memphis, of my mother living alone in Los Angeles and of my just moving into a Greenwich Village apartment in a house 130 years old. He was enchanted to learn it was the house where Louisa May Alcott had lived and in which she wrote "Little Women."

Time flew. I so wished for a tape recorder. Possibly he got a signal from Coley, I don't know, but it seemed time for us to leave as I was to dine with The Master. I excused myself to use the bathroom, observing on the way, that it was a surprisingly small apartment, with an atmosphere of tidy comfort totally without any ostentation. It lacked a certain personal quality, seeming more like a well slip-covered hotel suite (the English seem to slip-cover everything but the lamps). The bedroom was small, the bed turned-down, piled high with pillows. On top of the blanket was a plastic rack, later identified as a treasured gift from Gertrude Lawrence, which made reading in bed easier. Another beautifully framed oil painting by Coward hung on the wall over the headboard.

Returning to the living room, I found Noel Coward seated at the small grand piano there was just barely room for. "What would you like me to play for you, Rusty?"

What a moment. How many had ever had the chance to make such a request? I glanced at Coley, who had been so quiet. In his eyes I read the words make the most of it. For a second, I thought of those 75¢ RCAs I could afford only by hoarding lunch money while at highschool ... I was just tipsy enough to say: "We Were So Young."

Coward's fingers splayed over the keys in discord. "Wherever did you hear that?" It was not a song by Noel Coward, but one written by Jerome Kern. How did I dare? Coley looked stricken, for I realize now I had been rather rude under the circumstances!

But Orphan Annie plowed on: "It's very simple, it's a record of yours I bought back in the 30's and literally wore out, playing it over and over."

He was charmed and revealed: "It's the only song I ever recorded that I never wrote." *

The song is from the score of Sweet Adeline, and no one ever sang it better than Noel Coward, and he never sang it better than he did that afternoon. I wept, with my usual lack of poise, but I couldn't help myself as it erased all the Las Vegas hurt forever.

"How very odd, no one cries when I play my songs!" He didn't seem to mind my damp bear-hug one bit.

Coley had made a reservation for only two, to my surprise, at a nearby restaurant, L'Amourique. Coward and I walked to it after Coley took off somewhere in a taxicab.

At the restaurant, the French Chef (possibly the owner) came out of the kitchen to act as our waiter. I was conscious of all eyes upon us, but savored the experience. It was my first time being out in public with someone of such renown and recognition of the famous is like a wave. The fact that they'd reserved the best table in full view of the entire room filled with diners was pleasing to him for everyone present was able to watch his performance.

The menu was all in French, to my consternation. "You don't read French, Rusty?" Coward asked, as though it were a most ordinary

* Not true. He was being gracious.

skill. "No," I replied, "I'm from Los Angeles!" That struck his funny-bone and he laughed so heartily, he leaned clear down to the seat of the banquette we shared.

Personally, I would have preferred something on fire in honor of the occasion, but was very pleased with my cold vichysoisse, sizzling steak, boiled potatoes with parsley, endive (which was a new vegetable to me). No salad, Coward's dentures couldn't come to terms with lettuce. There was a wonderous parfait, coffee and of course, cognac. It was perfect. I for one had such a pleasant time I became oblivious to our observing diners.

I doubt that it was as late as nine o'clock when we bid each other goodnight. I had insisted on walking him back to his apartment, where he suggested I toddle off, as he had a heavy day ahead. I treated myself to a taxi, but it was more like Cloud Nine.

☆ ☆ ☆

I presented myself at the Belasco Theatre at the appointed hour. Coley met me and ushered me down front to a seat about tenth row center and there, while munching on a Mr. Goodbar and a vending machine apple, I watched the legendary Noel Coward and cast perform an invitational dress rehearsal of Nude With Violin. I laughed until I was ashamed of myself, and when it was over and he thanked those of us present for "being such a lovely audience," he looked (I was so sure) directly at me, for when I laugh, it's no secret from anyone.

A day or so later, I had attended an audition for a television commercial on Madison Avenue and decided to walk up to Bloomingdale's department store. As I crossed 57th Street, I spotted Noel Coward ambling along towards me.

"Only one autograph to a customer," he said. He seemed pleased to see me and wondered how I'd liked the rehearsal performance I'd seen. "You laughed in all the right places, I was veddy grateful."

Together, we headed west at a clip, as I rambled on in a general way, then happened to mention a gesture I thought he was over-fond

of using: putting his index finger to the corner of his mouth, rather like Shirley Temple ...

"Like SHIRLEY TEMPLE!" He flung his left arm across my body, stopping me in my tracks. "Show me!" he demanded. I did. "You always do it with your down-stage hand."

"Of course," he almost sighed. And we were off.

Orphan Annie was at it again.

On Fifth Avenue, he stopped at a Rockefeller Plaza haberdasher to check on whether or not shorts he'd ordered custom-made had arrived yet. They hadn't. Back on the street, he took time to chat amiably with total strangers who had seen him on TV with Mary Martin. Then he said to me, "Dear boy, I'm lunching with Kit Cornell at the Algonquin and you've made me veddy late. You must be my guest at the Preview of the play and bring a friend." With that, he hailed a cab, although the Algonquin was about four or five blocks away.

When one stopped, he opened the door, and then, trained actor to the hilt, he smiled and delivered the perfect exit-line: "Cahn't arrive on foot, looks cheap, you know." And he was off.

I was exuberant. I had not only wangled a seat to the show as hoped-for, it was a personal invitation from the playwright-star!

☆ ☆ ☆

The Algonquin Hotel was to be Noel Coward's "hide-away" during the run of the play. Coley and I had shopped for groceries, goodies, clothing, toiletries, flowers for Lena Horne, and together with a bed-side table borrowed from Charles Russell's apartment, taxied to the historic hotel on 45th Street. (We had previously moved a coffee table from Charles' living room to the reception room that adjoined Coward's backstage dressing room).

At the hotel, the assistant manager accompanied us to Coward's charming suite in order to be sure we had all we needed. It was to be utilized on matinee days (Thursday and Saturday) so that The Master didn't have to journey uptown to rest. A maid followed us

in, her arms loaded with extra pillows for his bed. There was a full locker of various alcoholic beverages, glasses and mixer, ice bucket, everything for the hospitable star. We had also carried a few of Mr. Coward's paintings with us to decorate the rooms with a more personal touch. We tended to the medicine chest (all of the artist's AND the actor's favorite nostrums for throat ailments), put the candy and the cookies, sleep-mask, six of the latest books and a very handsome dressing gown with slippers, in place. Coley piled the pillows five high, with an extra alongside.

The evening of the Preview arrived. It was more convenient for my guest to meet me at the theatre, so I met Coley for drinks and a quiet dinner at the Astor Hotel, then we walked through the Times Square madhouse over to the Belasco. Because it was a play about a modern painter, I invited a chum I had originally come to know in Chicago, himself a modern painter of great talent: Robert Indiana, whose work now hangs in national galleries, museums and private collections around the world, his LOVE stamp the largest-selling postage stamp in history. But at that time, with a barren loft studio in Coentis Slip at the tip of Manhattan, he was the personification of the starving artist, actually going without food for himself in order to feed his cats and pay his rent. To be present at a Noel Coward show was a rare treat.

We occupied a box, second tier, stage right. As I had already seen the play, I offered my seat next to Bob to a small woman who sat behind me, all alone. I later learned she was Sibyl Payn, the little mama (about the size of mine) of Noel's good friend, Graham, a favor I was always told Graham very much appreciated, though I have no reason to think so.

Oh, yes -- that night, I never once saw Noel Coward point his finger to the corner of his mouth like Shirley Temple!

☆ ☆ ☆

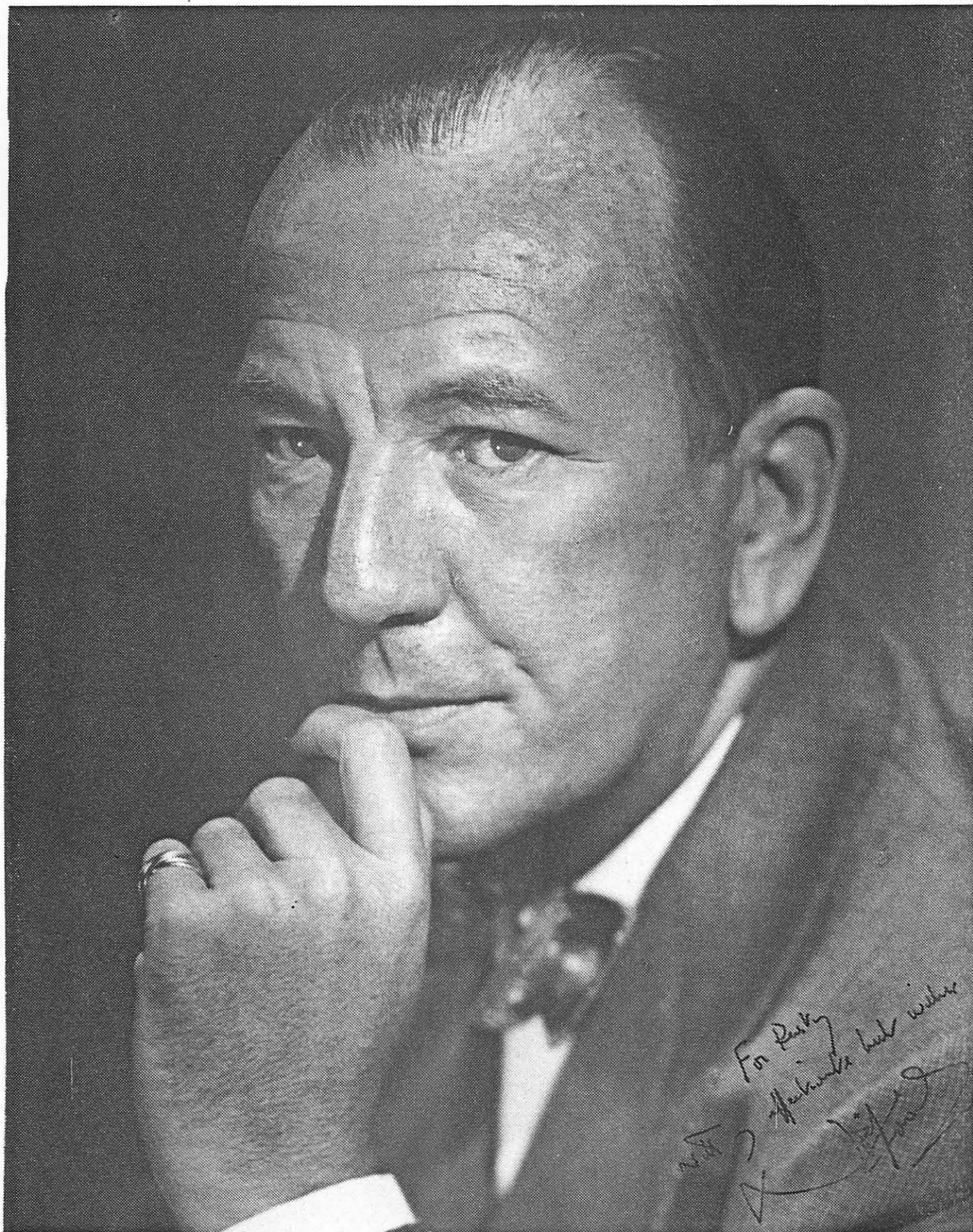
Because I lived in Greenwich Village, the next morning, I walked up to Macmillan's publishing office on lower Fifth Avenue and picked up a case of books, which I taxied to East 55th. On arrival at Coward's apartment, I opened the box and discovered it contained a couple dozen copies of Theatrical Companion to Noel

Coward, an awesome new reference source compiled by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson. Except for the same authors' tribute to George Bernard Shaw and Somerset Maugham, there had been nothing like it, containing as it does the names and casts of all the revues, plays, operettas, films, television and movie scripts and lyrics by Noel Coward, as well as lists of all his recordings, radio and television appearances, direction and producer credits, acting roles and so forth, in addition to a loving introduction by Terrance Rattigan which hails him as: "simply a phenomenon and one that is unlikely to occur ever again in theatre history."

The door to the bedroom opened and the phenomenon emerged, dressed not in a chic silk dressing gown by Sulka, but in a tatty old robe made from a blanket by one of his adoring fans. He loved it and took it everywhere. There were matching slippers, well-worn. On one was appliqued a felt "N", and on the other was a "C". Looking down at them, hands in commodious pockets, he apologized to me in a way, stating that he just never knew which to put on what foot, wondering if it should say "N.C." when he looked down on them, or "N.C." when others looked at them.

We had stacked the books on the round coffee table, together with some Noel Coward in Las Vegas record albums. It was a major crime that the next thirty or forty minutes couldn't have been tape recorded for posterity, as Coward sat in his easy chair, Coley across from him on the end of the couch. Each of the principal players in his cast was to receive a copy of the new book as an Opening Night present. With coffee at hand, they talked briefly about what should be written on the flyleaf for each of the actors and actresses and it was hysterically funny and very naughty - even to me, and I didn't know the players! They were like two mischievous school boys hatching a prank. The LPs were to go to the supporting players. Each gift was to contain a small Noel Coward engraved card, on which he had written the recipient's name, a keepsake itself.

The books finished, Cole produced an 8" x 10" photograph of Noel Coward, far and away the best portrait I could find while rummaging in Charles Russell's office files (a mess tucked away in a clothes closet). None of the funny things I suggested Mr. Coward might want to write on it pleased him. He explained:



☆ THIS IS THE COWARD I KNEW, serious and almost melancholy, never "on" when he was off. He loathed Christmas, yet received the name "Noël" for being born on December 16th. All the royalties from his songs, plays, poems, operettas, ballets, books, will go to aid indigent English actors and actresses.

(Photo by Editta Sherman)

"Jokes on photographs grow awfully stale, luv, then you're stuck with them -- in books, all right, but not on pictures."

So he wrote simply: "To Rusty, with my affectionate best wishes - Noel Coward." A month ago, I'd have never dreamed any of it possible. It was a thrilling omen that my New York Adventure was going to be special.

Meanwhile, guess who was allotted the task of wrapping each of the presents in fancy paper and ribbon, after a careful warning about mixing up the cards, that's right, the Secretree's new helper. I was given a \$20 bill to taxi them all to the theatre, utilizing the box they came in -- it was always a \$20 bill when I was to take anything in a cab and I never had to account for any change.

Before I got started, however, I had to deliver some tickets to the Hotel Gotham on Fifth Avenue and two stops on Park Avenue, plus pick up more ribbons and paper in Rockefeller Center for the additional gifts also needing fancy dress.

Producer Mike Todd had sent every cast member of Around The World in 80 Days a carpet bag suitcase made to look like the one David Niven carried in the film. We had awfully good use of it toting things to the theatre and the Algonquin. After finishing my wrapping session, I utilized it along with the books box to arrive backstage to find it almost impossible to manuever through the crowd of delivery people, TV cameramen and news crews. I put the packages out on Mr. Coward's reception room floor and divan and coffee table and sorted them out as to dressing room locations.

The Master had taken to calling me "luv", a Cockney term of affectionate familiarity. I didn't mind it as it was rather like sailors in the Navy calling each other "mate" when they don't know (or have forgotten) a name. With everything spread out so, I was chagrined to have him arrive, compliment me on the wrapping job I'd done and say: "You know, luv, I received the dearest note from your sweet mother here at the theatre, wishing me love and success -- how veddy kind ..."

Mom's dear note (I swear I hadn't put her up to it) joined those from several hundred people from all over the world -- as far away as Java, as I recall!

Most everyone of the cast had reported in early and so I was able to meet and talk with some. The little French actress Therese Quadri, was overwhelmed that she should get so many flowers and gifts and when I brought yet another, she begged to hug me in her excitement ... Mona Washbourne commented: "You're veddy friendly, ta ever-so, dear" (Cockney for thanks-very-much). Lovely Angela Thornton, who had joined the cast after the Philadelphia try-out, thanked me profusely, as did Joyce Carey, a long-time favorite of mine. To be an actor with some experience under my belt and to be involved in a Noel Coward Broadway Opening from behind-the-scenes was a pretty heady experience. No one asked me to stay, but I did, soaking up as much of the excitement as possible -- the English, it seems to me, make much more of a celebration of a show's opening than Americans. There were flowers and plants everywhere, candy, fruit and champagne. Telegrams rained like confetti.

Outside, another rain fell, chilly and gloomy. Everything was gray and soaking wet, especially "Rusty Luv", who trudged over to the Astor Hotel's Western Union office to send three telegrams, one to Mr. Coward, one to the producers, and one to Cole Lesley -- no one else had considered him.

Reviews the next morning were disappointing. The rain had put a damper on the audience, many of whom had come in all through the important first act, upsetting everyone, including those on stage. I talked with Noel Coward on the phone and he assured me he was "Bright as a button, luv," but I could tell he was depressed. The critics had loved him but hated the play and that stung.

That afternoon, at the producer's apartment, I cut out reviews from fifty copies of the six New York newspapers. With typewriter-on-lap, I did dozens of letters acknowledging Opening Night telegrams. Lance Hamilton dictated those and he was very witty, so I enjoyed the chore (he too, was amazed that he was able to dictate letters to a typist who completed them as he finished).

In the continuing rain, they sent me over to the Waldorf Hotel in a taxi, armed with another \$20 and a script to the play, which I personally delivered into the tiny paws of Miss Elsa Maxwell. It was a day late, but I used the change to treat myself to an Opening

Night dinner. I was in something of a state, for in hurrying into the hotel in the rain, I had bumped into a small man and knocked him to the sidewalk. His chauffeur helped him to his feet and he was awfully sweet about it under the circumstances, because (Leapin' Lizards) it was the Duke of Windsor! The Duchess remained in the car, out of the rain, laughing at our Alphonse-and-Gaston routine.

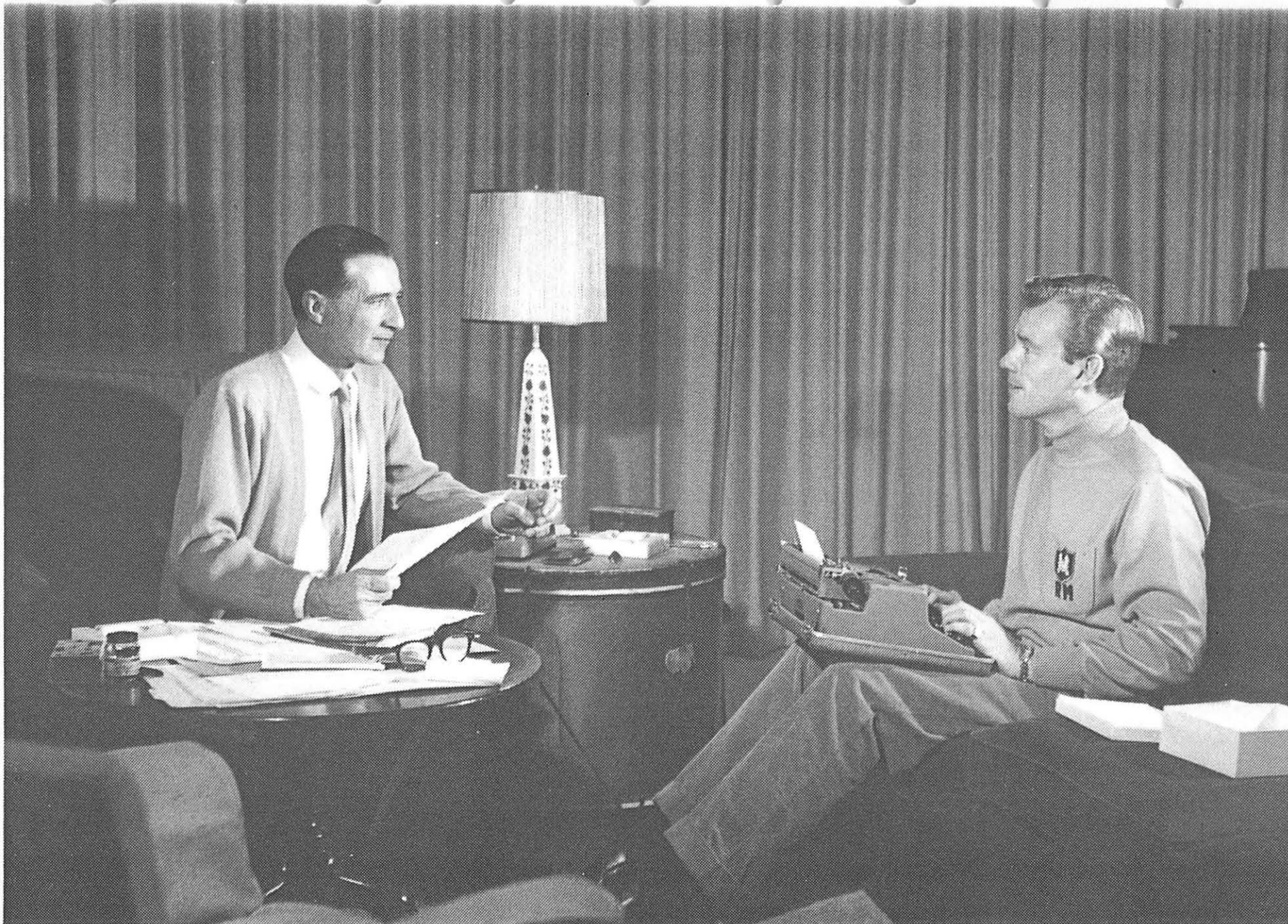
☆ ☆ ☆

Coley had been quick to settle into a work routine with me. We met every Thursday and Saturday afternoon in The Master's apartment to get on with all the mail load. He was pleased that he could dictate to me in short phrases, which I copied easily on the typewriter as he spoke. The letters were always short, on paper 5½" x 8½". Most often, they were kept in the third person: "Mr. Noel Coward has asked me to thank you for your very kind letter, which gave him much pleasure ..." which permitted Coley to sign them and get them out of the way. However, he wasn't above forging a nice facsimile of "Noel Coward" when it was expedient. (Which puts in jeopardy the value of any Noel Coward autograph.)

As we went along, it became apparent to me that we could literally create form letters to suit different repetitive needs. This kept him from creating something new all the time, much as he actually seemed to enjoy it -- sitting there in The Master's chair, puffing occasionally on a cigarette in a filter holder.

Soon, I was awarded a key to let myself in, and there in a neat pile on the coffee table would be the various things to answer, a little figure in the corner designating which "form style" to use. So often, with Coley on his many errands, I was able to work away an hour or two on my own. The system worked very well; we moved a mountain of mail during those first weeks, and after the play opened, I even took work home. A reference to that in one of my Letters to Mom states:

"Have started bringing work home to do for Mr. Coward. While my supper thawed, I wrote letters to Florence and Fredric March, Ethel Merman, Ricardo Montalban and others, including a small boy in Brooklyn. One of the letters that



COWARD'S COLEY and PART-TIME ASSISTANT - In this 1957 photo, Cole Lesley dictates correspondence to Rusty Morris, with portable typewriter on-lap. Both Noël Coward and his Secretary were amused and pleased that typing could be done in this manner. Actually, Rusty is stepping on foot-switch controlling exposure of this picture! Coward's Steinway is in background at right.

(Photo Separately ©1984 by Roland Rusty Morris - All Reproduction Rights Reserved by RRM)

came in was from Mary Martin, expressing thanks for Mr. C's telegram of congratulation following her TV appearance in Annie Get Your Gun. She writes very charmingly and relates how her daughter called her long-distance to cry over the phone because her mother looked so cute and young in her long hair and gunny-sack dress. Figured out my time and with this new arrangement will mean I've thus far earned \$195 - almost two months rent, and I've loved every minute of it."

At the end of an office session (never less than five hours), we would most generally enjoy a relaxing drink and I'd be brought up-to-date on the current news, such as Noel Coward and Margaret Leighton finally recording some of Coward's lovely poems (a facet of his talents rarely publicized and which I'd discovered only by having to type the needed scripts). There was an Off-Broadway production at the Barbizon Plaza of Conversation Piece, starring Joan Copeland, which took up some of Coward's time and attention as it was always one of his personal favorites among his works. Most important, Nude With Violin was not exactly a smash hit. As usual, the critics were hyper-critical, and as usual, Coward's feelings were hurt. (In fact, I was rather astonished to discover that Coward himself, a man who had brought so much pleasure to world-wide audiences for decades, was not the happiest person I'd ever met.)

My own personal opinion was that the leading character in the play was not a sympathetic one that American audiences could relate to, although it had been a great success in London, starring John Gielgud and replacement Michael Wilding.

Every evening after we'd finished our sampling of the Haig & Haig scotch (I never did identify its aromatic packing-material), Coley would clear things away and start tidying up, which included putting the living room in what he always termed "Apple-Pie-Order", removing any tired blossoms from the fresh flower arrangement Noel Coward insisted be on the piano at all times, turning down the bed, piling the pillows high, making sure the sleep mask was at-hand, laying out a book or two (Coward was a voracious reader of all the current best-sellers), and in the tiny kitchen, everything was made ready for midnight cocoa, breakfast coffee and an omelet. It was

ritual, never hurried, and always, it seemed to me, carried out with regard and affection.

Usually, Coley treated me to dinner in the neighborhood. We were fond of an Italian restaurant nearby, Casa Minaso (Coley called it "Mama Minaso's" because we asked to sit where a heavy, middle-aged waitress was unusually kind and the house wine was ever-flowing). As a rule, he was very reluctant to talk about himself, but over the ensuing weeks he divulged that, because his mother had died "early-on", he had been raised by adoring grandparents in Kent, a province just southeast of London. He hardly knew his father, who was an officer in the regular army, very stiff and proper. He had been a diligent student and worked for a time in a local grocery, making deliveries and learning "to cut cheese with exactitude."

A devout movie fan and incurably stage-struck, he journeyed up to London to see all the hit shows, and later, in his very early twenties, moved there, having no idea of what he was going to do with his life, having been denied a higher education by his father. His landlady fancied herself something of a fortune-teller and predicted that his life would change forever (and for the better) on his twenty-first birthday. He treated himself to an expensive birthday dinner, the best of theatre seats, then went 'round to a friend's flat afterwards, almost in tears, to think that nothing unusual had marked the day his life was supposed to change. The friend's phone rang, it was a mutual chum announcing that Noel Coward's backstage dresser had left and the job was available. Cole rushed to the theatre, where Coward was then appearing in Tonight At 8:30, applied for the job and was hired on the spot at eighteen minutes 'til midnight. *

* The story, I am sure, had often been told in this particular context, for it is common practice for those in showbusiness to deduct five years off their age. A more truthful version may be found in his own words in The Life of Noel Coward (Remembered Laughter - USA) ... he is careful not to mention it being his twenty-first birthday! An obituary by C. Gerald Fraser in The New York Times of January 9, 1980, reported Coley's death on the previous Friday at the age of seventy, which would have made him twenty-six at the time of hiring.

Thus, the prophecy came true (or so it seemed). Beginning as a valet, Cole Lesley stayed on over the years, almost forty of them, graduating from servant status to the secretarial replacement for an ailing Lorn Loraine, ultimately brother-protector and confidant, discreetly avoiding any share of the limelight at all times. When I knew him, he confessed that he wasn't on any salary, that he drew only what money he needed to exist, which to my considerable concern, didn't include a topcoat or even a muffler to comfort him against the chill of a New York winter.

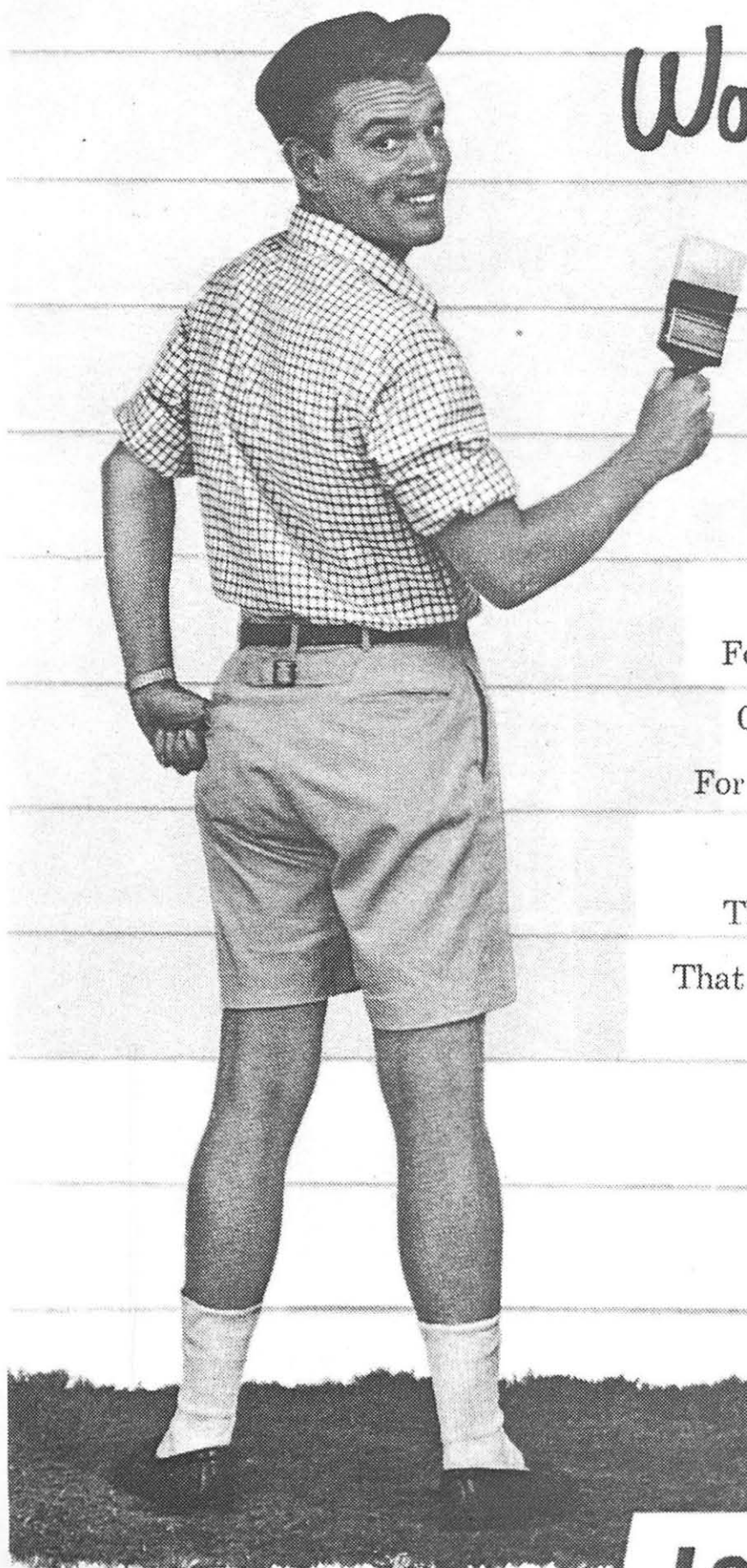
☆ ☆ ☆

Though covered in perhaps more detail elsewhere, it might be well to note here that, although Thursdays and Saturdays were given over to Noel Coward's busy correspondence requirements, I had also managed to apply myself to other endeavors as well.

I had flown to Chicago for a day's work for Lowe Brothers' line of paints -- they had begun to use my face on their labels and needed more of me to use as in-store display features, one an almost life-size free-standing cardboard figure. I had registered with a modeling agency and been assigned jobs for Kent cigarettes, Coca-Cola, Texaco, Goodyear Airfoam, Eastman Kodak, Jax and Shaeffer's beers; had romped through a Cole of California Champagne Breakfast Style Show at the Plaza Hotel's ballroom, costumed as a Son of Neptune: green tights, gold lamé belt, bare torso, gold lamé horns on my head, chasing girls in Cole swimwear with a gold trident -- that's a sort of pitchfork, not chewing gum. The gimmick was that any girl would "Raise the Devil" when she appeared in one of Cole's new suits. There were four of us Devils and the reception from the primarily female audience was tumultuous. Another ovation developed from our appearance in white shoes and socks, white walking shorts and shirts, a white African pith helmet, carrying a white rifle. At the end of our white leashes were girls wearing rhinestone collars and Leopard-skin print swimsuits. (Those were the days!)

In New York City, it was not unusual to go to three interviews for television commercials in one day, so I was a frequent visitor to the hallowed halls of B.B.D. & O., Compton, N. W. Ayer, J. Walter

Wonderful way to paint



For beauty, for "hiding"

On all kinds of siding,

For protection surpassing all others ...

Get the paint proved by test

That "outspreads" the rest ... it's

That wonderful paint by Lowe Brothers



LOWE BROTHERS

A PAINTER OF EXPERIENCE MYSELF (WALLS, THAT IS) - I was complimented when LOWE BROTHERS put my face on most of their labels after running a huge color ad of the pose in many national magazines. Subsequently, I was called back to Chicago to do this Betty Grable pose, also turned into an almost life-size standing display for paint dealers.

Thompson, Young and Rubicam and other advertising agencies. I had acquired an Answering Service and was circulating 500 modeling and TV Commercial composites. I appeared for one day in an advertising film at Hartley Productions for an aluminum siding I've tried very hard to forget, had auditioned for the CBS daytime television soap opera, Love Of Life, had auditioned for and appeared in two CBS radio shows, Right To Happiness and Backstage Wife, thanks to loyal Frances Von Bernhardt, of Air Features.

I had also posed for an advertisement for State Farm Insurance that, so I was told, ultimately appeared as a 20-foot-high billboard on Wilshire Boulevard near the corner of Fairfax Avenue for months. None of my Los Angeles chums who saw it and wrote me about it could point a camera to send me a snapshot, alas.

My Greenwich Village apartment was taking all my spare time as I spackled and painted, spackled and painted. Even so, I had somehow managed to visit The Cloisters, The Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum and had taken the boat trip around Manhattan island, aching for my parents to share it with me. I sat in the audience for a "live" Ed Sullivan Show that featured former film actress Frances Farmer, who was then trying to reclaim her life. She was near the stage door as I passed after the show, signing a few autographs. I watched awhile, then moved closer and said to her, "I wish you had sung 'Aura Lee'." She looked up a moment, almost in pain, managed a tight smile and answered, "I've sung 'Aura Lee'!" (In her best movie, Come And Get It!).

☆ ☆ ☆

Snow had been promised for Thanksgiving Day, but in 1957 New York City, it was only dark, forbidding and wet. I stayed under my blessed electric blanket for as long as I could, then taxied up to 504 East 55th Street to spend the day, typewriter on-lap, fearing the ultimate completion of our chores and the thought of turkey at the Automat, alone with the other loners (in spite of all my activities, I as yet had no friends to socialize with).

On the previous Saturday, we had worked until 8 o'clock. Outside, the rain was like ice, so Coley had gone over to Charles and Ham's apartment/office to get something warmer to wear before we trudged out. Lance Hamilton wouldn't hear of us braving the cold damp, but insisted that we dine with him, since he was staying in where it was warm and dry. So saying, with a minimum of effort that I envied, he fixed us each a delicious steak, salad and vegetable, all served with pixie aplomb. Included dessert of coffee ice cream AND mince pie AND champagne. Blessedly, no home-movies.

On Turkey Day, after we had wound-up our office activity and tidied the apartment, Coley, with typical good humor, insisted that Thanksgiving Dinner was to be his treat and that we make a "slap-up" occasion of it. Once outside, we discovered all the cab drivers in New York were evidently home stuffing themselves, leaving the city barren and fit only for Noah and his Ark.

Quickly, we ducked into The Cave of Henry IV, a nearby restaurant completely unknown to us - what's more, in a basement. But any port in a storm and fate was on our side. It was PURRFECT ... and hardly a cave at all, featuring a warming fireplace, checkered table cloths, candles on the tables, heavy wooden paneled walls and a festive musical touch provided by a genial wandering accordianist in a beret!

This especially appealed to Coley, for he used to go off to Paris on weekends during his youth like I went to the beach. So, he spoke French like a native. It was like old times for him at a totally unexpected time -- we were two very damp "foreigners" to New York eating turkey in a French-restaurant-in-a-basement, dry and sheltered from a downpour and merry as a grig, to use a Coward comment. Coley ordered a bottle of wine that went perfectly with the turkey, which arrived complete with all the trimmings, including chestnut stuffing. He yearned for "breadsauce", whatever that is, but all-in-all, it couldn't have been more delightful. A delicious treat to remember always!

There are none I can recall with more sentimental pleasure.

The Christmas Season, which Noel Coward labeled "merrie hell" arrived and because of nervous fatigue, he totally lost his voice and had to cancel five performances. All of this kept Coley even busier than ever, so his assistant was delegated to deliver some Christmas presents to Garbo, Elizabeth Taylor, Susanna Foster and columnist Radie Harris.

Armed with the usual abundance of taxi money, I set out. It was to Garbo's first. She was closest, and on the way, I fantasized what might happen when we met -- she'd be so lonely and would surely reward me with a beaker of Christmas Nog -- perhaps even a Christmas Tip. (That really is fantasizing!) Even so, I asked the cabbie to wait as we arrived at the smart townhouse bordering the East River. The doorman waved me off -- I had to use the service entrance. Okay. As I stood in the tiny back elevator, I was even more certain I would at least meet the legendary lady, who would (I prayed) open the door herself.

There was no door to answer. The elevator stopped, a cook opened the gate, took the present with a grunt, slammed the gate and sent me back down where I came from. Well, you can't win 'em all...

Next stop, Central Park West and the apartment of that queen of hype, Radie Harris. I'd read her column for years in The Hollywood Reporter and highly enjoyed it, picturing her as Deborah Kerr with glasses sashaying among the smart sets of both coasts and the invigorating international scene. In that neighborhood, the building was very nice. As I rang the bell on an upper floor, a door down the hall opened (the wrong side of the building for a view of the park), and a middle-aged woman, eyeing me with suspicion, asked me what I wanted. I approached the door and saw inside: it was a kitchen and Radie Harris was standing at a table in the middle of it dishing out weinies she'd just heated-up for supper. I told her I was delivering a gift from Noel Coward. She ignored me. "Open it, Mama ..." and the door was closed in my face.

On over to Park Avenue in a fresh cab (the other one wouldn't wait that close to midtown). This one would, but it was only a pause, because the doorman wouldn't even let me in the building --

he took the gift and told me to get lost. That's as close as I got to Elizabeth Taylor.

Back then, through Central Park and over to the West 80s. The address was a grubby building with trash cans in the downstairs hall. Junk music was playing much-too-loud from somewhere as a frantic mother yelled at her kids. Did I have the correct address? I had to climb cluttered stairs to the second floor, where it became obvious the mother's voice was peeling the paint off the very door of the apartment I was looking for.

I rang the doorbell and everything hushed. "Who is it?" came at me from inside. I explained. "Wait a minute ..."

Chains and locks clattered. The door opened only far enough to allow the person to grab the package, slam the door and start yelling at the kids again. What I had seen was a very brief glimpse of an unkempt woman with disheveled hair, in a tee-shirt and blue jeans ... it was hard for me to believe I'd last seen her as the talented singing star of Universal's lavish color motion picture, Phantom of the Opera.

☆ ☆ ☆

For reasons never explained to me, Noel Coward arranged with the manager of the Sutton Theatre, a beautiful movie showplace on the Upper East Side, for a private midnight screening of his war-time film In Which We Serve, to which he invited the entire cast and company of his play, Marlene Dietrich and other guests, including Coley and Rusty -- perhaps as many as fifty or sixty English and Americans.

Having seen the film under conditions already described in some detail, then to go out into the Pacific and serve in the bitter Aleutian Islands and later, during and after the invasion of Iwo Jima, I was shaken and unable to attend to any amenities when the houselights went up on a curiously subdued audience. To think that this one man had written, produced under difficult war conditions, directed (with an assist from his film editor, David Lean) and starred in this filmic masterpiece was incredible -- deserving of a Knighthood at least.*

* It was tendered; I was told he declined with grace.

That he was honored with a special Academy Award for it, is something few people realize and something he modestly never publicized.

☆ ☆ ☆

Another out-of-context memory sticks in my mind, that I shall never forget. Coley and I had worked late and dined, finishing just in time for him to make a required stop backstage at the Belasco. Curious, I tagged along and got to stand in the wings and watch Noel Coward and his great cast take their curtain calls. That moment is always lump-in-the-throat-time for me (real "show-biz"), so of course I wept -- appreciating a rare privilege thanks to Stage Manager Keene Curtis. Finally, it was over and Mr. Coward hurried past, recognized me and said: "Rusty - how nice - come in, luv."

Done with speed and professional precision, the "un-doing ceremony" as he called it, took only moments with the help of his Stage Dresser, Bill Wood, who assisted him out of his costume and into a nice robe. I got to sit at Noel Coward's dressing table, literally at his right elbow and watch him remove his stage make-up. As he gingerly peeled off his crew-cut wig, he glanced good humoredly at my mirror-image and said: "Fascinating, isn't it?"

He couldn't possibly have guessed how much.

I had given him a bottle of "Seabreeze", an astringent used by many Hollywood Make-up Men. It's very refreshing to sponge on one's face after removing make-up and he had to demonstrate that he used it regularly. A few pats of it on his face, a quick pat on my nose, then he was through the door to receive his guests as Star. I had enjoyed the whole experience so, I regretted it had to end so quickly -- I had journeyed all the way from George Washington High School to that moment backstage that night at the Belasco! Sadly, I had missed Las Vegas, but there were glorious compensations. What's more, I still have a tape copy of that scratchy 78 rpm record, We Were So Young, recorded in 1936 ... oddly enough, the first line of the song refers to high school: "At a high school cotillion, favors pink, favors blue ..."

☆ ☆ ☆



COLEY VISITED my barely-furnished Village apartment in November, 1957 so I could take "Village-ish" photos he might use for his Christmas Cards. We got a good one over in Washington Square, returning for this commemorative shot while the tea-kettle boiled for a "proper pot" of tea laced with warming Bourbon. Note portable TV at right ...

(Photo: R. Morris)

If there's anything worse than being totally alone on Christmas Day, it's being in the Navy on Christmas Day ... I could recall such barren times at places like Ketchikan, Alaska, without any heat on board ship ... I could recall that Christmas Eve standing watch on a new voice-radio unit that had no place to sit but atop the wheelhouse, with me beside it in a pouring rain that never let-up for four hours, the Christmas lights on Maui making a mockery of the whole drenching affair. Only one happy Christmas in memory, being discharged from the Navy December 21, 1945 and the celebration that triggered!

My first Christmas in New York had me in a quandry: where to eat. Not in a hotel dining room, about the only place I figured could be open at such a time -- how does one sit alone and eat (of all things) a Christmas dinner alone? I would stay home and somehow manage on what I had on hand: SPAM, cheese and English Muffins off my ironing board. Not a drop of festive grog, only tea.

When my telephone rang, I was awfully glad it was Coley, who expressed surprise to find me home and not off somewhere. I didn't explain that I had no somewhere. He wanted to express hope that Santa Claus had been generous and he "just knew" I'd have a lovely day with my friends (I had none but Leona, who had chosen to ignore me). He was anxious to let me know that, since Noel Coward had been in a Rheingold Beer advertisement in connection with the play, in costume and wig as the Valet, serving beer as a holiday drink to his guests, but wouldn't touch the stuff personally, that I was to have the case the Rheingold company sent him every week, with his very best wishes.

Merry Christmas ... luv.

☆ ☆ ☆

The play, Nude With Violin, lost its fascination for Noel Coward, who never enjoyed the routine of repetitive performances for long, so as playwright-star, he embarked upon an amazing "stunt" few would (or could) consider for an instant on Broadway: he announced he was going to perform another of his plays, Present Laughter, on alternate evenings! One of his better-known works (1943, London), audiences loved it. Just by coincidence, with a few minor changes, the same

cast (with the possible exception of Morris Carnovsky) could appear in quite different roles of importance equal to the ones they were playing in Nude With Violin. The Weekly Report to Mom includes:

"Over to Coley's after lunch to work until 6:00 p.m. on the contracts for the actors currently appearing in Nude With Violin who will also be appearing in Present Laughter. Was an opportunity for me to learn what present-day Broadway salaries are -- and not surprisingly, they are low. \$150 per week is the average, with a rare \$200 and \$300. That's not as much as the rude man in the boxoffice makes selling the tickets!"

For the pivotal role of Joanna, his leading lady, Coward chose Eva Gabor, who was only sensational in the part, wearing glamorous gowns that received gasps of admiration at her every entrance. She came sweeping onstage at one point in a huge coat of white moiré that trailed to the floor. Surrounding her shoulders was a large bank of white fox fur. When she casually draped the coat over a chair, it created an audible reaction, for it was obvious that the entire coat was completely lined with white fox! Her white flowing satin evening gown was equally dazzling. She couldn't have been more beautiful or a better actress, such was the occasion. Coward was truly great in a part he'd played so many times he could recite it backwards (including French, having starred in a Paris production in 1948). It was the Noel Coward audiences wanted to see: witty, urbane, in a positive parade of silk dressing robes -- a legend-alive, to love and enjoy, the ideal choice to play the leading role, that of a conceited, bedeviled, bed-happy stage star. He had written every nuance, lived every sentence, who better could play the role?

Personally, I was thrilled for Eva, as I had worked with her and Pat O'Brien in the ten-city tour of Strike A Match (1952); I found her to be a marvelously talented and hard-working actress. Present Laughter was a great opportunity for her to be seen at her very best. I sent an enthusiastic Opening Night telegram, as was then the custom and settled down front as Producer Charles Russell's guest ("Come and bring your laughter," he'd invited). It was a triumph! I couldn't wait to get backstage to tell Eva how good she

had been and how proud I was of her. I was the very first to arrive at her dressing room, the door to which was open, so I flew in, threw my arms around her, hugged the breath out of her and gave her a most affectionate kiss on the cheek. Had Dorothy Kilgallen and Johnny Ray not walked in that moment, I'm sure I would have been slapped. Eva was furious, evidently NOT recognizing me as I had stupidly assumed she would. Her mother Jolie and Kay Thompson joined the group ... "How dare you, sir? Get out of my dressing room this instant, or I call the police!" A stammering fool, I backed out.

The sidewalk outside the stage entrance was thronged with people hoping to glimpse someone famous. I could remember when they thought I was and the nice things that had been said ...

When I ultimately got home through the Saturday Night throngs of Broadway and Greenwich Village fun-seekers, I made myself a cup of cocoa and took down the 8" x 10" glossy of Eva Gabor from my hallway photo arrangement. Across it, she had written: "To Rusty - With Love, Eva." I replaced it with one of Joan Crawford. I smiled, reading her inscription: "To Rusty - With Love, Joan."

As he heard all about it the next day by telephone, Coley was both amused and disappointed, but fretted about Kilgallen's presence during the scene, so insisted that I forget it immediately. Totally. There was not to be even so much as a sincere and abject letter of apology to be mailed to the lovely Hungarian who has since resumed the lilting accent she worked so hard to lose.

☆ ☆ ☆

Noel Coward's health suffered alarmingly during the last weeks of the two shows, yet, he insisted that the entire double production be air-shipped to San Francisco and thence to Los Angeles -- an extension of about two months, to very appreciative, and for him, revitalizing audiences.

That final week, Coley and I met on Thursday afternoon as usual, working dutifully from 2:00 until 8:30 p.m. As on our previous two sessions, we cleaned up the equivalent of a whole week's work. We

had evolved a system that really was efficient - and fun. It was awkward realizing we had come to the end. For the last time, we silently cleared away the mess. For the first time, there were no fresh flowers on the piano or filling the fireplace ...

I very much doubt the food at our favorite Italian spot was as good as it always had been. He walked me to the subway entrance where he thanked me for all my help and I did the same, promising that I'd come by the next day, reminding him to listen to me on the radio. He said he'd give it a go, but the day would be frantic.

At CBS the following day, I sailed through my portrayal of an eager attorney without a hitch. Backstage Wife was one of daytime radio's oldest shows, and one of the last. On then, to the model agency to check-in and pick up a check, which I didn't bother to bank, hurrying instead to First Avenue and 54th Street.

There wasn't much I could do, except run a couple errands and offer a few opinions and pack a few odds-and-ends for my cupboard at home. Coley was reluctantly leaving a day ahead of time, flying on ahead to get things at the Hotel Mark Hopkins in "Apple-Pie-Order" as always. There wasn't time for a proper send-off and I didn't have enough pocket money to get him anything but a magazine. Time ran out; we had to settle for a hamburger and a cup of coffee at the mid-town airport bus terminal.

As I walked him to the bus, it was all so strained and formal. I wished for the words to say thanks in a decent and anything but a tearful manner -- his interest in using me as an assistant during his stay in New York had provided a lot of fun and considerable excitement for me -- the extra money in many many instances provided my total food supply and transportation, in fact, my only real spending money for many weeks, all else I earned went into setting up my apartment.

It seemed wrong somehow to just shake hands and wave so long. It didn't convey enough, it was all so empty and impotent.

I didn't wait to see him drive away ... he claimed the French believe "to say goodbye is to die a little."

Photos by Stadler Studio, Chicago
Courtesy: WILSON BROS. SPORTSWEAR

Renee and Rusty

MODELS BUREAU
75 E. Wacker Drive

DEarborn 2-7330
Chicago 1, Ill.

During the three years I lived and worked in Chicago, in addition to the four advertising films already mentioned, I also worked in taped radio commercials (American Telephone & Telegraph, Blue Cross & Blue Shield, Colgate Toothpaste) and in filmed television commercials (American Family Flakes, Busch Bavarian Beer, Aunt Jemima, Mor-Bif, Swanson's TV Dinners) among others, such as the "cartoon" voice for a coffeepot and a coffee I can't remember.

My red hair gave me an "All-American Look" that was very popular with Chicago's impressive population of advertising photographers. As in California, my size made me ideal for sample clothing, usually a #39 or #40, so that I was kept very busy doing print-work for the top catalogues: Sears, Montgomery Ward, Spiegel and Alden. Yes, I even appeared in underwear - "Long Johns" as I recall, the insulated kind you wear skiing. But I wasn't just a clothes-horse, posing with all manner of products such as cameras, soft drinks, air-conditioners, lawnmowers, hearing-aids, automobiles (most often in Detroit), tools, stoves, tractors, tires, watches, tape recorders, electric organs, shampoo, paint products, anti-freeze, Sealy and Serta mattresses, pens, liquors, Pullman railroad cars, Professional Golfer's Association, beer, airlines, LP albums and on and on. Sometimes it was for commercial artists, who would carefully supervise the pose and the always-important expression in a photo studio and from the resultant pictures, do an oil, watercolor or acrylic painting so amazingly real that I was able to identify the fingernails as my own. There was a husband-wife team, (Hank and Marilyn Conover), who were incredible in that their painting techniques were so alike they worked on the same illustration - but one would do the hands and the other the hair perhaps, or the props or product or the sheen on chromium - each had a specialty, yet it was impossible to tell who had done what to the finished painting. Best of all, they were wonderful bosses.

It was pleasant, happy work for the most part, with some very charming (and often very pretty) co-workers, petite Renée Breman especially. We were teamed again and again. We liked each other and the rapport showed. A prestigious production shoot that lasted a week as a rule was Wilson Bros. Sportswear, and on one, we had a lot of fun trying to disguise the fact that recently-wed Renée was expecting. A lot of the sportshirts were "his" and "her" styles,

so it was possible for Renée to wear her shirt-tail out over her skirt. It was a charming challenge, but it worked out successfully.

As there were also "his" and "her" pajamas as part of the line, it was decided that Renée would have to step-aside and permit Tudy Golden (similar to Renée in type and another favorite co-worker of mine), to wear them. In those days, they were oh-so-careful to show that both of us were wearing wedding rings. The informal situations in which we could both logically be wearing pajamas in an interior setting which could never include a bedroom, taxed the fanciful art director's imagination to the breaking-point. We drank a lot of cocoa and played a lot of scrabble by the fireplace!

Both girls had incredibly long natural eyelashes and it's very obvious that the retoucher, for devious reasons, made mine appear to match! I get a kick out of the pictures because, on the advice of a Hollywood make-up man, I had to have my own lashes dyed dark brown for years, because the sun bleached them blonde.

Most of my print-work was booked through Connie and Al Seaman's agency, The Model's Bureau, a Chicago institution emulated by others, but never with the personal attention Al devoted to everything. As a result of my in-demand status, I was the first male model in Chicago to raise my hourly rate to \$20. It sounds hilarious now, but it was very serious back in 1957. A boycott followed and I went jobless for almost six weeks, until Stephen Heiser, one of the top lensmen in America, plus a wonderful guy, asked for me "at any price", knowing that his action would not only raise my rate five dollars for good, but those of all the male models in my rate bracket. (I don't recall being feted).

There were so many wonderful times during that period. My professional popularity brought me many friends and a chance to live a block from the spectacular Lakeshore Drive beach area. In good weather, Burr Tilstrom, brilliant behind-the-scenes creator/performer of TV's Kukla, Fran and Ollie, regularly held court along that concrete esplanade. As noted previously, I was a genuine fan of the show and attended a number of the live telecasts. On the beach one Saturday, in a tactless moment of joking around, I happened to wonder what a Dragon did for sex ... Burr overheard the comment and a tenuous friendship was sabotaged forever.

I had meanwhile come to know and socialize with his modest backstage assistant, Joe Lockwood, a photography buff who promoted my forever-fond appreciation for Chicago's wonderful architecture. We shared many happy hours walking the Near North Side looking for and capturing on film what Joe called "architectural experiences." (I'm so hopeful that things of this nature lived-on in his subconscious mind, for most of the last year of his life, he didn't know who he was nor any of his friends, due to arteriosclerosis.)

Working as I did in the city's most prestigious photo studios was a learning experience I took advantage of. The thought had occurred to me that an interest in photography and talent with a camera was something to nurture, with an eye to the future. If my hoped-for acting career didn't work out as dreamed, I felt that everything I could assimilate about photography would be invaluable. (I didn't know until much later, back in California, that no matter where I'd worked or what I knew, it didn't count for much of anything so long as I didn't have a diploma from an accredited photography school. If that's a complaint re: the status-quo, so be it.)

On every job to which I was assigned, therefore, I snooped -- always making mental notes: how sets were constructed, how offices and dressing rooms and even darkrooms were layed-out. The larger studios could afford art directors, whose genius at set design and decor could attract and keep important clients. (The incredible kitchens I've seen which were made of poster-board with drawn-on drawers! I can remember an ad for a famous furniture wax where each and every edge of table and chair and bookcase was covered with Scotch tape, which, when properly and carefully lighted, would show terrific highlights. And on clothing advertisements, many of the garments were rebuilt especially to fit me by tailors known in the trade as "bushelers". Sometimes, right on the set, while the photographer and crew waited, a garment was cut up the back with scissors and pinned to fit me better if tissue paper stuffing in the right places didn't work.) I happened to run across a layout at the vast Vogue-Wright studio one time and scrawled across the top portion was: "If it doesn't work, show it on Rusty." When I asked what it meant, an assistant confided that my frame was such that it was considered an ideal "sample size" and that clothes

which didn't fit on others as hoped-for, would be assigned to me, because I seemed to fill things out as intended. One learns there are mathematical proportions which are observed in the garment industry -- a so-called "drop" from the shoulder-line to the waistline, a "drop" of so many inches and a change in circumference from the waistline to the hips and certainly from the waistline to the knee, and so forth.

There were artistic photographers like Skrebneski, who were very chic, but I only got to work for him once. He was a true (and kind) genius, then as now. I had the distinction of being the male model in the first color men's fashion layout in Playboy magazine, wearing sportswear from Abercrombie-Fitch and Marshall Field & Company. I was told later, that Fields complained about the credit line, withdrew any future cooperation, said they weren't even to be mentioned in the publication, such was the respective prestige of the two parties at the time, (1956 - Vol. 3, No. 8).

Dolores "Dee" Taylor was the most glamorous, highest-paid and most sought-after female model in Chicago back then, and I well recall what a thrill it was for me to be her dancing partner on an album cover for Mercury records. She had a lovely shade of auburn hair, so I was asked to get mine darkened, which was an early morning adventure on the day of the shoot at Wesley Bowman studio. The photography was tested and retested to get everything ready, making everyone look like a movie star in the heyday of MGM. In actual fact, we had to do it before lunch, because Rusty had to catch a plane for Los Angeles to attend the funeral of his father the following day. Everyone knew how I felt, and therefore, the atmosphere was anything but as enchanting as it appears.

Stephen Heiser and I both got taken advantage of by the ad agency representing 7-Up. Several fellows, myself included, were invited in for a low-paying "test-shot" drinking a bottle of 7-Up in a carpenter's apron. In the foreground were a few tools, in the background were more tools hanging on pegboard. I was happy to be considered, but rather stunned, when the "test" appeared throughout

Fix thirst good...with the
real thirst-quencher!



NO COMMENT ...

the United States on calendars, 24-sheets and in full-page color ads in such magazines as Life, Look, Saturday Evening Post, Better Homes and Gardens and Farm Journal. Later, in a kidding way, I mentioned to Steve that my mother had one of the calendars hanging in my father's California hospital room -- it was the greatest national exposure I had ever received from any modeling job, and to think it was only a test shot for which I got a lousy twenty dollars. Heiser grinned and said: "How do you think I feel - they paid me for only a test shot, too."

That photo, more than anything else, earned me attention from the top model agency in New York, The Huntington Hartford Agency, who let me know they had big plans for me and wanted me there pronto. But I had made commitments for the movie for the American Feed Manufacturers Association, which was to be filmed in Fort Wayne, Indiana, plus other work at Vogue-Wright, so stayed on in Chicago, never dreaming the enormity of the mistake I was making in being so loyal.

Jane Broder, perhaps the most highly-respected New York agent representing actors and actresses for the legitimate theatre, had expressed interest in me as early as 1955, as a result of information furnished her by my former Hollywood Agent, Menifee I. Johnstone. Miss Broder and I had exchanged cordial correspondence to the effect that I was yearning to come to New York and get cracking as an actor, and she, in turn, as a professional favor to her "dear old friend, Menifee," would act as my representative for theatre work and also for motion pictures to be filmed in the New York area.

When it was apparent that I could not be back as planned in 1956, I wrote to let her know and the truthful reasons why, and received a letter in reply which can only be considered as astonishing. She stated that she did not have the time to read and write letters that I quite obviously had -- that she was "too busy" to be concerned that I'd had a great deal of personal expenses making five trips to the west coast because of my father's illness and funeral -- after all, she reminded me from her Manhattan tower, "we all have a cross to bear." What really bothered her most of all, was that I was obviously a person who could not be trusted to keep his word, indicating a very unstable, immature personality. Therefore, much as it might disappoint Menifee, when or if ever I arrived in New York, I would not be welcome in her office. Sorry. She had, however, taken on a young man as an

associate who was going to handle television commercials only -- his name was George Morris, and he might be interested. I saved this further unfortunate fate until Hollywood, seven years later. It was possibly the most worthless agent-alliance I ever made.

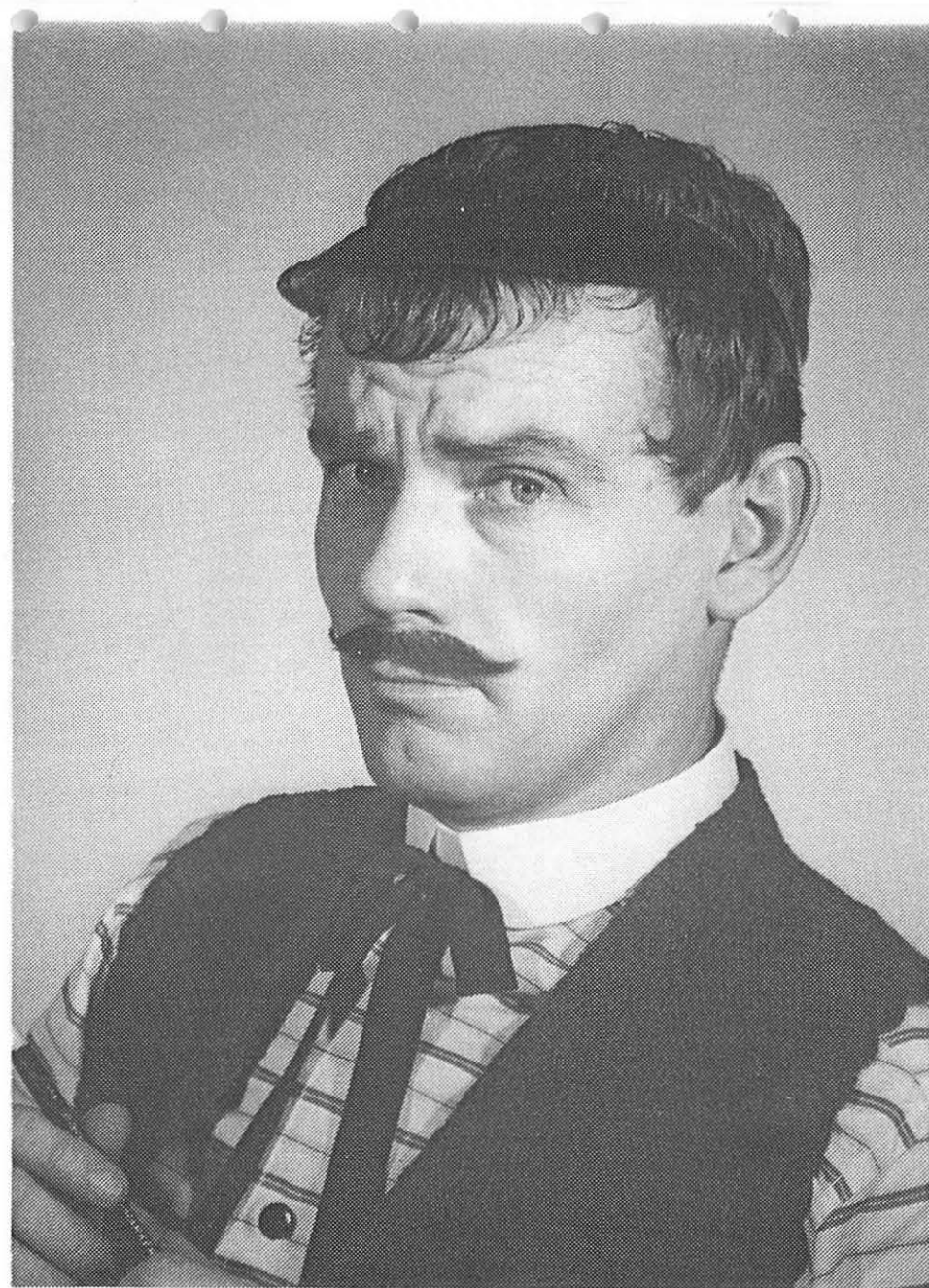
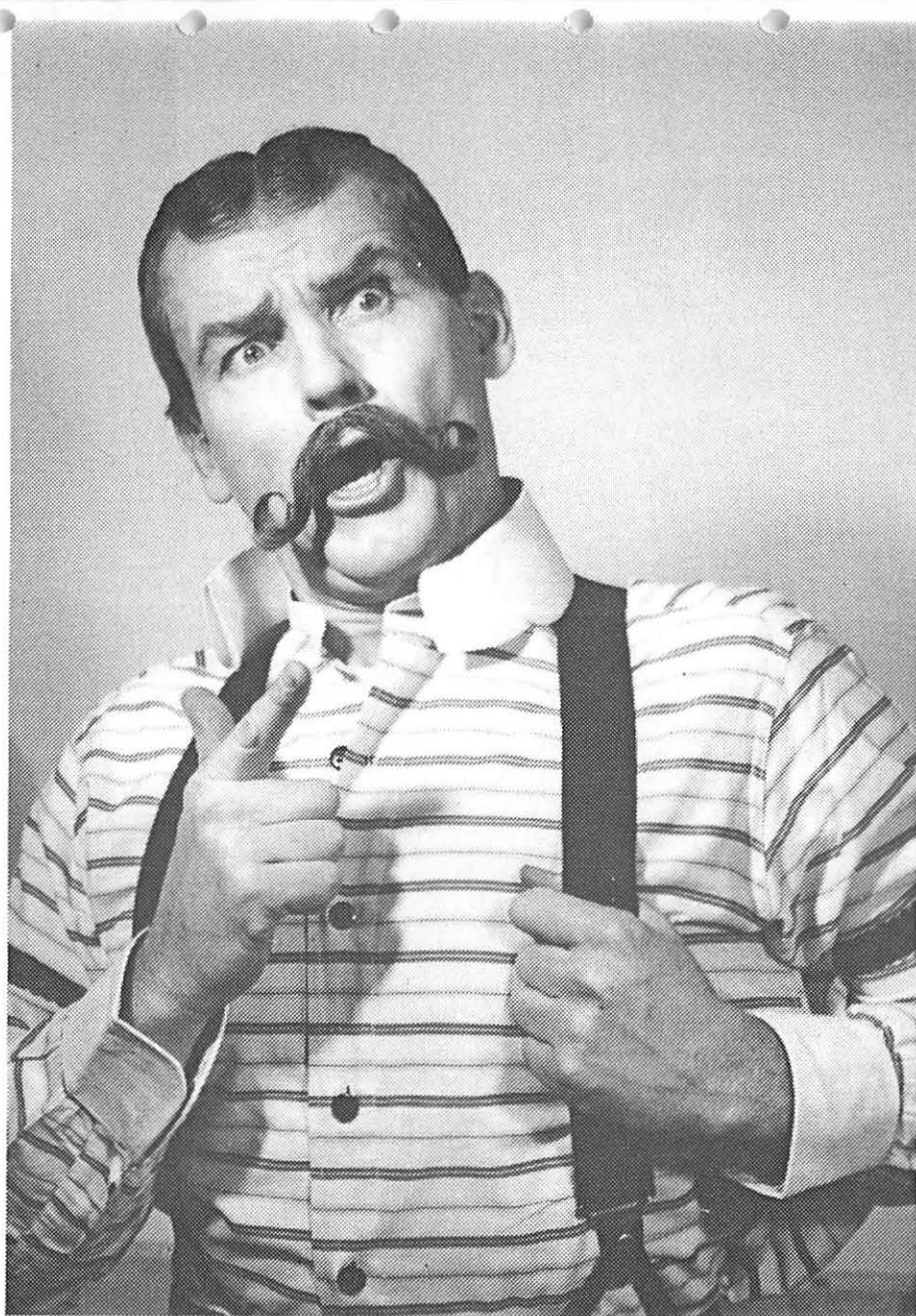
☆ ☆ ☆

Arriving in New York City on Labor Day, 1957, I soon learned that the prestigious Huntington Hartford Agency was out of business - something to do with a tax write-off. I was there without either of the two agents I had counted on so much. (Though I'd enjoyed a very good year in Chicago as a result of raising my hourly rate after my father died, I hadn't economized as I might have, had I known I'd lost both agents before I had them in my pocket.)

In order to survive, I had no other choice than to go with Burke McHugh's Agency for modeling ("I can't afford NOT to have you in my stable," he frowned). As it happened, my very first New York job was a spectacular full-page head-shot advertisement in color for Kent cigarettes, followed almost immediately by a fly-back to Chicago at the request of Lowe Brothers Paints, which by that time, featured my face on their product labels.

Even so, New York was slow-going. I had red hair and so did Burke McHugh, who was himself a popular character model and entertainer. I had a knack for making rubbery faces art directors loved, and so did Burke ... truth to tell, some of my early jobs were those Burke had to turn down. He was capable of kindness, though I always felt he did it as a penance. Even so, it was a sad day for all of us when he developed a heart condition, forcing him to relinquish control of his agency to non-professionals without a drop of Irish blood among them.

I've already told of utilizing my Rolleiflex in taking black-and-white photos for the newcomers at Burke's agency, including a young John Davidson. I felt it was a way for me to "pay back" for a lot of the good luck which had come my way, so I charged them only for the film and processing and a set of photos I could show to others as examples. I still have the better ones on file and often wonder what happened to all those guys and gals who paraded before my lens. All had dreams and aspirations, just as I did. Oh, we had such fun and never knew it!



MORE BORROWED COSTUMES - These were worn in a little public relations film for a gummed-tape that traced the history of packing from the 1890's to modern packaging. Again, I offered to return the clothes, then hurried home, set up lights, and with my Rolleiflex, snapped a number of shots in this vein. Had a lot of fun in the process, shooting a number of photos that never did one whit of good. Hung a framed print of the one on the left in my bathroom and claimed it was a picture of my grandfather. Got a few chuckles ...

While living in Chicago, I had repaid social obligations by photographing the interiors of friend's apartments in color, giving them a set of 5 x 7 enlargements instead of inviting them out to dine. As many had literally created a silk purse out of a sow's ear, it was an especially appreciated gesture and one I was to continue during my five years in New York whenever it was appropriate.

Though the apartment itself was nothing special, as noted, I had taken interior photos of Noel Coward's flat just to be able to say I had done so. Hermione Gingold saw them and approached me about doing similar coverage of her place in the same building -- one larger and far more theatrical than Coward's deserving of layouts in Architectural Digest.

As I recall, I quoted a price of \$25 for taking them, plus the cost of the prints. Ridiculous, to be sure and I always regretted it, for in show business (as well as others) the quality of one's work as a photographer or actor is too often judged by the price tag. In this case, it was an "investment" of my time and camera talent with the sincere hope she might show the prints to others who might want or need some of their place and so on -- some fool once said that a picture speaks for itself and is its own best salesman. It does indeed, but only to those who understand the language! Most agents wouldn't know a good photograph if it bit them and most of the actors and actresses I've had anything to do with as a photographer, choose photos that look good only on a piano, i.e., those which flatter or substantiate an image (or create one).

No matter, the photo session with Hermione was a romp ...

There was lots of room in which to work, beautiful things everywhere, all perfectly color-coordinated with lots of gold tones. With a silk diffuser over the lens, I took a portrait of her at the piano worthy of an album cover. She invited a neighbor from across the hall to appear in one with her, again at the piano as he was/is a singer, then changed into a long diaphanous gown to sit like a queen on her luxurious couch which I had to stabilize with lots of magazines under the cushions so she wouldn't sink into it. "Clevah," she complimented.

A special favorite was taken in her ultra-feminine bedroom, sitting on her antique brass bed, telephoning a friend. She had

changed again into a dress of the identical shade of blue as her collection of blue milk-glass on a nearby dresser. All furniture was lacquered white and the bed covering matched very lacey curtains ... charming.

Her hobby, as she wittily explained it, was collecting antique oil portraits of children. "Little guhls," they all were, many of them totally completed by some Early American painter, depicting fancy dresses and setting -- only the face and hair would be left blank and those areas were later filled-in at the actual site. Thus, any child might resemble the princess of her dreams, the imaginative painter going on his way handsomely rewarded. Her special treasure, and it was really dear to her heart, was a rather amateurish painting of a child which might very well have been herself. It was a bit mature for its little body, with a face, as Hermione termed it, "Only a mothah could love!"

The great evening had been so special of itself, I didn't mind waiting the entire summer for my money. At long last, the mailman delivered this precious note:

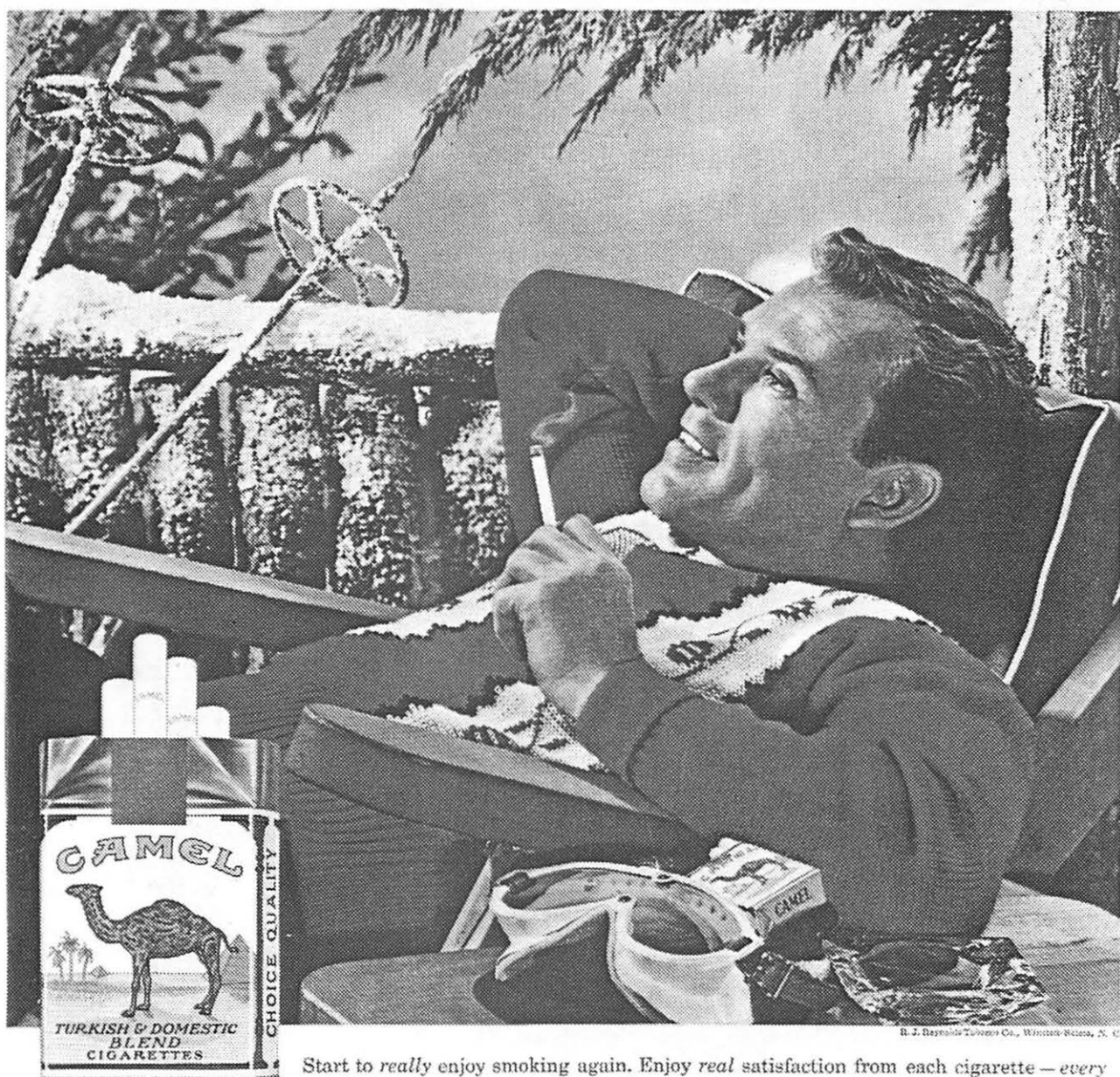
"Dear Rusty:

Enclosed cheque is for a few dollars more as I left you waiting so long. As I explained, it wasn't intentional. I love the pictures - the one of me is the best I've ever had taken.

*Best wishes,
Hermione"*

Sometime later, leaving her building after a party, I saw her in the lobby, looking tired and woe-begone. It was very warm and humid and she was discussing this with the doorman. I greeted her and went on my way, then quickly returned. She was sitting on a bench, alone with a small dog. I reminded her of our photo session, but more importantly, just raved about seeing her that week on The Jack Paar Show singing A Foggy Day in London so wonderfully it seemed like an entirely new and fresh song. She listened, tears came, and she looked away for a moment ... "Thanks dahling, you're veddy sweet -- I really needed to hear that tonight."

Are you smoking more now
but enjoying it less?...
CHANGE TO CAMELS—A REAL CIGARETTE



**The best tobacco
makes the best smoke.**

Start to *really* enjoy smoking again. Enjoy *real* satisfaction from each cigarette — *every* time you light up. The Camel blend of costly Turkish and domestic tobaccos has never been equalled for rich taste...for easygoing mildness...for real enjoyment with each and every puff. Isn't that what you want from *your* cigarette? Of course it is! Change to Camels!

Have a real cigarette—have a CAMEL

SPECTACULAR IN COLOR, great things were predicted for me when this ad appeared on the back cover of such magazines as LOOK and TV GUIDE, subway posters, car-cards, and billboards. Unlike SEVEN-UP, it paid plenty, as we went on location up in the mountains for a day, but the art director was unhappy, so a set was built in mid-town Manhattan. The ad agency was so upset to learn that I was a non-smoker that I never did a cigarette job again - it was too much of a hassle I didn't need. I also decided I didn't need the Rice-McHugh modeling agency!

(Photo by Hesse)

The Veteran's Hospital Radio and Television Guild, an organization that sprung up during World War II, attracted a great many radio people, who trekked out to all manner of V.A. hospitals to record half-hour radio scripts and skits literally at the bedsides of some patients. Other recordings were made in a reading or game room usually, but the nick-name was "The Bedside Network" for good and sufficient reasons. In those days, before television, each bed in a hospital was equipped with a pair of earphones, so that a patient could, by turning a selector switch, get a variety of radio shows to enjoy. The hospital-made tapes were also piped to the bedsides and everyone listened in -- a much appreciated and much-acclaimed morale builder.

While in New York, I became involved briefly with a VHRTG group that went over to a New Jersey V.A. facility where we had a real studio in which to work. I couldn't hack it, as it turned out. As a Vet myself, I related too much to the patients, a grateful and cooperative lot, but it was a mental ward and extremely depressing. Still wanting to participate, I made it known that I could provide photography on occasion, and one assignment was to go backstage and take photos of Julie Andrews in her Camelot costume, along with a few other "co-sponsors" of the upcoming VHRTG Ball.

At the Majestic Theatre, I found Miss Andrews in her dressing room, getting ready for a matinee performance. She was utterly delightful in every way and listened with interest when I told her I had worked for Noel Coward. The first arrival was someone whose work I'd admired for years: Thelma Ritter (what a joy she was). She was exactly as one might imagine her to be, amusing us with a few stories about how her neighborhood ladies over in Brooklyn treated her, never guessing she was a movie star, but "certain" she was a former school classmate and so forth. Seldom, if ever, did they recognize her as anyone but Mrs. Joe Moran, who just happened to garner Academy Award nominations from time-to-time.

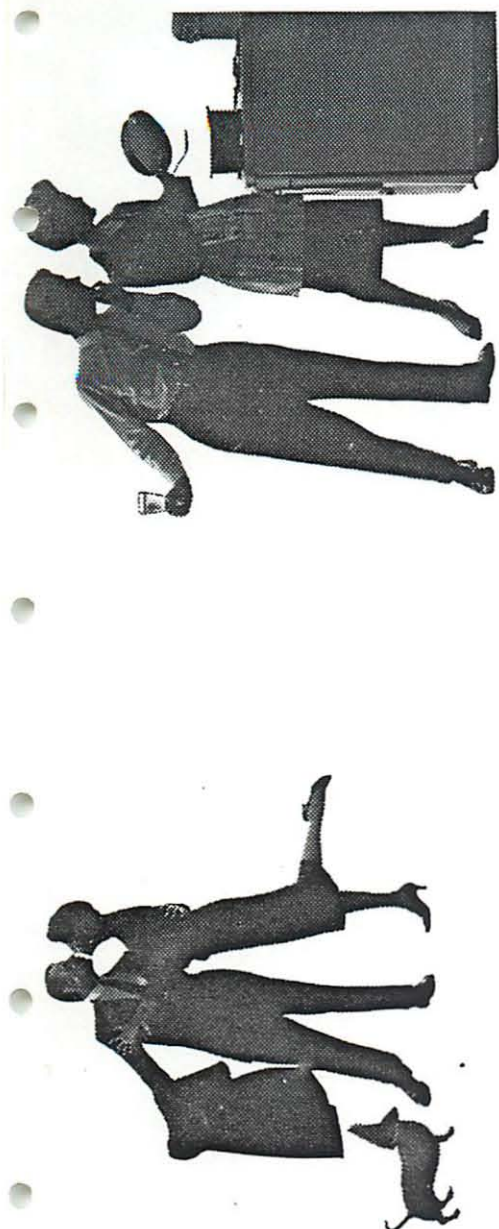
Soon, she was joined by announcer Bud Collyer, actor Zia Mohyeddin, a very rambunctious Art Carney and a very shy Maurice Evans, all of them pleased to pose for a very nervous photographer who will NEVER forget the rapport between Art Carney and Thelma Ritter -- such a pity they never teamed together in a motion picture.

Because the VHRTG newspaper was to be printed immediately, it was decided time would be saved if I took candid shots at the Ball with my Polaroid. It was a glorious glamorous turn-out at the Plaza Hotel and I was snapping here and there when I came across Julie Andrews all by herself for a moment. As Official Queen of the Ball, she was happy to pose for a couple of shots. While we waited for them to develop, I told her how pleased I was that she had recorded Noel Coward's beautiful song, London Pride. Without any hesitation, she chuckled me under the chin and said, "So YOU'RE the one who bought the album!"

In a very real sense, living in New York City can be compared to working in a candy-store: the goodies become so taken-for-granted, that a person doesn't fudge a sample now and then. So it was with me and Broadway shows. They were there, like the daily headlines, and it was only when one heard Sound of Music was in its final week, or that a really good show had closed for lack of support, that you woke up to the fact that you might be remiss as a theatre-goer. Or, what could be even worse, being a theatre-buff, not seeing a show more than once. Especially in those days, when ticket prices were more-or-less realistic.

I ache now thinking back and recording just some of the shows I missed by being too-busy-to-bother: The Miracle Worker, Bells Are Ringing, Separate Tables, Auntie Mame (especially when Greer Garson took over for a while), Look Homeward, Angel, The Music Man, Sunrise at Campobello, A Time Remembered, Westside Story, Raisin In The Sun, All The Way Home, Bye, Bye, Birdie, Gypsy, Carnival! and so forth -- all great ones just barely (?) balanced by the ones I did see and so enjoyed: Judy At Carnegie Hall, Camelot, Oh, Captain!, My Fair Lady, Once Upon A Mattress, Dear Liar, Sail Away, Present Laughter, Nude With Violin, Unsinkable Molly Brown, Li'l Abner, Leave It To Jane, Little Mary Sunshine, Fiorello!, Mary, Mary, Earnest In Love, and of course, The Fantasticks.

But doctor, in all truth, for me it was watching other actors make a buck, and I envied them with all my bones. Many of the guys at the gym I attended regularly were in shows and the shop-talk in the locker room gave me heartburn. I wanted so much to trade places with them, that I made a point of NOT seeing their show. Years later,



Your kind of beer... real beer!

Nicest thing experts can say
about a beer is that it tastes "round"...
no rough edges, a smooth harmony
of flavors. Schaefer is really round.
It's real beer... your kind of beer.



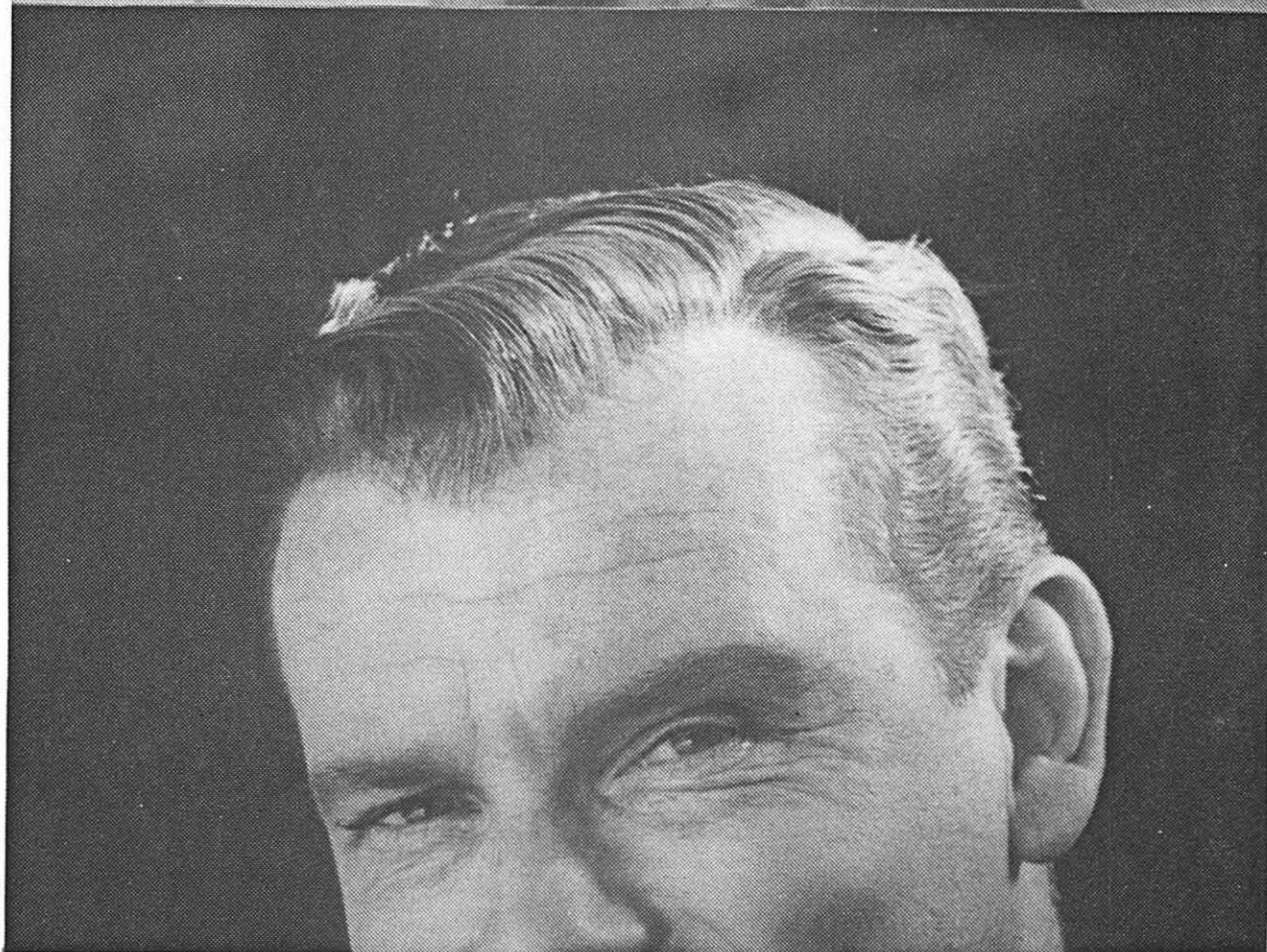
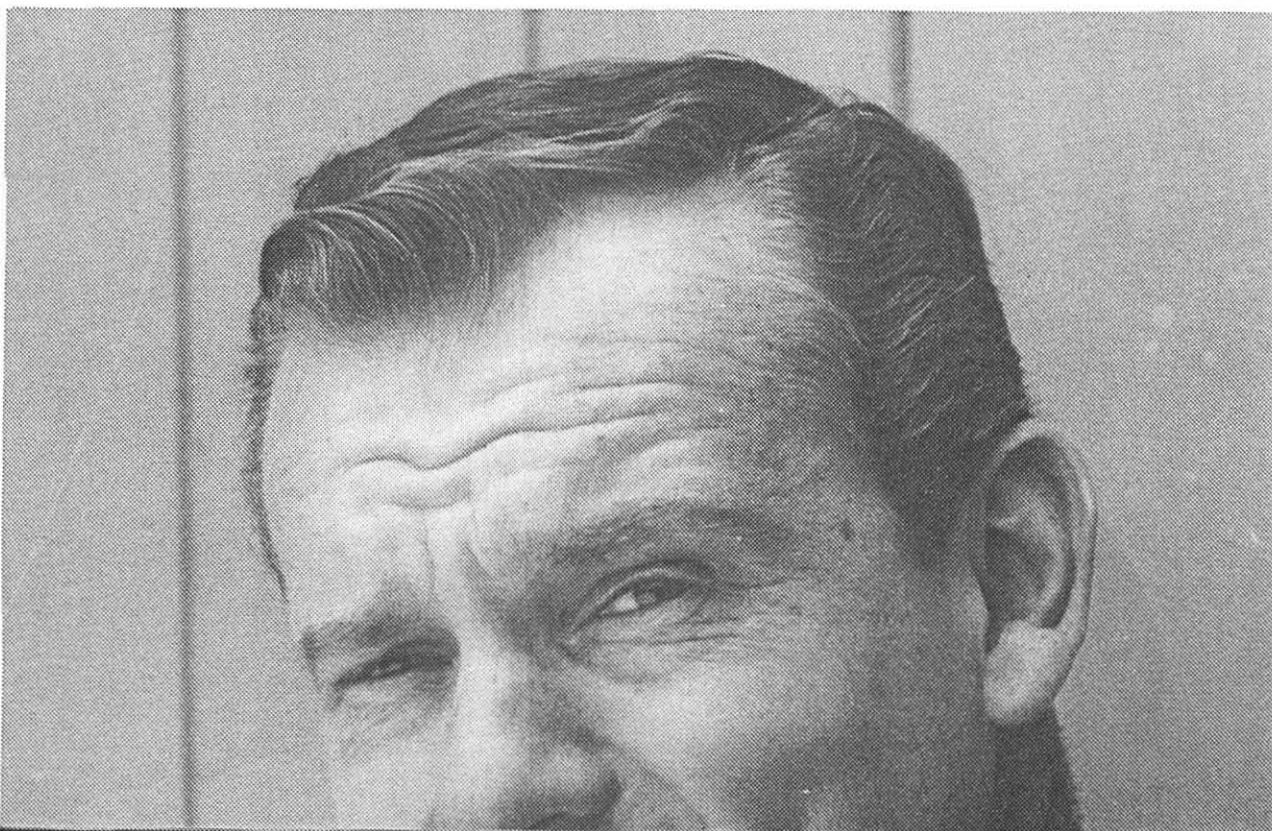
HOW MODELS GET RICH DEPT.: The prettiest girl in New York (later Miss Rheingold) was my "wife" on this shoot - would you know it? To save money the photographer borrowed a relative's dog, who didn't want to do anything required. Consequently we went four hours overtime ... from final layout, dog could have been drawn in! Salary-wise, this assignment was equivalent to starring on Broadway. (1957)

I was to regret my attitude very much indeed. Had I seen John Beal in Calculated Risk in New York, it might well have made all the "big difference" when I got to portray the same role in the La Jolla Playhouse (summer stock) production in 1963. Beal is a consummate actor, who, I'm sure, had more than two weeks rehearsal time, but even with Don Porter's able direction, I was a miserable flop. The less said, the better, though I shall always regret letting Ruth Burch down ... she had been kind to me over the years. Failure isn't pleasure.

In New York, the pay for modeling was triple what it had been in Chicago, occasionally more, but the treatment of models was gross, in my opinion. I'd been the "fair-haired boy" for so long, it wasn't easy being treated like a "piece of meat". In December of 1960, I went out on location to a Long Island market, where, as a grocery-boy, I was to be loading Miss Rheingold's car with a case of Rheingold Beer. We had originally met in 1957 on an assignment for Schaeffer's Beer, where an over-eager co-worker was an untrained dog whose antics stretched our original four-hour booking into an all-day affair and we had both been delighted to make double our money! As we hadn't worked together since then, we couldn't help comparing that day with the excitement she'd been experiencing as Miss Rheingold. No names here, as what followed was the saddest tale of despair one might ever imagine, for her Fairy Princess Life had actually been miserable. I remember she said she'd seen her fiancé only ten times during that whole year and couldn't begin to count the times she'd had to sit up until all-hours in smoke-filled hotel rooms and bars being nice to oafish Rheingold distributors. She was almost in tears at the memory and as she talked, I realized that everything she said also related to my experiences - that I'd outgrown the glamour of it all - there was no more fun to be had and for what? I made it my last appearance as an advertising model with a sense of genuine relief. *

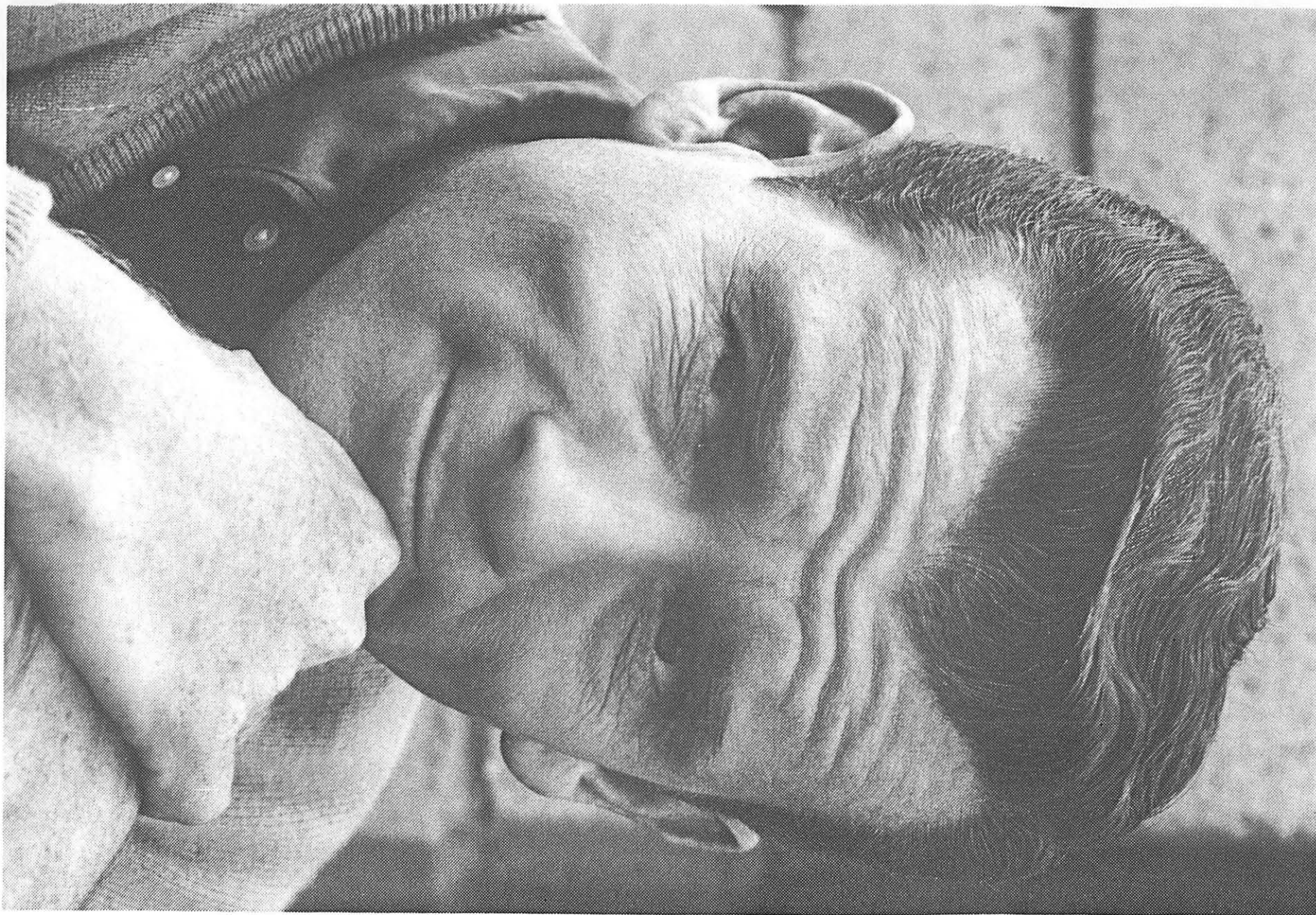
The next two years were busy ones, however, as I'd clicked as an actor in television commercials, thanks to Chuck Tranum. I worked most often for Ivory, but I also remember Lipton Tea, A.T.&T., Canco, Gillette, DuPont, Eastman Kodak, Eversharp-Schick, Fortisun, New York Telephone (several live cut-ins during the supper-hour news, Thermopane, Oldsmobile, Pillsbury Flour and others, even Vicks, where they

* Back in Hollywood, circa 1964-66, I appeared in at least a dozen training films for Union Oil, essentially modeling jobs called "slide-films".



NO TURN UNSTONED DEPT: Worried about my thinning hair, especially in front (top), I went to Max Factor's and bought \$75.00 worth attached to a lace base (bottom)...

(1963 Photos by Peter Thompson)



JOKE ON ME DEPT: Very carefully placed and combed-in, it blended nicely with my own and I wore it through the weeks I worked on-stage in "CALCULATED RISK". Nobody told me that the acetone needed for removal would turn the possibly dyed auburn hair green -- nobody wants to be "The Guy With Green Hair", so bye, bye.

(1963 Photo by Joe Shimotsukasa)

put mineral oil in my eyes to make them "watery", and some grapefruit-pineapple drink that made us all nauseous. The little boy playing my son began to cry so much they had to call off the filming, complaining that, on the previous day, "Patty Duke was such a great little trouper, she just puked into a bucket and went right on with the scene!"

Everyone (I'm sure) admired perky Patty Duke, but it upset me so I reported the whole incident to the Screen Actors Guild and subsequently got an irate call from a V. P. at the advertising agency (name on request) who told me that I'd never work for them again! I reported the call and his name to S.A.G. immediately and got a call from the SAME AGENCY the very next month, got the commercial I tried out for (a cigarette I'll be darned if I'll mention). In a way, I could "Duke" the cigs when I had to and did Cavalier, Kent, Winston and Camel, but then they really cracked-down with some truth-in-advertising and that cost me thousands of dollars I don't regret.

Though I really didn't have to, a couple of Christmas seasons, I took jobs in department stores because New York is such a lonely town at that time of the year -- everyone goes home, if possible. One year, I worked at my very favorite store, Hammacher-Schlemmer, and enjoyed it so much they asked me to stay on as a regular employee. As a Christmas worker, I made \$60 a week. They offered me \$45 a week plus a one-percent commission and the privilege of working the entire store. I was told that Hattie Carnegie might come in, ask for her favorite salesperson, who would then take her floor-to-floor with sales adding up to as much as \$3,000 -- wasn't that worth considering? It was, but I didn't and probably made a foolish mistake.

The next Christmas, I was one of two Santa Helpers hired by the prestigious firm of Abercrombie-Fitch. \$65 a week, but no commission, so when someone like David Susskind came to me and wanted ten of something that didn't cost more than \$75 each, I would invent an excuse and hand the sale over to the only permanent salesman who hadn't been rude about my being there. He racked up his best Christmas ever, and Susskind got ten punch-bowl sets. (Rusty was criticized for being a terrible salesman with the lowest sales averages in the department).

One day, a tall woman was considering some beautiful hand-carved wall plaques of fish priced at \$45, as Christmas gifts for her son. "What do you think, mother?" she asked a little woman beside her, who

was dressed in a bright red "P-Coat", a plaid pleated skirt and open snow galoshes that rattled when she walked. Around her head, a black silk scarf was tied under a pouting chin. Mama thought for a moment which gave me a chance to look at her with more attention. Like my little mama in Los Angeles, she'd put her eyeliner on by feel, since she was unable to do it and wear her glasses at the same time. She wore no other makeup except lip rouge, which was bleeding into the fine lines around her mouth.

It seemed impossible, but it was Marlene Dietrich.

As she continued to think, I said, "I heard your latest LP at a friend's the other night - the one you made in Rio. It's sensational!"

Mama looked at me with squinting eyes as much as to say: "You Son of a Gun, you've recognized me even in this stupid outfit!"

In her most aristocratic manner, practiced before many cameras, she flung back: "Vere did you hear it? It hasn't yet bean released!"

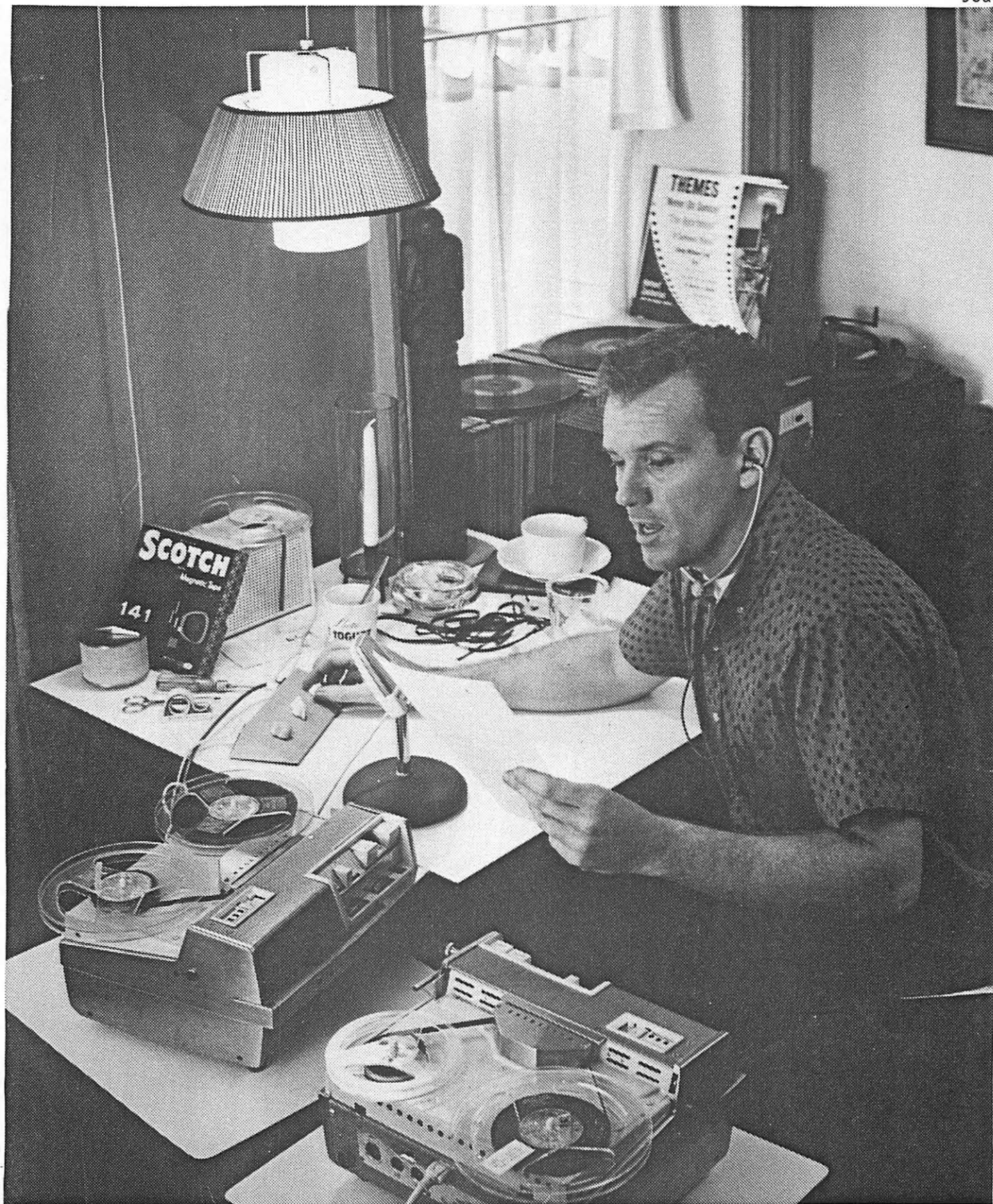
I told her Larry Carr had played it for me - he was a neighbor of her conductor, Burt Bachrach.

Mama evidently decided I was on her side, and without much talk, walked behind the counter and, with me, went through the stock drawer-by-drawer. She decided on two plaques, and she would take them "viss" her to be written-up elsewhere. Like Joan Crawford and Katharine Hepburn, both frequent shoppers, she could do anything she pleased.

Perhaps it was only five minutes later that she approached me breathlessly, "Vere can I go to get a bawometah foh a wittle boy that doesn't cost \$400 foh gawd's sakes?" Laughing in complete understanding, I told her of a cutlery shop down Madison Avenue a couple blocks that carried such items. She smiled her appreciation and made a kiss. I prefer to remember the look in her eyes, suddenly no older than mine, which said: "Thanks, you've been fun."

☆ ☆ ☆

In 1962, after playing most of the year in Williamsburg, Boston, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and Nags Head, North Carolina, taking hundreds of slides and miles of movie film, everything seemed to indicate that a chapter in my life was concluding. Little did I know.



IN THE VILLAGE, 1962 - A year to remember, I traveled and played for the most part, taking hundreds of color slides. Am shown here tape-recording a narration soundtrack, with music and sound effects, to accompany slides taken in Washington, D.C. Four airplane motors were purring from one machine into the mixing panel I have my hand on. Music comes from phonograph in background. I could do this for days on end / nobody cared to see results, sob.

(Photo: R. Morris)

With my father gone, my mother was having serious problems. My landlady let me know one day that the building where her husband's optometry office was located, was being razed and they wanted to convert my apartment -- what were my plans?

It seemed to me that I had stayed too long at the fair, that it was time to get back to the West Coast and try, if possible, to get back into what I enjoyed most, next to radio, and that was working as a motion picture actor. Although I had sent 62 parcels of things out to my mother in Los Angeles, I delayed leaving New York because of Sue Seay's sad illness. But summer suits are not made for Halloween weather back East, so I left with great reluctance on the TWA funhouse flight already detailed.

There was no welcoming committee. There was no room for me at my mother's place. Temporarily, I bedded down with the 62 parcels, bags and trunks stored in her garage until I could find a suitable place for a small photo studio operation that would also accept a very loving Dachshund glad to be on terra firma.

It had cost over \$2,000 to make the move. I had no contacts, no agent, no bank account. Worst of all, I had no car, no friends. I cried myself to sleep that first night ... New York had been an exciting adventure. This was the pits.

☆ ☆ ☆

It had been photography and pictures I had taken of myself that initially brought me movie producer attention after the war. With a second-hand Argoflex and a kitchen darkroom, a tripod and a self-timer, I had managed some excellent publicity shots of myself. These I sent to Paramount Producer Hal Wallis after reading a publicity feature describing his "sincere" interest in signing-on new faces.

It worked in that it got me an interview, to which I brought a large aircheck of my appearance with Edward G. Robinson on the Hedda Hopper Show on CBS. Wallis had a playback unit in his Oscar-filled office and listened to my scenes. I was cast in a small role in The Accused, starring Loretta Young and Douglas Dick. I was to play one of two veterans attending college on the G. I. Bill. My buddy was Bill Mauch, one of the Mauch twins, (the other, Bob, had retired to

PARAMOUNT

For Release
October 26, 1948

SPOT NEWS

NEWCOMER SIGNED FOR "BITTER VICTORY"

Roland Morris, an aspiring young actor, has been signed for a role in "Bitter Victory," Hal Wallis production for Paramount, following his introductory role in "The Accused."

He believes what he reads in the papers, which is why he is in pictures today. Some time ago he saw a news story quoting Wallis as being interested in new faces. He had his portrait made, and sent a half dozen varied poses to the producer. This led to a personal interview, and the young stage and radio actor was given his first screen role.

In "Bitter Victory" he will play the part of Diana Lynn's suitor. Robert Cummings, Elizabeth Scott, Miss Lynn and Eve Arden head the cast of the romantic drama based on a Reader's Digest story. William Dieterle directs.

PARAMOUNT MUSIC DEPARTMENT HITS PEAK WITH SIX FILMS

Paramount music department today swings into a schedule of peak activity with staffs busy on six new pictures and preparations in work for others.

Pre-recording is currently under way with Bing Crosby for the songs in "Top O' the Morning," in which he will co-star with Ann Blyth, Barry Fitzgerald and Hume Cronyn. Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen are writing two of the songs for the

(more)



RUSTY MORRIS, DIANA LYNN and LAURA ELLIOTT in a scene from "BITTER VICTORY / PAID IN FULL". I played "Bunny Howard" who had been Diana's All-American Boyfriend before she stole Robert Cummings away from Lizabeth Scott. 1948 soap-opera that stayed on the shelf a couple of years - escaping in a butchered version that was barely publicized. It was an unhappy group with lots of on-the-set and behind-the-camera tensions; I was scared to death, but Diana held my hand all the way.

(Photos Courtesy Paul Nathan / Hal Wallis-Paramount)

HAL WALLIS PRODUCTIONS, INC.
Paramount Studios

TELEPHONE HOLLYWOOD 2411



CABLE ADDRESS "HALWAL"

HOLLYWOOD 38, CALIFORNIA

Saturday.

Dear Rolland:

Enclosed are the stills on "Bunny and the pack". I think they're good. Don't you?

Have been trying to reach you on the phone, but apparantly you're busy working - or something. In any event, I did want you to know that you did a fine job here and the last day's dailies were excellent as good as all of the others I mentioned to you.

Phone me! - and let's get together soon...



f
aw

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER PAUL NATHAN sent me a packet of 4" x 5" production stills, two of which are reproduced here, including the "hat shot". If I could be a cut-up, Hal Wallis could cut it out, and did. The letter indicates I did "a fine job" on my first major movie -- a shame it showed only at the Preview!

study film-editing). At the Sawtelle V. A. Hospital, doubling as a college campus, I learned from Billy that the director was so unhappy with one of Wallis' new discoveries that he was literally cutting her out of the picture as shooting progressed. Playing her boyfriend, it was also cutting Billy out - and with him out, I too, would be eliminated as all my scenes were with him. True enough, I eventually ended up with an off-screen line during one of Loretta Young's close-ups!

I was awarded a compensation prize of sorts, a part in a film starring Diana Lynn, Elizabeth Scott, Eve Arden and a very rude Robert Cummings. I was "Bunny", a close friend of Diana's. Though based on a true Reader's Digest story, the picture was a downer, revolving around the accidental death of a baby. Director William Dieterle had been charming, allowing me to characterize "Bunny" as something of a cut-up in an effort to lend some of the sequences light-hearted humor.* All of which was left on the cutting-room floor by Wallis -- who let it all escape two years later with a new name: Paid In Full.

A genuine shame, because I meanwhile sold a four-page story-with-photos to Popular Photography magazine, detailing how pictures I had taken of myself with a self-timing camera and sent into Hal Wallis won me a featured role in a movie called Bitter Victory. Though the magazine was delayed a few months, it still came out a whole year before the movie, plugging the original title. (Later, I came to know Designer Moss Mabry, who had been Elizabeth Scott's escort to the preview screening and he described every scene I was in; both of them agreed at the time it was a wonderful break for a newcomer, equal to that of Guy Madison's in Since You Went Away.) On TV's late late late shows, my one remaining sequence is totally missing.

It happened in another picture called She's Working Her Way Through College. Again, I played a college student identified as a campus cut-up who took Virginia Mayo the long-way-around to her first class with Professor Ronald Reagan. Cute business, all scrapped.

I was featured in a couple of shorts at RKO, one of which was a popular series starring comedian Leon Errol. In this one, he visits a Dude Ranch run by his daughter's boyfriend. It was my first introduction to those cowboy boots with a higher-than-regular heel. Walking the next day wasn't easy! I also had to shoot a pistol and brawl

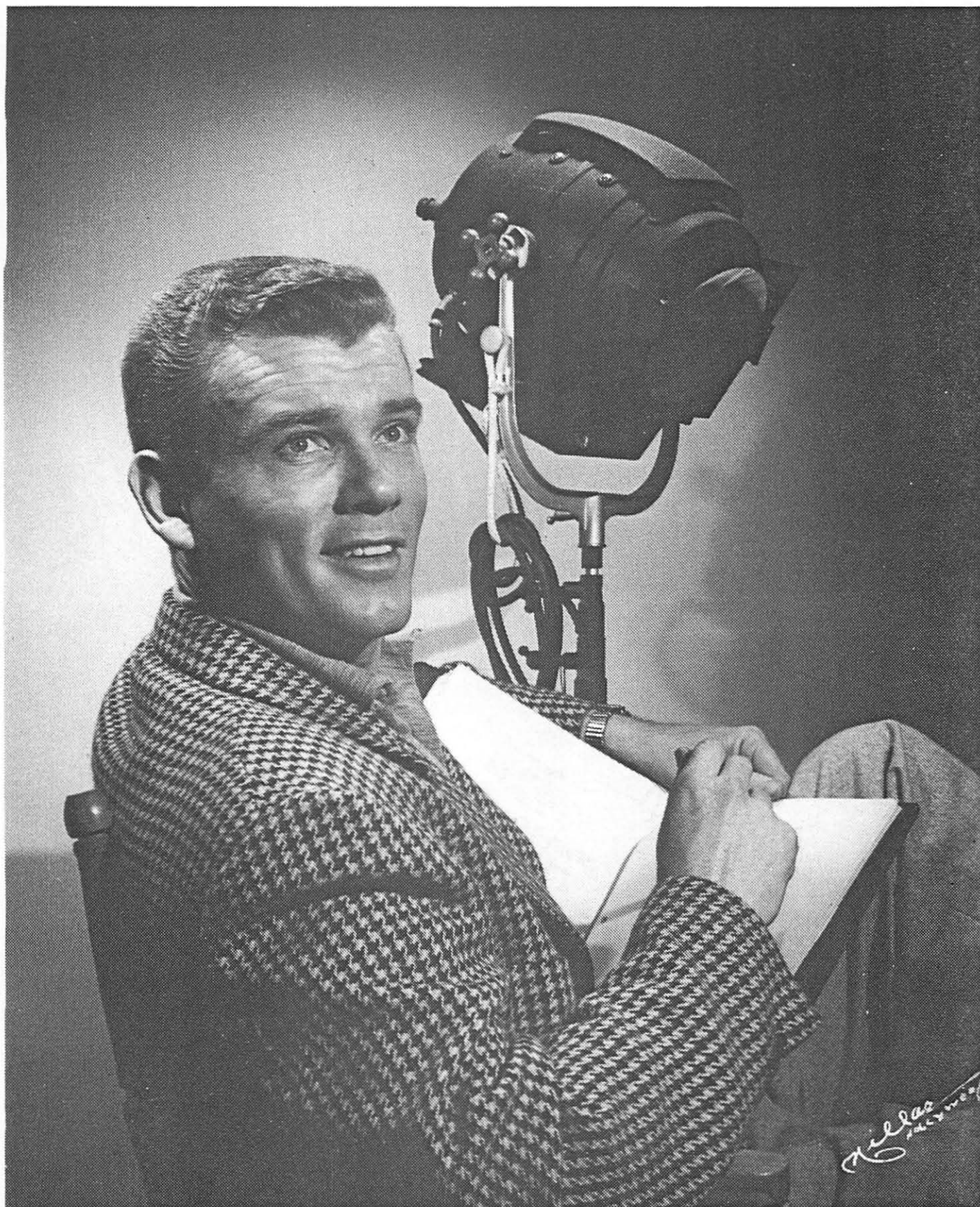
* I wore my date's hat back on camera when I had to fetch her coat; in a two-day party sequence, I do-si-doed with a cowboy musician!

with a drunk in a barroom sequence, breaking up a little furniture in the process. During rehearsal, the gun was no problem, but for the actual filming, the propman substituted a "full-load" so that when I fired the gun, it scared me so I dropped it. I remember Leon Errol shouted, "Now that's comedy - write it in," but they didn't. As for the fight sequence, they used a stunt double and had to curl his hair with a curling iron to match mine closer (mine was natural; I had dimples, too, in those juvenile days). It was a pleasure to see him go into action dressed in clothing identical to mine and just wreck things, then, suitably mussed, I traded places and continued ...

George Bilson was the producer, an awfully nice guy from the old days of Hollywood. He also had another series going which used a trained German Shepherd. In this one, I was a Scoutmaster on an outing with a troop of young Scouts. Something about the dog being mistaken for a wild dog roaming the area with rabies. About all I can remember was having to learn how to jockey a school bus on hillside roads / I never even got to meet the dog.

The only real location I was treated to was up near Sacramento for a small role in a most interesting feature called The Well. We had to fly to San Francisco, Walter Kelly and I, rendezvous with the two actresses portraying our girl friends, then fly on up to Sacramento. From there, we were driven south to Marysville, which was a town featured in the film as being torn apart by racial tension, all of it resolved when the energy of the riot was refocused into helping get a small black girl out of a well she'd fallen into. I played one of the hot-headed white dudes whose attitude was less than tolerant. It was a fine film and generally well-received. I was proud to be a part of it. They threw a grand cast party at the studio when it was completed. I felt like a movie star - at least for that night!

In Battle Circus, I was at last teamed up with the love of my life (in movies), June Allyson. It was wartime Korea, as staged on MGM's backlot, and I was a soldier donating blood to my wounded best friend. Very moved, she was to ask me why, and it got very gung-ho. At least on paper. We never shot the scene. She elected instead to go home, it was her wedding anniversary. In language loud and profane she told them what they could do with their movie as far as she was concerned.



WILSON "BILL" MILLAR took some of my favorite photographs, including the shot on the cover of this manuscript. This was about 1951 - I had made yet another screen test, this time at Universal, for the lead in a new TV series with an Army training theme, so had my hair cut. Series (using WW2 footage) was never made.

(Photo by Millar)

I quickly fell out-of-love and have called her "Junie-Poo" ever since! A sweetheart she wasn't, and couldn't be for all I witnessed that day. Of course, I got paid, but ...

A real sweetheart for my money was Doris Day and I was so happy to get a little scene with her in On Moonlight Bay at Warners. It's one of my favorite movies anyway, depicting that World War One period when there were so many throat-catching songs. I played a solder on a troop train going through town. Doris climbs aboard, looking for her boyfriend, Gordon MacCrea, spots me with my hat down over my face because I'm dozing. She lifts off the hat, and there I am dreaming with eyes wide-open, but come-to and proclaim to the guys in the seat ahead of me: "Wait'll I tell you about the dream I just had!"

This was a situation where publicizing my radio shows paid off. Though I was weary of playing All-American Boyfriends and Brothers, I had a quality that let me read lines like that and get the part after fifty others flunked out. A similar situation arose one Saturday at Goldwyn Studio. Jack Baur, the casting director, phoned me in something of despir to say they were shooting a scene with a soldier on a bus showing his wallet photos to another soldier, played by Farley Granger. Mr. Goldwyn fired the actor on the set, insisting he gave a risque connotation to the scene -- could I please come over pronto, get into a uniform and my halo and read the lines? I could and did. The picture was I Want You. Mark Robson was the director and made me so glad I had only a one-day bit. Goldwyn wasn't much fun, either. He and Farley had a terrible "row" about working Saturday and Farley left and was gone for hours. Just before they would have had to call everyone back to shoot Monday, he returned and we got it in one take.

I got to be a Navy pilot in Flat Top, an aviation mechanic in Fighter Attack (again in Korea, I think), a Coast Guard Pharmacist's Mate in Sea of Lost Ships. I also got an unpleasant taste of what it was like to be an Army recruit in As You Were for a week.

In Francis Goes to Westpoint, I spent the day in a football player's uniform. The only fun was working with Donald O'Conner and that marvelous mule (you could stand right there with him and almost swear he was talking). It was nice to get out of those shoes, too. All my sequences were taken on a sound stage, which happened to mean asphalt floors ... cleats are for grass. I hurt to my knees!

Too often, the nonsense involved in hiring an actor or actress for a role in a film is monumental -- totally out of proportion to the importance of the role involved. Too often, casting is based on whether or not the actor makes the director or producer look good. That was especially true in radio, where Lurene Tuttle or Virginia Gregg in the cast not only guaranteed a performance beyond reproach, but praise for the director who had brains enough to cast an actress in a role he didn't have to direct.

It was true in films, too. If a director had a producer's girl friend in an important role, he HAD to fill all the others with the calibre of actors and actresses he wouldn't have to worry about as all his time would of necessity have to be spent coaxing an acceptable performance out of Tootsie Broad.

Thus, I well remember my interview with Alfred Hitchcock ...

In those days, a lot of process-screen work was the norm, and so we met on a process stage at Warner Brothers studio. This is just a great big barn-like building with a special projector a hundred feet down the way with a shutter that can synchronize with the shutter of the camera shooting the scene (if it didn't synchronize perfectly, the background would be a blank). So the actor is positioned and/or moves in front of a huge translucent movie screen on which is projected a street scene or whatever, and he or she appears to be on that street doing whatever, or driving a car and the scenery rolls away in the distance though nobody moves an inch. In this case, it was a Washington museum, and Ruth Roman was supposedly visiting there. After watching Mr. Hitchcock film a sequence, I was brought before him. He was gentle, he was kind. He asked me, "Can you ACT, Rushty?" "Yes, Sir." "Who shez sho?" I thought a moment and answered, "I do." "Fine, you'll do."

I worked three weeks on Strangers On A Train. If you look very carefully now and then, you'll know that I was there.

All but a day was spent working at night out at the Rowland V. Lee ranch in San Fernando Valley. It had a natural lake ideal for the purpose, with surrounding trees and land perfect for establishing an attractive carnival encampment, complete with all the accepted furnishings, including cotton candy, popcorn, a ferris-wheel, merry-go-round and a vast assortment of concessions, rides and hoopla.



RAYMOND CHANDLER and CZENZI ORMONDE (possibly a pseudonym for Alfred Hitchcock) are credited for the screenplay of "STRANGERS ON A TRAIN", but it was RUSTY MORRIS, at top with LAURA ELLIOTT and below right with TOMMY FARRELL, who wrote the celebrated observation concerning popcorn!

(Photos Courtesy Warner Brothers)

Unfortunately, the month was December, and in that locality, the night air swept in from the ocean only a few miles to the west, without any interference. Our teeth chattered. Everyone not before the camera wore winter coats. Those of us who had to appear in summer clothing wore sweaters and long underwear underneath. To prevent the actor's breath from photographing, the area of any action was heated by smudge pots, oil-burning outdoor heaters brought in from the orange ranches. They were surprisingly effective.

Tommy Farrell was the gregarious actor hired to cavort with me on a "date" with Laura Elliott, who played Farley Granger's over-sexed wife. She had previously worked with me in Paid In Full at Paramount. She was more zoftig at this point, but just as frosty and it had nothing to do with the weather. Tommy was especially popular with everyone on the WB crew, for his mother was the fondly-remembered actress of the Cagney era, Glenda Farrell.

Patricia Hitchcock, the director's outgoing and fun-loving daughter, had a featured role in the production, but was not in any of the sequences with Tommy, Laura and me, to my regret. She and her mother were out there on location almost every night, just to enjoy all the excitement. One night, Pat conned me into riding the ferris wheel with her. Whatever her motive, her father put a monkey wrench into the act by getting the operator to stop the wheel so that our seat was at the very top. It was cold, a bit windy and very soon Pat went into a hysterical fit, screaming to her father to let her down. When he finally did, I was just as grateful as she was!

"Hitch", as everyone called him was a sly and mischievous man who loved to tease. When the three of us were out on that frigid lake in the little boat, supposedly exiting the "Tunnel of Love" ride, he bellowed through an electric bull-horn he utilized, to ask me in front of the entire throng, if Laura had given my zipper a workout. (Laura wouldn't have touched me with a ten-foot pole -- her role was a very difficult one, requiring extreme concentration because of the "fishbowl" glasses she had to wear. When she had them on, she could barely function without assistance -- was almost incapable of judging distance and was either sick to her stomach or suffering from severe headache.) I admired her for her professional

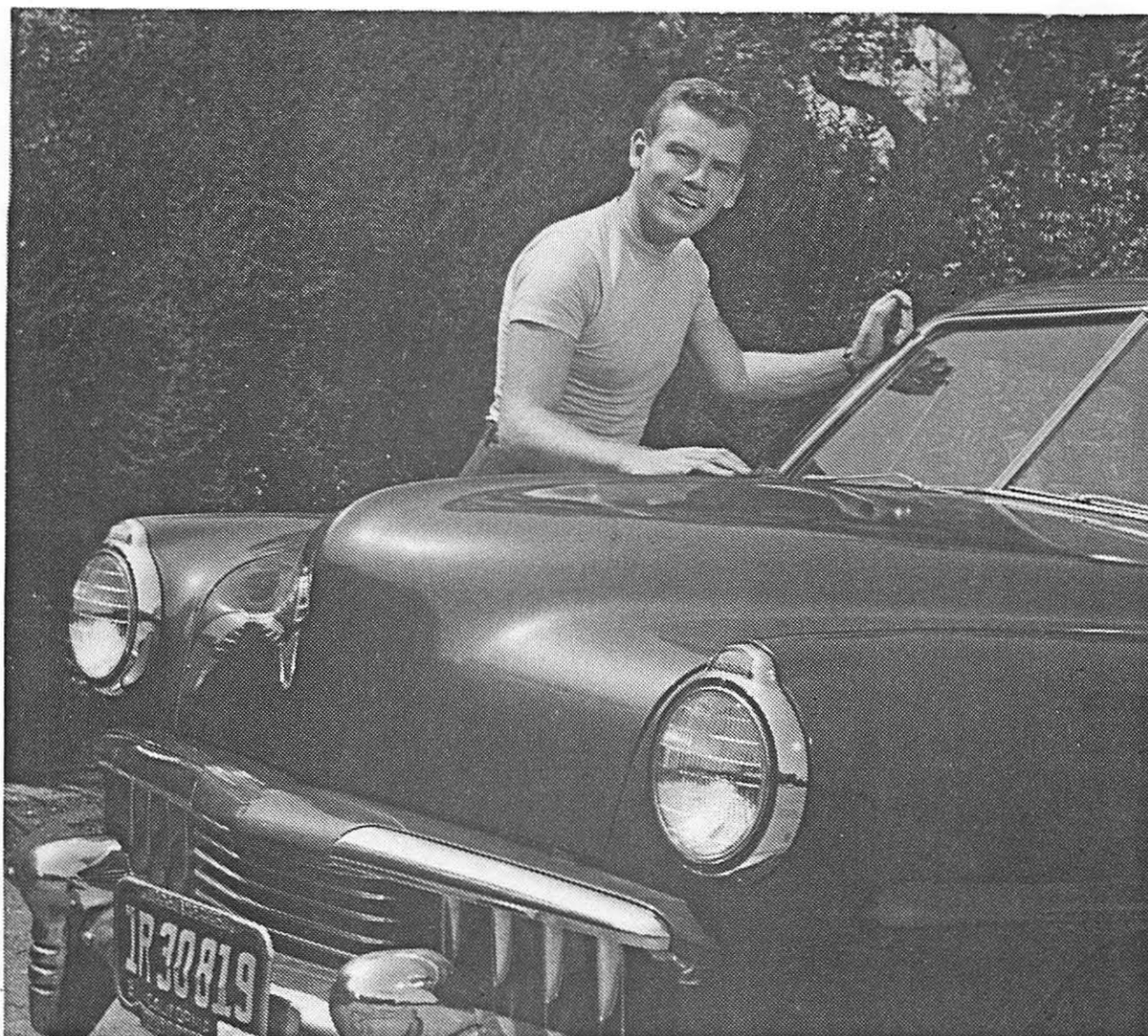
dedication. She never got the recognition she deserved until years later; with a new name (Kasey Rogers) she played Barbara Parkins' mother on the television series Peyton Place.

The Hitchcock method of filming was very tedious, for every single piece of action had been worked out previously on an elaborate story-board. Beautifully drawn sketches, much like a comic strip, depicted everything that was to be photographed, indicating the movement of the action, camera, etc. Moreover, he was overly fond of shooting every scene a dozen or more times. Nothing was left to chance. He was kind, considerate, very patient and often very wicked. Everyone adored him.

The sequence depicting Robert Walker stalking Laura Elliott at the carnival was described on only one page of the script, but it took over three weeks to film. There was no indicated dialogue, we were asked to ad-lib appropriate lines. One I thought of which particularly pleased Hitchcock was: "Who can neck with a mouth-full of popcorn?" He asked with glee that I make what is called a "wild track" of the line so that they'd have it clean, with nothing in the background to garble it, and if you listen for it, it's obviously there.

Because certain shots required digging a massive hole in the ground to shoot from ground level, or to raise, with a giant crane, the camera crew and Hitch high into the air, there was a lot of time for the actors and extras to huddle together around the stoves and talk shop, eat, drink gallons of coffee, tea or cocoa, play cards and so forth. When Robert Walker learned that I was reading a new best-seller about F. Scott Fitzgerald called The Disenchanted, he suggested I join him in Hitchcock's office trailer, which he never used, where it was quiet and warm. I did, and as he sat listening, I read him page-after-page of the book aloud. A quiet, brooding man, he was kindness personified and not at all like the character he was portraying so well in the movie.

Later, in the studio, we shot the spooky sequence of the ride through the "Tunnel of Love", where only our shadows are seen distorted on the fake rock walls. Every movement was choreographed just-so. After lunch, we worked on the process stage, where a portion of the merry-go-round had been assembled. There, we sat on the painted



"HITCH" was a dream car come true. My father was an auto mechanic who helped keep the United Parcel trucks moving -- He was partial to Studebakers and when he learned that a co-worker was selling one (his wife had died), I discovered what it meant to drive a car owned by "a little old lady from Pasadena". It was immaculate in every way, kept tuned like a timepiece by my caring father. I was too fond of it to expose it to Chicago's winters and sold it (very reluctantly) in 1956 after my father's funeral.

Nothing since has measured up. I hate to drive ... in fact, I have barely managed 6,000 miles per year since returning from New York. An achievement few can claim, living in the Los Angeles area.

(1955 Photo: R. Morris)

wooden horses (Hitch claimed to have selected each one of them for their wanton personalities), singing As The Band Played On until we were weary of it. The rise-and-fall of the horse's movement was not doing a thing for Laura's lunch, as she pretended to see Walker nearby. Actually, none of us dared look at the screen behind us, which was filled with the whirling background of the carnival. Tommy and I wound up our day, and our very happy job, running around outside in tennis shoes, calling in vain for Laura, a "wildtrack" recording to be used during the camera's probe of the island, where the murder is mirrored in the distorted lenses of the fallen eye glasses.

A really gala company party was held at the completion of the filming at Warners studio a day or so before Christmas. There, I got to meet some of the cast which included Farley Granger, who was nice enough to remember me as the soldier with the "dirty pictures" on the bus at Goldwyn's, Marion Lorn, Ruth Roman. I don't remember the Hitchcocks or Tommy Farrell being there, but no one was staying long because they all had Christmas shopping to attend to. Farley walked me to my new car, an attractive Studebaker coupe, which, for as long as I drove it, I nick-named "Hitch" in love and appreciation.

Alfred Hitchcock was one of only four people to reply to anxious bread-and-butter letters I had written upon my arrival back in California in November, 1962. He was interested to learn details of the things I'd been up to since Train, but nothing he was planning had any suitable role in it for me. Paul Nathan, Hal Wallis' right-hand man, also replied, even though a dozen years or more had passed. He kindly explained Wallis would be in England doing Anne of A Thousand Days, Becket, etc. Nothing for a forty-year-old All American boy...

Though radio was dead, I'd also written Lawrence and Lee, hoping they might have something in the works where I might be utilized. Bob Lee replied in a very friendly manner as always, to say they were at work on a musical version of Auntie Mame. Sorry. His partner, Jerome Lawrence, telephoned -- the only one to do so, of the dozen important people I'd worked for in the past and had contacted.

He needed someone to help with some scrapbooks and things they were donating to the Lawrence and Lee Collection at Lincoln Center. He also had at least 1,000 color slides which he had taken on various

world-wide locations. To conserve film, his camera took single-frame color slides which the labs were not then mounting - could I do it?

I was still getting residuals from my Ivory commercials, and had begun acquiring some darkroom equipment, but coming back to the quiet residential neighborhood where my mother lived was driving me zonkers after the heart-of-the-heart of Greenwich Village. As soon as I was able to acquire a second-hand 1952 Mercury, I took Jerry up on his kind offer, just to get away. It was closer to show-biz ...

Funny how things work out. I'm the least religious person anyone might care to know, but looking back, those few months at the beach were Heaven-Sent. The scrapbooks and slides were pleasant projects; I even twisted Jerry's arm to invest in a Kodak Carousel projector and a folding screen, which permitted his enjoyment of the pictures he'd taken (he's an excellent photographer). Using my through-the-lens reflex camera, I took a series of color title slides for him, including in the corner of each, one of the many statuettes or toys he'd purchased in the particular country depicted.

The physical activity was good for me, out in that tangy ocean air -- the peace was restorative. There were a lot of "Man Friday" chores for me to apply myself to, including deck to be painted, house trim to touch-up, windows to wash weekly, storage spaces to organize a food-freezer to sand and refinish, his dog to brush weekly, etc. I looked forward to my Tuesdays and Thursdays, not for my \$10 per day, but to work out a lot of anger and frustration. It seemed to become more and more obvious as agent turn-downs continued to pile-up, that I might have to make a very serious career adjustment. Many days I had the beach-house all to myself and there could have been heard more than a few primal screams, but for the roar of the nearby surf.

Jerry and Bob have a unique way of working much of the time, involving as it does, hours and hours on the telephone, since Jerry works at his typewriter in Malibu, and Bob sits at his over the Santa Monica mountains in San Fernando Valley. Mame, being Mame, was a lot of headaches and a lot of fun into the bargain, or so it seemed to me from what I overheard while rearranging the files and the office bookshelves.

On one of my days alone, I managed to shoot a roll of color film

of the interior of the beach-house, never dreaming the negatives would become priceless mementoes in a few years when the entire area was bull-dozed.

The closest I came to meeting Angela Lansbury was seeing her through Jerry's living room window one day as I raked the beach -- I felt heartsick as "Cinderella" at the time, but Jerry more than made up for it August 6, 1968, by inviting my mother and myself to be his personal guests in Row "B", 22 and 23, at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. My mother could never talk about it without crying, for Mame was the most exciting show of a lifetime to see from that choice location!

The beach chores ultimately came to an end and I felt much better for the experience. The transfer from East Coast activity and income to West Coast doldrums and depression wasn't easy, especially when I faced the fact that zoning laws in California do not permit living on business premises, as is so prevalent in Manhattan. Only in a narrow County strip in West Los Angeles, a perfect location for a studio from which to photograph actors and models, but nothing I could afford let me keep "Murphy".

Since I had turned down an offer to work as a National Geographic photographer (a Washington D. C. contact almost begged me, as the magazine preferred unmarried unfettered photographers that they could send to the far corners of the world on assignments), all because it would have meant giving up the dog, I remained steadfast.

No matter what I tried, there didn't seem to be an actor's agent in Hollywood who would take me on. I had been gone too long ... it would mean more work getting me re-established than they were willing to undertake. One informed me quite seriously that I was just a guy with a nose in the middle of my face. Another one, a woman who knew where all the bodies were buried, said with all my experience and breaks, I should have been a star -- "Why aren't you?"

Not one of them would look at my personal print of my Death Valley Days film. No time ... who cares, it's in black-and-white ... you're no longer a "type" ... they're not making war pictures anymore ... you've grown out of the only thing you had to sell -- so went most of the comment, if there was any.

Very possibly, I hadn't done myself much good with an article I wrote for the S.A.G. magazine I called Are Actors Really Camera-Shy? (Jan-Feb, 1965). It was primarily a guide on how an actor should plan a photo session to help make every picture count. I suggested that most agents packed around a book of actor's photos that were, more often than not, a disgrace, the intimation being most agents are slobs. Not exactly a distortion, based on years of my experience ...

Only one agent treated me like a human being. He was the only agent ever thanked by name at an Academy Awards show - Ed Begley had shared credit for his Oscar with agent George Morris, "a gentleman." But he only wanted me for commercials. I signed with him, hoping he might change his mind. Eventually, with good reason, I requested a release and when I went to get my pictures, I was given 24 of the 24 I had left for his use. A gentleman perhaps - but a professional?

From there I went with Bill Cunningham, who had a reputation for promoting former radio people. He did too, but all I got sent out for were voice-overs, and always I had the most melliferous-voiced announcers in the business for competition -- on a very good day I might sound thirty years old at most! Since we had never met, nor was I ever given a SAG contract to sign, when those two very basic considerations were pointed out to me by an agent at Ashley-Famous, I signed with them. Lots of prestige. Lots of indifference.

Ultimately, the commercials division was reorganized, and I was assured by a top man sent out from New York that they were keeping only the actors and actresses, those who had proven they could deliver. Swell. A few weeks later, I was summoned to come in and meet the New Man In Charge. He was just a snotty kid, who hated all my photos, not realizing I had taken every one of them. "They stink, they do you no favors. Trust me, pal." (At least he didn't called me "Dad"!) Then he shoved a business card of a photographer into my hand and told me to make an appointment for some really good shots. For this, I could have kayoed his SAG franchise. I couldn't be bothered, but on the way home, I wrote a letter to him in my head (later mailed) not only asking for a release from Ashley-Famous because of him, but reminding him that I had been doing TV commercials while he was still in grade school. (He lasted only five weeks, I later learned -- hopefully, somebody tipped-off SAG about his sweetheart deal.)



PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

RUSTY MORRIS

TV COMMERCIALS:
GEORGE MORRIS AGENCY

A VERY REAL, HONEST, REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO - One of my favorites thanks to the camera skills of a talented fellow actor. A casting tool George Morris chose to ignore.

(1965 Photo by Roy Dean)

I have always enjoyed going on interviews. They called them "go-sees" in New York and it wasn't unusual to go-see ten times each week, even two to five a day. In Los Angeles, I felt lucky to go-see once a month, always involving terrible traffic which I loathe.

So it was great to just be called by a very dear friend who was temporarily associated with MGM (not the so-called Casting Director) and was able to wangle a couple of parts for me in the top-rated TV series Medical Center. It was really the same role each time, that of "Charlie", a technician who operated the electro-encephalograph. A real fan of the show, I was especially pleased to discover Chad Everett was a caring vital force off-camera as well as on. Charming, friendly, great to work with. So was Director Earl Bellamy ... genial, soft-spoken, patient.

Dina Merrill was the star of the first episode. On my call-back, I was pleased to finally meet and get to know Mercedes McCambridge, whom I had always admired as a radio actress but never had the luck to work with. A fine talent, she was only superb as "Maggie", an aging nurse who wouldn't quit. Love her intensity ... and her voice.

Again, I snooped, fascinated to examine the incredible set which was a detailed hospital floor, complete with a well-equipped tiled operating room, numerous labs and private patient rooms, even a patio terrace overlooking a (painted) view of the UCLA campus. Everything I could expect of MGM, to be sure. Tours of the other sound stages revealed only a suggestion of what it all had been once upon a time.

Much later, out-of-the-blue, with no agent, no casting interview, I was invited to undertake the brief role of a gas station attendant in a feature film entitled Pretty Maids All In A Row. I couldn't count the times I had been a gas station attendant -- I'd even gone through short training courses for Standard, Sinclair and Union Oils.

In this turkey, starring Rock Hudson and Angie Dickinson, I was to approach Angie's car when she drove into my station and ask the usual: "Fill 'er up, check the oil?" For that, I got \$250, which I admit is better than raking the beach.

Angie Dickinson is just possibly the nicest person working in the business. No pretense, only warm friendliness, as though one had

RUSTY MORRIS



ANOTHER COSTUME TAKEN HOME, ANOTHER SELF-PORTRAIT - Though borrowed from a Union Oil training film, this is the way I appeared with Angie Dickenson. Gas Station Attendants only look like this in pictures! I played too many to count ...

lived next door all her life. I seldom use the word "darling", but she surely is.

For some reason, Rock Hudson chose to be a movie star and cut me dead. No rush to extend a Chad Everett handshake and a welcome to the picture, he treated me as though I were on the moon - maybe he was hung-over and as yet had no coffee. Who knows?*

In this oh-so-silly scene, Angie sees Rock getting into his car at the far end of the gas station, honks her horn to attract his attention -- this, while I'm leaning in under the hood, adding the oil. The horn startles me, I jump, bump my head on the hood and she smiles sheepishly. It might have involved three hours, during which time, the Director, Roger Vadim, never said so much as "boo" to me, as he instructed the cameraman and crew what I was going to do. Odd.

All of this time, trouble and expense was because there was a gasoline then on the market that featured a slogan: "Put a tiger in your tank." It was on this nearby sign that the camera focused for the fade-out -- you see, in the picture, Rock's name was "Tiger" ... the only clever thing about a movie I waited to see on television.

As we had used a real gas station in the wilds of Culver City, a chauffeur drove me back to the studio so I could return my uniform to the wardrobe department. I stood there trying to imagine what it must have been like in the days of The Student Prince, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, Showboat, Marie Antoinette, Kiss Me, Kate, David Copperfield, For Me and My Gal, Waterloo Bridge, San Francisco, A Tale of Two Cities, Singin' In The Rain ... that day, there was only me in that vast haunted building.

Walking through the main gate of MGM to my car, I left the dream-factory-turned-ghost-town, never guessing the party at last was over. I had made a Schlitz commercial there, appeared in two Medical Center episodes and enjoyed a small role in a big wide-screen Rock Hudson bomb.

If it all had to end that way, how nice that it included Angie, and not Junie-poo!

☆ ☆ ☆

* I've been told he's extremely shy (yawn).



EXHIBIT OF "POOCH PORTRAITS" AT STARCREST BOARDING KENNELS,
SUN VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Joel Marston, an actor with whom I had worked in Strike A Match in 1952, had spent the intervening ten years becoming a very successful breeder of Chow dogs, and was one of the many chums I contacted while settling into my mother's garage. I took advantage of every opportunity to make money for darkroom equipment, so when Joel let it be known he needed photos of his champions for various publicity and advertising outlets, I did my best.

In the course of it, I established a fictitious firm name: Pooch Portraits. I had to paint it first, but Joel let me have a wall in his Sun Valley kennel office to display some sample prints. He was in partnership with another actor in operating the boarding kennel called Starcrest (most of his clients were movie people).

The silent partner in the business was James Dobson, a good ol' boy from Tennessee I had known from the days we were doughboys together aboard that Doris Day troop train On Moonlight Bay. Jim had worked a lot in movies during the time I lived and worked back East. He'd achieved deserved attention as a regular cast member of the TV series Boots and Saddles. He pretended to be much more of a hillbilly than he was because it got him jobs, but he had been active in the behind-the-camera aspects of movie production in Europe, especially Munich, where he learned to speak fluent German functioning as a casting director and production coordinator. Somewhere along the line, he began to write a weekly column for his hometown newspaper he called Hollywood Way and was approached to produce and star in a most interesting radio version of the column.

The proposal, as I understood it, was to create a short radio show that could fill a five-minute segment left by ten-minute farm price reports and news shows in rural America. There was a need and Jimmy Dobson was the ideal person to fill it with his just-folks mannerisms. Since Rusty Morris happened to have two good reel-to-reel tape recorders, a studio-quality RCA mike, I was encouraged to tag along, ya hear? Moreover, I owned a stopwatch and because of all the narration tracks I'd made for all those slide shows that nobody wanted to look at, I was an accomplished tape-editor to boot.

The format was to vary, being one week of five-minute shows of Jimmy telling tales of all those Hollywood folks he knew and worked

with from time-to-time, the alternate week was to be a five day interview with a Hollywood notable in zippy five-minute portions. Now, lest this sounds strange, it's simply amazing how much information and news can be crowded into those five minutes! Jimmy was not only clever, he was glib, and with Rusty's scissors at work, not one single second was wasted.

Together, we visited the homes of Ginger Rogers, Rock Hudson, Efram Zimbalist Jr., Marilyn Maxwell and Hugh O'Brien. We recorded more than we needed as a rule because the editing process would fit it all down to the required time. Ginger got carried away with Christian Science and filled an hour and a half, but she was terrific, telling some sweet anecdotes of her childhood days in Texas, perfect for the show. Both she and Efram had just appeared in Harlow (the Electronovision version), in which Jimmy also worked, so of course, that got some plugs, as well as Efram's upcoming new series about the FBI. Hugh O'Brien had just returned from Africa, where he spent some time visiting Alfred Schweitzer, and his stories were fascinating. Rock Hudson talked about his singing lessons and the problems of being such a recognizable star out in public, coping with people in restaurants and department stores and so forth. Most heart-warming, and he was amusing and charming as he can be when he wants to. My favorite interview was Marilyn Maxwell's, who, as an old and dear friend of Jimmy's, was perfectly relaxed and very "real", talking about her zany adventures with Bob Hope on one of his overseas Christmas junkets.

Because of the unusual rapport Jimmy had with each of those interviewed, the tapes were just splendid in many, many, ways and we as a team were very hopeful of quick approval. I never really learned what happened as I was unhappy with the business arrangements from the beginning and stayed in the background. Evidently, the ship sank while being launched, and I think he was too heart-sick to seek out another radio entrepreneur. An awful lot of hours and effort went to waste and what is even more upsetting is that every inch of the tapes was consumed by flames when Jimmy's hilltop home burned to the ground in one of our seasonal fire disasters. Duplicates could have been so easily made, but I was too angry and upset to discuss it. Still am, to be perfectly honest ...

The Dick Cavett Show

by Rusty Morris

This is the best antidote for the "Eleven O'Clock News Blues" to be offered by television.

One either loves Dick Cavett or hates him. He is extremely talented in giving you good reasons for both attitudes, but it may very well be that he suffers from his occasional attacks of the cutes when he himself is bored. Otherwise, if he were to be remembered only for his interviews of Noel Coward, Lunt and Fontanne and Katherine Hepburn, he deserves every accolade one could spare.

This latest series of interviews are without cut-aways for commercials and are generally low-key, warm and rewarding. Occasionally things get so good that he asks the guest to stay over for another show, thus spreading into two half-hour segments. (A visit with former film star Geraldine Fitzgerald comes to mind.)

The spectrum of guests covers statesmen, musicians, authors, television executives, architects, doctors, dancers, entertainers, lawyers, designers, writers, even sports figures such as Muhammad Ali, who was, without doubt, a most charming, amusing and entertaining guest, more relaxed and like himself than ever seen on other TV exposures. Claiming to be the most recognizable human being in every corner of the world, according to reliable polls, he is now eager to utilize this rapport to further world peace and understanding among all races and religions. He is anything but the clown he is fond of presenting himself to be. This summer, KCET repeated some of the shows, and that was frosting on the cake. Two shows featuring Gwen Verdon and three members of the Dance Machine had to be a joy to the heart of anyone owning a video recorder.

Cartoonist Charles Schulz let us know from a beautiful San Francisco origination that *Peanuts* was read by perhaps 100 million people every day around the world, and that he would have preferred calling the strip *Good Ol' Charlie Brown*. The nucleus of a veritable merchandising empire, Mr. Schulz revealed himself to be a most unassuming and modest gentleman, rather flabbergasted at his incredible fame. He fondly recalled that Snoopy is not exactly a figment of his imagination, but is based on a dog he owned and loved at the age of 13, a dog of undetermined heritage, whose many talents included the ability to ring doorbells. The security blanket, which Linus is seldom without, has so crept into the language that it is now to be found in the latest dictionaries.

He is delighted with the worldwide acceptance of the animated film version, enjoying success in many languages, and confessed the biggest problem is finding voices, since of course, the perfect choices quickly out-grow their special qualities. When Cavett conveyed he had been offered the role of Charlie Brown in the Broadway show, Schulz suggested it was possibly due to Cavett's seeming air of innocence masking the fact he didn't know quite what was going on. Fun! When asked if he put himself into the characters he draws, Charles Schulz admitted, "If you read the strip every day, that is me, because everything I know, everything I've ever read, listened to, said, goes into that strip. It's me. There's no more of me, nor is there any less of me."

To which Cavett observed: "Wait a minute, I thought it was me!" And that is probably the secret ingredient in the global success of *Peanuts*: 100 million readers see something of themselves in Good Ol' Charlie Brown!

On a subsequent airing, Cavett presented a dramatic contrast to the woes of being a multi-millionaire creator of everyone's favorite alter-ego in the guest appearance of the controversial British writer, Quentin Crisp. His fascinating autobiography, *The Naked Civil Servant*, has been made into a commendable film starring John Hurt. Limited in its American release, the Los Angeles station which ran it had to re-schedule it almost immediately, due to the public's demand.

A flamboyant homosexual, now in his 70s, Quentin Crisp appeared on Cavett's stage looking rather like Ethel Barrymore, with similar hair-styling and royal poise, in command of every moment, every arch of the brow. His honesty in dealing with himself is genuinely heart-warming, and it is to be hoped that his lecture tour of the United States meets with success. "I'd been led to believe it was a jungle. Americans are so kind and so welcoming, I'm amazed." Small wonder: Not only honest, he's as entertaining as a 20th Century Oscar Wilde.

Cavett explained in the introduction that Crisp had made a radical decision to be himself at an early age, difficult to do in an England hobbled by 1930's societal pressures and moral conventions. In effect, he martyred himself to the cause of a person's right to fully realize his own style and nature and to be accepted on his own terms by everyone. That he's come into his maturity without bitterness, and with a remarkable eloquence and wit is amazing.

Enormously at ease before audiences, he's obviously made friends

Dick Cavett brings informative, challenging conversationalists into our home, expanding the vision of our minds with wit and charm.

with the TV cameras, observing: "Now that television has woven inexplicably into our lives, we are all in the business of acting, all professions whatsoever are also in the profession of acting. If anybody has some terrible habit of which he is ashamed, he should never do it in secret, he should do it on television. Then people don't say 'There's that terrible man over there,' they cross over the road at the risk of losing their own lives, to tell you, 'we saw you on the telly!'"

Crisp can well remember a time when simply shopping for a box of matches to light a stove and cook himself a meal presented a threat to his life: "I've thought about people killing me in the street, because they never attack in single combat, always five or six of them, and you are alone and no one will come to your aid, certainly not the police! The main thing is never to defend yourself. If you do that, you will be killed. Because then they are aroused, it becomes a battle. It's very hard to go on hitting somebody who's fallen to the ground at your feet."

Cavett commented that after seeing *The Naked Civil Servant* that he was impressed by Crisp's bravery in flaunting himself at such a tender age and asked if it had worked any hardship on Crisp's parents. Crisp amused the studio audience by observing, "The trouble with children is that they're not returnable. One of the first things everybody says about people who can be seen to be homosexual, it



Dick Cavett: Beyond commercial television.

you go by the way you are in the street, one of them will turn to the other saying 'how terrible for his mother'—and of course, it's absolutely true, and so if you're going to defy the world, you have to accept the charge that you are selfish. There comes a time, if you leave home when you're about 25, when you become more or less the same age as your parents—and you can talk to them about your life. You

homosexual wants more homosexuals in the world. They want a world in which everyone is free.

Cavett pursued, "What about her great central fear that homosexual teachers, by being admired, would therefore lead the students to homosexuality by openly advocating homosexual lifestyles?"

Mr. Crisp peered down his classic nose and scoffed, "No teacher would advocate a homosexual lifestyle unless he was more interested in publicity than in permanent work! I think that people have got to get used to the fact that no male homosexual is anymore interested in small boys than 'normal' people are interested in small girls."

The inevitable question had to be asked, how had recent success and recognition changed his life? "Style is sincerity. It is finding the means, the words, the gestures, the life that expresses totally who you are. My only ambition is to be totally available, so that everybody knows exactly who I am. I now can worry about next year instead of worrying about next week—and whereas at one time I walked through the world scolding people before they scorned me—now, like everybody who has been on television, I wear a perpetual expression of fatuous affability."

Of course, it is one of the miracles of television that we have come to accept it as a magic carpet, offering escape to other worlds and events around the world (even on the moon), but we must not overlook the magic of a man like Dick Cavett, who brings informative, challenging conversationalists into our homes and to our personal hearths, expanding the vision of our minds with wit and charm—all the while presenting a brilliant persona in a handsome package, even cute on occasion.

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IN 1978, I WAS ASKED TO REVIEW TV SHOWS AND BOOKS by an editor with a PhD and a respect for my opinion. I jumped at an opportunity I hoped might lead to some journalist's privileges, to say nothing of some extra income! Unfortunately, my outlet went bankrupt and I was left with some manuscripts I tried to peddle without any luck (too lengthy). Above, greatly reduced, is the one that made it into print, of which I'm really proud. I received congratulatory letters from writer Quentin Crisp and cartoonist Charles Schulz - Mr. Cavett chose to ignore me.

For awhile, I entertained the idea that I could become a professional tape editor -- it requires extreme patience and a kind of Germanic tenacity, of which I'm well-supplied, genetically. It can also be a very creative process, which appealed to me. But my initial investigations indicated the union situation was formidable to say the very least.

☆ ☆ ☆

In addition to Pooch Portraits, I was licensed to function as Actors Only, with smart business cards that utilized a drama mask I had originally designed back in highschool for our drama department's use on programs and posters.

Little by little, the portrait business built and I was very encouraged by what the prospects implied. Thanks in great part to loans obtained from the AFTRA Credit Union, my garage darkroom was crowded with the best equipment. Cole Lesley provided a new Mamiya-flex camera with interchangeable lenses and piece-by-piece, I had acquired portable lights, stands, carrying cases and so forth, so I could take on most any sort of assignment, including going downtown to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion after a matinee performance of Funny Girl to take portraits of character actor and good friend, Sam Kressen. Great shots, taken on the set, backstage, and out in the auditorium resulted. We were thrilled until we learned to keep them out of sight! Had the production crew known about our innocent activity, we'd have had to pay for a full crew's time. (I should have remembered plays I'd been in, where the photographer always brought his own lighting equipment -- to use the actual set lights means payment to the entire stage crew. A union complication.)

Sam got me two others all lined up from the Funny Girl cast and then I wrecked my car. A total wipe-out in a confrontation with a truck. Not my fault, and I ultimately got a settlement, but for a time, those who wanted photos had to come to me. Having taken photos all over New York City, Glendale (near Pasadena, California) was rather prosaic, but we persevered. Sam returned later in Luther, borrowed his props, wig and costume from the theatre, with permission, and we got some exciting publicity shots in the nearby hills. (See ACTORS ONLY composite on page 110a).

Having seen my Pooch Portrait exhibit in the office of Starcrest Boarding Kennels, actor Earl Holliman asked me to take photographs of his German Shepherds and also of his mother's Boston Bulls. He took advantage of Paul Nathan being in Europe to have me photograph Paul's two dogs as a surprise welcome-home gift, the timing of which was perfect, for the eldest dog died a week or so after his return.

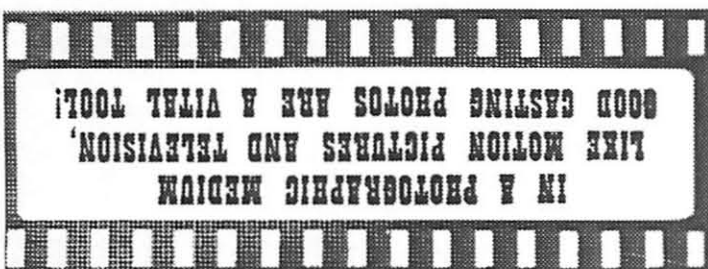
Another time, Earl called me from Paramount, asking me to come over and take a roll of color of him in a handsome turquoise-beaded leather frontier jacket in front of a red stage coach. The results are magazine-cover material, but we got in trouble, for that is a no-no, or was then, in most studios where the still photographers consider the studio grounds their exclusive province. Earl had to do some fast-talking to save the film.

Others I took of him for an After Dark magazine article got me an offer from Viola Swisher to take more of people she'd be interviewing in the future. I was to do it all for my personal publicity as there was no payment involved from any source. I didn't think it was that much of an honor to be in After Dark, another of my thoughtless business decisions.

However, the idea of doing a composite of nineteen of my very best casting portraits on one 8" x 10" glossy occurred to me and I worked very hard to make perfect prints for reduction copying. My old friend, Maxine Woollever, of Hollywood Accessories, did a superb copy-job everyone complimented and predicted great things for. I typed up a price resume and sent the combination out to every agent I could think of, especially the fifty-two who had turned me down as an actor. I felt certain that the unique composite would create lots of interest, for I had seen nothing to compare with it, both in content and in quality and format.

One by one, ALL of them were returned to me marked "REFUSED" -- which meant that I had to pay the return postage as well, since none had been opened -- in effect, agents were saying drop dead.

During periods like that, an understanding Dachshund can be a precious possession -- my "Murphy" lived to be a fat and loving eleven -- possibly the most photographed dog in history.



PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE THEATRICAL ARTS



ACTORS ONLY
A ROLLAND MORRIS ENTERPRISE

☆ THE ILL-FATED COMPOSITE - Being a collection of types and ages, all photo clients I was hoping to help by way of exposure to agents and casting personnel, as five were New Yorkers. Sam Kressen (with cross) is in his costume from "LUTHER" he borrowed from the theatre. He's more himself in the photo below it. Note business card has no phone number ... I was hoping to relocate!

About that time, the new owner of the house my mother was occupying, let us know that his mother was soon to arrive in the United States from Turkey. For her to legally enter this country, she must have a place of residence. Therefore, my mother must move out.

It was a blow. With the dog, it was a real problem as well.

I'd saved the original cartons for most of my gear. Regretfully, I disassembled the perfect darkroom, sick that I had to leave all the electric conduit I'd spent hours installing, for the owner's convenience. I left it a far, far better place than I had found it. I'd lived in a garage for five years without heat, without water, to pay for over \$3,000 worth of darkroom which was packed-up and has been unused since July, 1968.

My Omega enlarger, such a beautiful, vitally-needed piece of modern industrial design, sits like-new in the corner of my dining room now, under a plastic dust-cover, obsolete.

The wall of my hallway is filled with mounted mementoes of the days that were, even to an enlargement of my Navy I.D. photo, complete with freckles, boot haircut and a pout. An actual frame of my 1941 Paramount screen test is there, enlarged and haunting. Two of the plays are represented, some of the radio, the movies, the television. Even the cover of the LP featuring the two dancers in never-never-land. Even the 7-UP ad!

Along one wall of the bedroom, four footlockers stand on end, gathered one-by-one from Carson, Pirie & Scott. They are filled with scripts, contracts, pay vouchers, tear-sheets, expense records, correspondence, resumes, publicity photos, reports, framed autographed photos of such as Joan Crawford, Noel Coward, and yes, Eva Gabor. In the closet are boxes and boxes of catalogued reference material and manuscripts of a novel I spent ten years writing, plus the movie script adaptation I made from it. On the floor sit, unused, a 16mm sound projector, two tape recorders-that-travel, nine cameras. On the rack above are several favorite old suits I could never manage to part with, made to wear while walking down

Fifth Avenue with someone like Noel Coward, on his way to lunch with Helen Hayes, Kit Cornell, Eleanor Roosevelt ... or Marlene, of course.

☆ ☆ ☆

Some legal problems in 1975 necessitated I work off some of the fee due the attorney, so I was introduced into the world of law and ultimately word-processing, learning how to operate the IBM MAG II, the IBM 6240, the A. B. DICK MAGNA II, the LANIER, the QYX-4, the OLYMPIA XTE-II, the WANG plus something of the "Wordstar" and "Script" computer formats.

In addition to many law firms, I've worked for a legal secretarial service (where I learned word-processing), much too many banks, IBM, insurance brokers of national magnitude and questionable ethics (one of them a "sweat shop" operation that hired only Hispanic and Black young housewives who not only worked for lower than established wages, but took work home / obviously out of my milieu, I left after learning the 6240), two cosmetic manufacturers, Max Factor and Indian Earth, and for ARCO, one of the largest oil refiners in the world, where, as a temporary replacement for an executive secretary on maternity leave, both of my bosses were young enough to be my sons! (There's material for a comedy there).

A never-to-be-forgotten job when I first returned from New York was as a typist-janitor in a tax expert's office, where I learned many professional secrets, one of them never to be intimidated by income tax returns! Regretfully, the man's wife worked there, too, and she insisted I clean the place every Friday night. Typical "housework" of a kind, but demeaning in an uncomfortable way after my Gotham highlife, plus her attitude was infuriating.

From there, I worked nights for awhile as a paste-up artist for a local newspaper. As a trainee, I was earning \$1.75 an hour (a far cry from my days as an advertising model) working with punks who resented my presence, especially when, after six weeks trial, I was assigned to laying-out a double-truck market ad, the paper's top account. When I asked for a twenty-five cents per-hour wage

increase and it was vehemently denied on the basis of my tenure and experience, I took my portable radio with it's privacy earphone and like Charlie Chaplin, I walked into the sunset.

For a couple of exciting years, I worked for/with playwright Jerome Lawrence (again) as he labored to produce his beautiful biography: ACTOR - The Life and Times of Paul Muni (Putnam's, 1974). A book could be written on this experience, involving as it did such dedication on Jerry's part, months of research, the material of which I filed in four huge loose-leaf binders, his gathering of photos that had to be organized, copied and returned to sources, my transcribing 372 pages of taped interviews plus typing the manuscript four times, learning the "hard way" that writers earn their money -- even after publication, as I photographed Putnam's party and the subsequent autograph party at a Beverly Hills book shop, both thronged with celebrities.

Few would have been given the opportunity, so I considered it worth every birthpang, an honor, really. Both of us are Cancer Signs, and perfectionists of sensitivity, so the experience cost a relationship I've endeavored to maintain over the years, sending "care" envelopes of clippings of show and book reviews, etc. (I can never forget Lawrence and Lee, for by typing three of their scripts for stage and screen, I earned a Sony color television set which reminds me every day of their interest and support.)

By far the most intriguing job since New York, was that of paste-up artist for a short-lived but extremely well-received (world-wide) legal newsletter: The SexuaLawReporter, a brainchild of brilliant young civil rights attorney, Thomas F. Coleman. It is at this writing on the shelf because Tom's professional success began eating-up thirty-six of every twenty-four hours each day! He was, in the beginning, a neighbor who came to me to type up his very first brief he submitted to the State Supreme Court and we got on so well, he was for a time, like an adopted son.

It was Tom, fresh out of law school, who took me on when a V. A. Therapist urged that I get into the job market and spend more time with people after I had my second cancer operation. Though

he couldn't afford me and ultimately had to get a genuine law clerk in my place, I worked three half-days a week for Tom, typing, doing the bookkeeping, billing, screening calls, processing SLR subscriptions, as well as occasionally coaching him in rudimentary acting skills before juries and the television cameras when the news crews were about to descend on his office for comment.

Handsome, aware and cunning, he's a born actor and has made the most of many natural and developed skills, including writing for legal periodicals and papers. Succeeding so quickly in a field as highly competitive as showbusiness, I feared, with reason, that his new prestige had alienated us and "old" Rusty wasn't needed anymore, but when he was appointed by Governor Brown to be Executive Director of his Commission on Personal Privacy in 1982, Tom, in turn, appointed me as word-processor for the project, knowing he could sit at my side as he had the day we completed that first State Supreme Court brief which meant so much to him.

The job took seven months and is one of my proudest memories. It meant transcribing to paper two hearings (getting every discernable word from a myriad of Los Angeles and San Francisco witnesses exact); it included typing, proofing, revising and playing-back over 1,000 pages, comprising two volumes, one of which is as thick as a phone book. This also involved a close working relationship with Editor Jay Kohorn, another vital young attorney with admirable legal and journalistic acumen. It was a labor of love on the part of more than 200 people and I am so honored and grateful to have played an integral role.

☆ ☆ ☆

At that particular period, my rent was almost doubled. With my mother in a convalescent hospital and the upstairs neighbor's son studying the drums, I decided to move and in the preliminary stages, zigged when I should have zagged. My nephew is a scenic designer for TV and films and had arranged for a Movie Props Rental Warehouse to buy a lot of our furniture -- possessions that went back to my very first 9:00 to 5:00 job.

... We were in the war, finally. I had met with the Draft Board and doom loomed ahead. A neighbor, Lyndon Conner, a man whose daughter Marion I had squired to dances while in school, invited me to come work for him at Union Pacific's Maintenance-of-Way Department as a file clerk. The company still preferred to hire men, so they could be moved-up-the-ladder to managerial posts. His file clerk had been drafted - someone was needed to fill the job. I was elected as he knew he could depend on me -- plus, I could type, not a very gentlemanly skill in those days.

... Yet, they say that if you can type, tend bar or play a piano, you can get a job anywhere in the world. One day, I may write an opus about typing and how it has affected my life! It would surely be dedicated to my very first typing teacher, a woman I remember as a dead-ringer for "Klinger" on M*A*S*H who preached:

"Remember class - typing is like painting a house - if you cawn't do a good job - put away your brushes and SAVE the paint!"

... So it was that I went to the railroad yards and filed and typed up accident reports in the days before electric typewriters and when five carbon-copies were the norm and xerox had never been dreamed-of! Knowing my time as a civilian was limited, I splurged the money I earned on things to make our home prettier and to take the gloom out of my mother's eyes: lamps, mirrors, rugs, drapes, dishes, glassware, table linens, continuing even from Iwo Jima, when I wrote to Los Angeles' Barker Brothers for a Governor Winthrop Secretary Desk.

Forty years later, all this, including an O'Keefe & Merritt gas range I'd bought with my Veteran's Bonus, was to be carted away by men from the scenic rental studio. I'd not moved the stove since I painted the kitchen. I wanted to vacuum behind it before they came. An unfortunate mistake ...

Barely able to stand the next day, I sadly watched as a four-man team erased years of memories from the rooms, floors, even the walls. It wasn't easy to come to terms with, but I thought a lot of trouble was over, not knowing it had only begun.

I could just barely sit, stand and walk due to a slipped-disk (as later ascertained). But I kept on the job and finished up The Report of the Commission on Personal Privacy out of loyalty to Tom and for Auld Lang Syne. I was dreadful to get along with, even the driving to and from work was often extremely difficult, with times I didn't think I could get into my car or out of it. I don't know how they put up with me, but they did. Sleep was almost impossible, but I managed, thanks to a painkiller called Zomax, which killed five people that year.

Fortunately, I was working 2:30 until 10:00 p.m, so was able to barely continue the moving chore, which took two months instead of two weeks at most, since I had to depend on the availability of help from chums (even Tom Coleman took my wardrobe trunk out of a storeroom and came over and wrestled my refrigerator into place).

Meanwhile, in agony, I was being tested and evaluated by no less than twelve doctors at the V. A. Oncology, Orthopedics and Neurology Clinics. One doctor, a young woman who got me out of my scivvies and poked around my anal area with a needle, announced I had the classic symptoms of a spinal tumor and if I wasn't operated on within twenty-four hours, I'd spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair.

Her final patient of the day, she had to help me to my car, meanwhile listening to the facts: I had to be out of my apartment by midnight or I would be sued not only by the landlord, but by the family of four moving-in the next morning. Furious, she told me she would no longer be responsible, a great stroke of luck!

No sleep that night. At 7:30 a.m. I walked into my mother's room at the convalescent home to explain things. The day-to-day diary I was keeping for the benefit of my sister in Memphis, gives this little scene to help remember my dear little mama:

"July began with an early visit to Mom at 7:30 a.m. I was on my way to the VA hospital, facing up to a spinal operation to prevent paralysis from the hips down (or so I had been told).

At age 60, I was beyond the point of caring much after all the knives that have carved on me, but I hated the idea of leaving Mom all alone with absolutely no one to look in on her after my daily visitations of fifteen months.

I found her sleeping peacefully, but I managed to kneel by the bed with my knees resting on her slippers and kissed her. She opened her eyes and said: "Rusty, is that YOU?" I reassured her it was and explained that the gas stations in the area didn't open until 8:00 a.m. so I was going to spend the waiting-time with her while she had breakfast.

"Are you glad to see me?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. I was always crazy about you. I asked God to give me a son, and he did."

"He gave you a lulu!"

"He gave me a prize ..."

Anyway, was fun watching her put away a breakfast. She was in much better spirits and I was so grateful it wasn't going to be a heavy scene. I told her why I was there and what was about to happen -- leaving out the mention of being crippled.

As she sat on the edge of her bed, eating breakfast, a piece of bacon in her hand, she listened with no special reaction* - I don't know what she understood or how she really felt, but she said in her little-girl-manner, yet playing Mom:

"If I've learned anything in my life, it's that everything happens for a reason, and for whatever reason, we have to accept it, do the best we can to make the best of it and move on. Go, and let them help you and don't worry about me. Just know I love you, and will be thinking of you."

I was promptly hospitalized and spent the morning with a wet cloth over my eyes, tearfully re-running in my mind, the scene with my mother. Two young Neurologists came to my bed, examined me and prohibited me from getting out of bed for any reason, even to go to the bathroom.

* *Alzheimer's Disease*

Okay, it wasn't unusual, but it was worrisome.

My lunch came, but I didn't touch it. This was noted by a Dr. Kildare-type who seemed upset I was hiding behind a washcloth on such a pretty July First. Though he looked like a Highschool Senior, he introduced himself as Dr. Wiecks and explained rather self-consciously that, due to Presidential cut-backs in health care, I would not be "permitted" to stay over the Fourth of July Holiday, that I was to get up, get dressed and go home!

I was flabbergasted and reminded him of the purported need for an immediate operation or I'd be crippled from the waist down, or so Doctor X had informed me after an hour of examination. Obviously, he knew Doctor X, because he let me know that an operation was a very real possibility, but it would be based upon something a lot more scientific and medically reliable than pin-pricks.

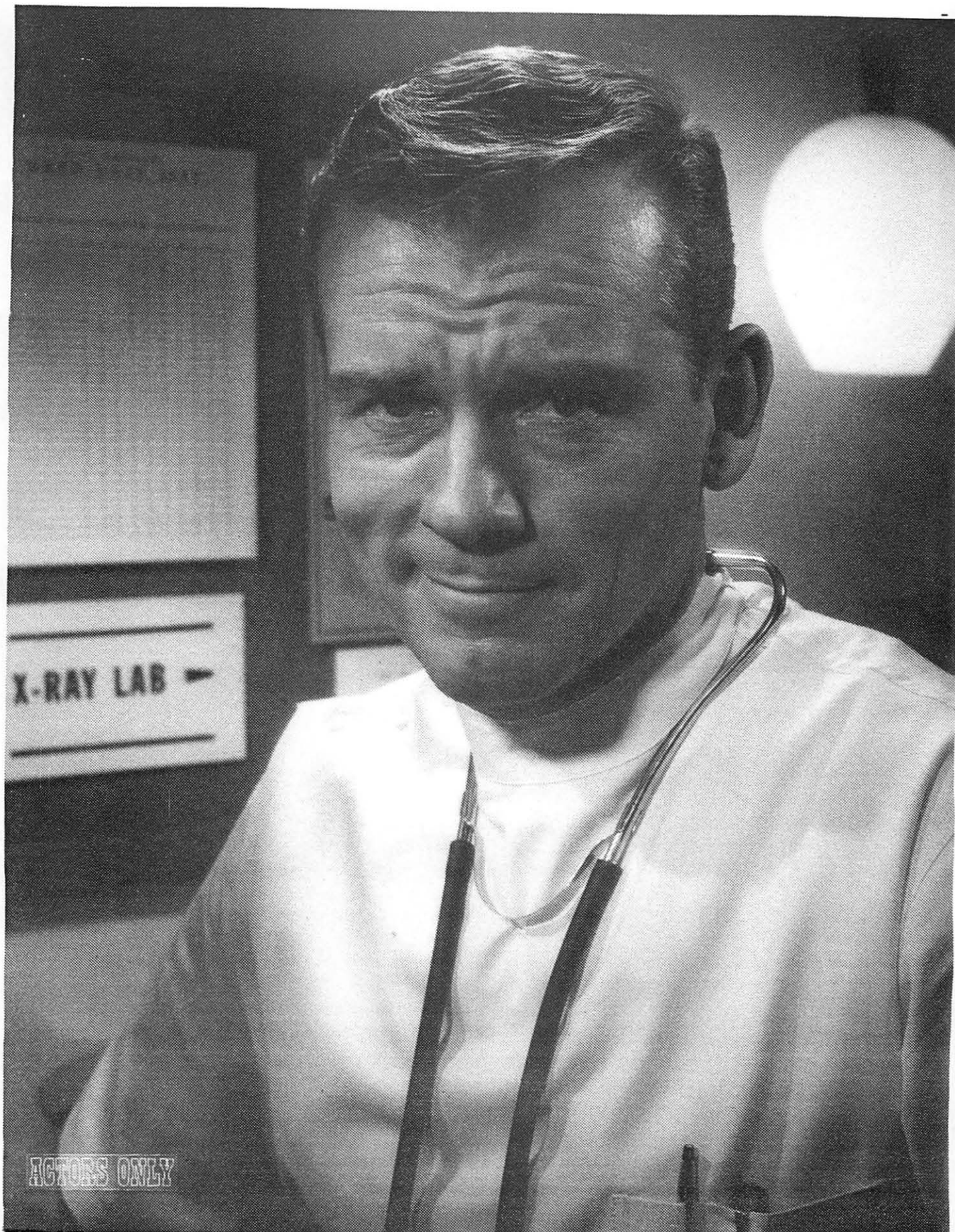
To his consternation, I became almost violent, letting him know what I thought of a doctor who would scare the daylights out of me in such a thoughtless manner -- that it not only wasn't fair to me, it wasn't fair to my family nor friends. Totally agreeing with me, he gave me a prescription for more Zomax and bid me goodbye.

At supper that night, my little mama told me all about a dream she'd had in which I'd visited her for breakfast ...

☆ ☆ ☆

If former actor President Reagan was responsible for a most anxious weekend, the tests that soon came about painfully indicated that a spinal operation would not be approved in my case.

My telephone rang the very next morning (July 2), requesting me to return to the V. A. Hospital in Sepulveda, forty miles away, for a test that afternoon. It was called an Electromyogram that involves about two dozen needles, resultant bleeding, and a Sony television set tuned into the patient by means of long wires connected to all the needles placed at assorted depths into assorted places. I sure didn't care for the program and the color was dreadful and the sound was worse. So much for the real me on TV!



"DR. KILDARE" - I've met only four, but one of them, Dr. John Chizen of Santa Monica, saved my life in 1974 so I could write this memoir. This is one of my favorite self-portraits, taken in my Greenwich Village kitchen, hoping to land a role on a TV soap-opera around 1960. Didn't get the part ... too young. Those were the days!

Fascinated as I am by the inroads of television into medicine (I've seen my liver sparkling like stardust on a Sony), I was even more fascinated by Dr. Kamur. She was from India, complete with a Sari visible under her white coat, complete with that little dot of lipstick between her eyebrows. She winced along with me as each needle was inserted, often expressing regret if it hurt. At the end of the session, we sat at a small table, she placed her hands over mine and in formal words, but dulcit tones, assured me that, in her professional opinion at least, there was no spinal cancer.

Because the 4th of July happened to fall on a Sunday, I wasn't re-admitted into the hospital until July 6th, where I fell prey to a Viennese specialist only the young Residents could understand. I did sense he was trying to "trick" me and could read the surprise on his face and the reaction from the others around the bed when I failed all around. More pin-pricks, none of which I could feel anywhere on my feet or on my legs up to my knees (and he was hardly as delicate and dainty as the ding-dong Doctor X). So, he ordered a Myelogram test. I regret I had no way of copying the Release one must sign, for it listed (as I recall) seven possibilities leading to death as a result of the test!

Only Hitler deserves a Myelogram, a spinal puncture to obtain a fluid sample for analysis, then insertion of a radio-opaque dye into the spinal column, AND THEN being trussed by-the-feet to a table that tips head-down. The camera is also an electronic fluoroscope, so as one lies there next to yet another Sony big-screen TV set, one sees his spinal column actually moving as he is positioned into place by the assistants.

It takes an hour because each and every x-ray is over-sized and must be processed and checked before the next one is taken. The doctor in charge was very particular. He wore a large leaded apron to his chin (I was totally naked). When I remarked that he looked as though he was baking something, he said: "I am - you!"

My dentist claims that I have a high threshold for pain, so bad as the Myelogram was, I seemed none the worse for the experience. What I didn't know is that a "train" rolls across you about four hours later -- I hardly dared breathe, even move my eyeballs or touch my teeth together!

Medical Center

16111 Plummer Street
Sepulveda CA 91343

July 26, 1982

In Reply Refer To: 665/11

Rolland R. Morris
Box 6747
Glendale, CA 91205

Dear Mr. Morris:

I am deeply appreciative of your very nice letter concerning Dr. Jiero Marin. I hope that most of our patients receive good care. I know that once in a while we do slip as all human endeavors do. We usually hear it when we do something wrong and not very often when we do something right. Your letter, however, was one of a kind and I am very grateful to you for taking the time to say what you did. I have sent it on to Dr. Marin. Again, let me thank you for your letter and let me hope that we can continue to take care of you and do a proper job.

Best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Wiley F. Barker'.

WILEY F. BARKER, M.D.
Chief of Staff

* V. A. Medical Center in Sepulveda, California is a teaching hospital and while I've had some unfortunate experiences, I wouldn't want to make anyone think comments made on pages 116-120 indicate unusual dissatisfaction. It's probable that I wouldn't be here were it not for this remarkable facility where the nurses, both male and female, were always "angels of mercy". In July of 1982, I was moved to write a letter of commendation to the Chief of Staff about one of the doctors - his reply is above ... Dr. JIERO MARIN, from Ecuador, was number two in the progression of the twelve who treated me and it was he who immediately diagnosed the problem after a brief examination in triage. None-the-less, a six-week study was made, which included tomography, myelography and electromyography, which eventually confirmed his opinion that there was nerve root injury resulting from a disk protrusion. I very much wanted to establish his professionalism as a young Resident - it could have saved a great deal of time, expense and pain. - RM

My Neurologist, a frumpy woman who costumed herself in a parachute jumpsuit she thought made her sexy and adorable, had been on duty over the Fourth, so she had taken off, leaving me in the care of a skinny young sadist who seemed to enjoy my tears of excruciating pain and gave me codeine only when I assured him they'd hear me in the next building and proceeded to prove it. I recall only that his name rhymes with spaghetti, but bless his T-shirted, blue-jeaned heart, he authorized another prescription for Zomax, so now I can stop the world and get off should it ever become necessary.

Somehow Friday passed into Saturday which passed into Sunday when I at last felt up to driving myself home. I came through, thanks to caring nurses, dim voices in a pain-filled void. I was under orders to continue weekly therapy, but since that involved Jump-Suit-Judy and the Skinny-Spaghetti-Spook, I stayed home in bed on a board for almost four months. The V.A. had given me forms on which to file for Disability, but the State insisted I was self-employed and didn't qualify.

☆ ☆ ☆

Time seemed to be taking its toll ...

1969 was the date of my first cancer operation (benign) and 1974 the second (malignant), two of six necessary hospitalizations since World War II.

My dear-and-darling-best-friend-I've-ever-had went to that Big-Dog-House-in-the-Sky in 1973. (Heartworm, contracted I fear, on the canyon roads of the Malibu area during my many months there, holding down the fort during Jerome Lawrence's absences abroad.)

In March of 1983, my little 88-year-old mama finally got her wish to get some rest -- for four anxious weeks, the hospital had denied it to her after she fell, broke her hip and had a prosthesis surgically implanted. I'm convinced that what modern hospitals do to the elderly in order to build-up their Medicare payment is just plain criminal. In my mother's case, it was almost \$50,000 and amounted to simple torture on a daily basis. Detailed in my daily

diary kept over the period, to write now of all that pain has been totally impossible. Thanks to that diary, the three attending physicians AND the hospital, one of the finest in this area, have stayed a mile away.

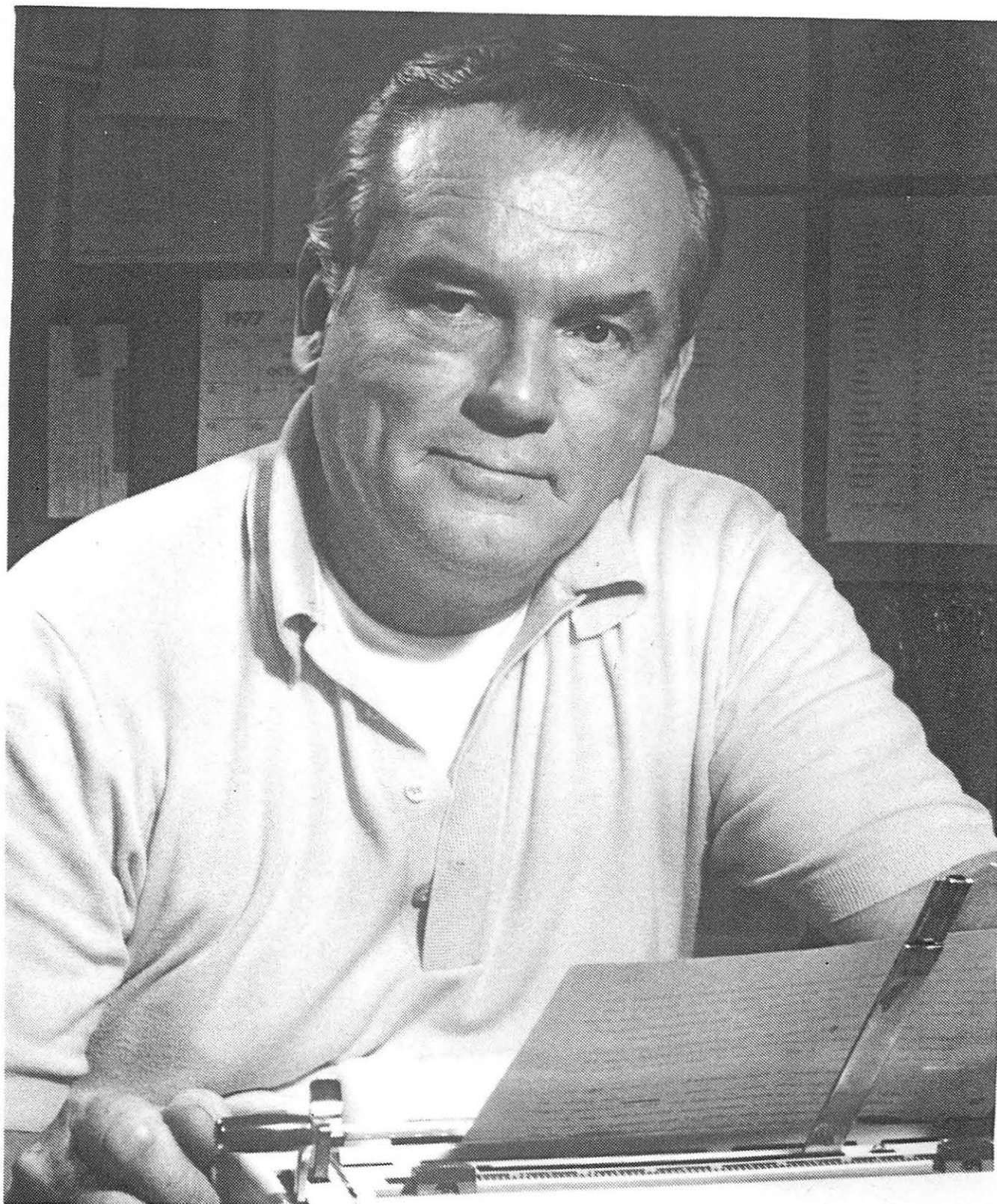
The State agencies overseeing convalescent hospitals have also ignored me. I felt I had grounds for legal action, inasmuch as my mother managed to walk 144 steps down a long hall with a walker, past a Nurse's Station (where were they?) and out a door into a parking lot, where she fell. It was dusk, no one knew she was out there until a patient's daughter drove in, almost ran over her and solicited help. The blood was in the parking spot, the one I generally used every day, until the next rain.

When I was physically and emotionally able to approach an attorney about all of it, I found out that the Statute of Limitations on Accidental Death had expired three weeks before I visited his office. Since I myself had been flat-on-my-back, unable to work, the only person who could claim actual damages was dead.

Though she'd had life insurance for years, she lived long enough for it to mature and so she cashed it in and added it to her savings account, which helped her to two years of convalescent care along with \$450 per month from my sister and \$450 per month from a has-been actor who'd managed to set a little aside for a rainy day, not a deluge. My sister and I picked out a sylvan burial plot we love. Last in a row, it's near a wall accompanied by tall pines. There was no funeral or graveside services, though my sister somehow managed to watch the actual burial. I couldn't.

Later, I had my father's ashes transferred from Oregon, and they, along with a Veteran's Administration headstone that spells out "Rolland" with two L's, is side-by-her's, as it should be ... they loved one another once.

☆ ☆ ☆



LAST PHOTO - We grow up with a mental image of ourselves as we appear in our mirrors. Which isn't very sensible, because that is a "reverse" image and is why we often look at a photo and think it doesn't look like us at all. I've always photographed better than I actually looked -- the camera was kind. To be photographed as often as I was for so many years, then realize THIS is the most recent one on-hand is kinda strange. I took it back in 1977 so as to have one for the dust-jacket of my novel. The novel has never been published and there has been no reason for a photograph ever since -- the camera was still kind. I hesitate to change my luck ...

UNION NEWS: For all my years as a professional actor, I do not qualify for a pension from Actor's Equity Association, The American Federation of Radio and Television Artists, or The Screen Actors Guild. Nor will my Social Security, as itemized, pay so much as my monthly apartment rental. (Too much of my work since 1962 has been as an independant contractor, so I've been told).

Fantastic composer-lyricist Jerry Herman advises in Mame: "Open a new window ..." so it appears that the actor who almost made it, will have to get back in make-up and try to rate a few more curtain-calls.

Already, I'm on Actor Jimmy Coco's wonderful diet, and will soon be getting some self-photographed 8" x 10" glossies circulated, making some phone calls and going to a few auditions.

Again.

It will be interesting to try for a few roles as a doctor, lawyer, corporate chief. Grandfathers, surely, as the "rusty" is fading on top as it also disappears!

I even think that, with my interest in photography, I could direct, or at least contribute behind the cameras in some useful way. Or write -- they do say I have a knack for arranging words.

Yes, somehow, somewhere inside me, Orphan Annie still lives.

★



October, 1984

AN ADDENDUM RE: NOEL COWARD and COLE LESLEY

As noted, my friendship with Cole Lesley did not end with that bus pulling out of the airport bus terminal in mid-town Manhattan. Events brought him back to New York City and to my village apartment where we enjoyed a festive evening of good conversation, some of it recorded for posterity (?) since we re-created the dictation sequence, the sound of the typing and so forth. Topped at last by my first confrontation with baking those dear little Cornish Game Hens.

And of course, he arranged for me to see "SAIL AWAY", though I was sad not to be able to participate in behind-the-scenes work as before. Simply stated, I was too busy professionally. I think a fellow named Geoffrey Johnson helped out and ultimately wound-up as the New York Representative for Noel Coward. That came about, I believe, after I returned to the west coast, and continues today. I do not know Geoffrey Johnson.

After leaving that sorrowful day, Coley flew through friendly skies to San Francisco, delighted to rid himself of the cold and misery he left behind. As soon as time permitted, he wrote from the west coast to keep me informed ... thus, very simply and ever-lastingly until the day he died, began a friendship-by-mail that included charming letters, postal cards, greeting cards, photos, books and gifts over the next twenty-two years. On occasion, there might be a twenty-dollar bill, urging me to rush out and buy the LP albums Oh, Coward and Cowardy Custard or some best-selling book like The Thornbirds, he insisted that I read a.s.a.p. I was invited to special performances and New York and London galas I couldn't possibly attend during my dark days in the garage. As it wasn't sensible to cheer me up by long-distance from Switzerland, he made letter tapes on cassettes -- his were always keepsakes, complete with the tinkle of ice in the glass at hand. (Who says the English don't like cold drinks?)

When a photographer came to Les Avants to document the interior of Le Chalet Coward, I got a set of surplus prints. Coley was given

a Polaroid color camera and became the unofficial staff photographer capturing on film the major visitors (see samples in Noel Coward and His Friends, William Morrow, 1979). I got a few of the funnier ones -- Coley, for instance, was capable of sitting in even a soft-cushioned easy chair and raising his leg into the air, straight as a flagpole, with not a hint of a bend at the knees, something even professional dancers are usually incapable of -- and someone had snapped him thus, teacup at the ready!

The day he received his first personal copy of The Life Of Noel Coward from Cape, the London publisher, he set a copy up near a sunny window and photographed it with his Polaroid, so proud was he to share the thrill of it. (A priceless subway poster he sent me advertising his book, has been laminated to tempered masonite and now decorates a wall in my office.)

Cape also sent advance copies to a list of theatrical contacts provided by Coley, who obligingly returned complimentary comments suitable for the book's publicity. He was thrilled by Sir Harold Hobson's verdict:

"In its vividness and attractiveness of style, it is one of the best biographies of our time."

and especially touched by character actor Robert Morley writing:

"What makes Cole Lesley's biography unique is that, fascinated as one is by the doings of The Master, one becomes completely enthralled by the dedication of Mr. Lesley himself, and one finishes the book with the knowledge of what, I think, the author least wanted to impart -- how much his selfless devotion contributed to Sir Noel's achievements."

This may well be (so far as I know) the first publication of this discerning tribute, for typically, the self-effacing Coley permitted the publisher to use only the four words: "One becomes completely enthralled." All of it meant so much to him he was anxious to share it with me, and it is quoted from a personal letter I received. Thus, it is now mine to share with everyone.

☆ ☆ ☆

Sir Noel Coward died on March 26, 1973 of a heart attack suffered in his little private house atop a hill he affectionately named Firefly at Kingston, Jamaica -- a quiet retreat he had built in which to work when Blue Harbour, the main house below on the beach, was crowded with visiting friends. He was only 73, a man who had never attended school and could not read or write a note of music, yet, he had entertained millions the world over for several generations -- a timeless writer, composer, a friend of Presidents and Kings -- knighted in 1970 by Queen Elizabeth, twenty years after he had declined the same honor from her father, King George VI.

He was buried two days later on the grounds of his home, overlooking the sea he adored. At the graveside services attended by local dignitaries and townspeople alike, it was only fitting that Coley finally emerge from the shadows and deliver the last goodbye -- a quotation selected by Lord Olivier, from the Second Book of Esdras, Chapter 8, Verses 52-54, which say in part:

For unto you is paradise opened ... sorrows are passed,
and in the end is showed the treasure of immortality.

Soon afterward, the treasured red-and-blue-bordered airmail envelope with Coley's distinctive handwriting, arrived to let me know:

"Rusty ... the service was perfectly lovely, the sun shone, the property looked its most beautiful, and even more important, most peaceful. The men wore white, the women their prettiest dresses and all the villagers came in the bright colours which Master loved ... Our gardeners insisted on digging his grave, working two days and two nights, walled it and painted it white, with beautiful long fern hanging down from the top. It faces the sea, towards the glorious view he loved so dearly ... when all was over and he was covered with a blanket of flowers, about six close friends, Graham and I, took our sunset drinks, sat on the grass, toasted him and tried to thank him for everything ... we have been surrounded by love -- so many heartbreakingly touching cables from all over the world -- which gave us help and strength and great comfort. How lucky we have been (and are) to have such friends.

- Love, COLEY."

The showbusiness tradepaper, Variety, disclosed that Sir Noel left bequests to a "small galaxy" of showbusiness friends, but that eventually all royalties from his plays, songs, books and poems will go to aid indigent English actors through the Actors Charitable Trust in London. However, during their lifetimes, the bulk of his estate was to be shared equally by Cole Lesley and Graham Payn, his two faithful assistants over the years.

In a very real sense, the Secretree's Assistant was remembered as well by a very generous Cole Lesley, who stayed on seven more years in Chalet Coward, overlooking Lake Geneva, Switzerland, as he laboriously wrote out in longhand his celebrated 480-page biography of The Master ("Master did it this way, so must I," he wrote me.) I had insisted on coming over and typing his manuscript -- just like the old days. Assuring me he had plenty of help, he began sending me \$200 every birthday and \$300 every Christmas ... this IBM Selectric II Typewriter he suggested in memory of the Royal Portable, suitable for lap-sitting.

☆ ☆ ☆

Cole Lesley died sometime during the night of January 3/4, 1980. The cook found him in the morning, with a favorite book still open under his arm, his bed-lamp still glowing, a slight smile on his face. So I was informed by Arts Editor of Punch, Sheridan Morley, who added, "We buried him in the grave he had chosen overlooking Lake Geneva on a marvelous, clear, frosty January morning."

Although I received three letters from Coley during the week following his death, all happy, excited letters telling of Christmas, promising details "after the 6th", it was not until April that I located and heard from the very thoughtfully kind son of actor Robert Morley, and co-author with Coley of the beguiling scrapbook called Noel Coward and His Friends (Wm. Morrow & Co., 1979).

One is apt not to delve into letters and postcards and tele-

"If there has been a better or more fascinating theatrical biography in the last fifty years, it has not come my way"

REMEMBERED LAUGHTER by COLE LESLEY THE LIFE OF NOEL COWARD

AT THE tender age of 7, Noel Pierce Coward made his debut in a school recital, bringing down the house with his rendition of a charming ditty entitled "Coo." His success was to prove no flash in the pan. Over the next sixty-odd years, Coward would win fame not only as a singer but also as a playwright, composer, director and actor. He would become the star everyone applauded, the celebrity everyone feted, the wit everyone quoted. In this full-scale biography, Cole Lesley, Coward's companion, secretary and confidant for nearly forty years, gives us a fascinating close-up of the man Alexander Woolcott aptly dubbed "Destiny's Tot."

"This is a treasure-trove of anecdotes and memorabilia, a richly illustrated, affectionate love letter to a treasured friend, a musical with a cast that includes Beatrice Lillie, Tallulah Bankhead, Lawrence of Arabia, Gertrude Lawrence, Laurence Olivier and George Bernard Shaw."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

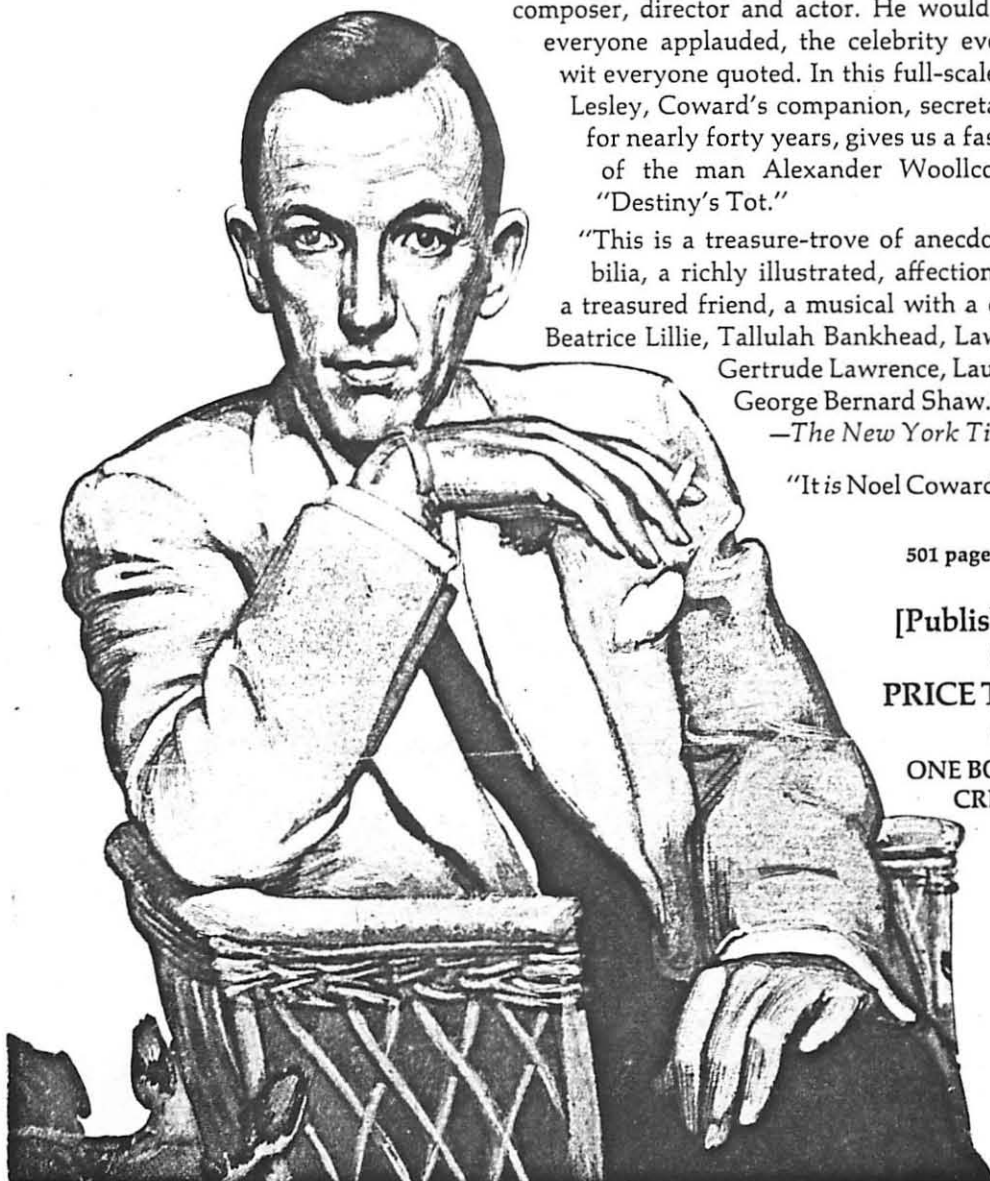
"It is Noel Coward."—Lauren Bacall

501 pages • 77 photographs

[Publisher's list price:
\$12.95]

PRICE TO MEMBERS:
\$10.95

ONE BOOK-DIVIDEND
CREDIT GIVEN



grams and taped correspondence during such an interim of wonder and anxiety. Instead, I contented myself with the memory of a last and final meeting:

... I last saw Cole Lesley during his hectic visit to L.A. to plug his newly-published and highly regarded biography of Noel Coward Remembered Laughter - The Life of Noel Coward (Knopf, 1979) on the DINAH SHORE SHOW of January 27, 1977.* He telephoned me from Malibu, where he was staying briefly, to announce his arrival. I recorded our conversation to replay and enjoy the excitement of it all. Due to transportation problems, he felt we couldn't get together until the day of the show two days away, at which time he would call so we could make plans for meeting.

The day came and he called from CBS' Television City Studios to say that he was involved with Merle Oberon, who had appeared on the show also, and that the only time left was after he saw Merle home, as she had been entirely responsible for his appearing on the show, so could I meet him as late as 10:00 p.m. at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel? I could indeed, disappointed no dinner would be part of it.

As he poured us drinks in his suite, he proudly showed off the wires and flowers and notes received from many well-wishers, alas, not I. We sat and relaxed and talked like the old days, laughing at his adventures in getting about town from Malibu without a car and his "nerves" at the idea of appearing with "Darling Dinah" on network television. "No worse than the dentist, really." He was curious to look through two boxes of color portraits I had taken of local actors and actresses utilizing photo equipment obtained with the birthday and Christmas checks he'd sent since Sir Noel had left him the bulk of his estate. The photos were impressive and he was very complimentary, expressing regret that I had not been the one to do his portrait for the dust-jacket of his book.

So much to talk about, so little time and it was apparent he was weary-to-the-bone. When I discovered he had an early plane to catch, I took the hint, expressing amazement that two hours could pass so quickly. During our walk to the elevators, he divulged that he'd only just learned his biography had been selected by the Book-of-the-Month-Club. I told him I'd always heard it was an absolute guarantee of an additional 100,000 sales in America. He looked a

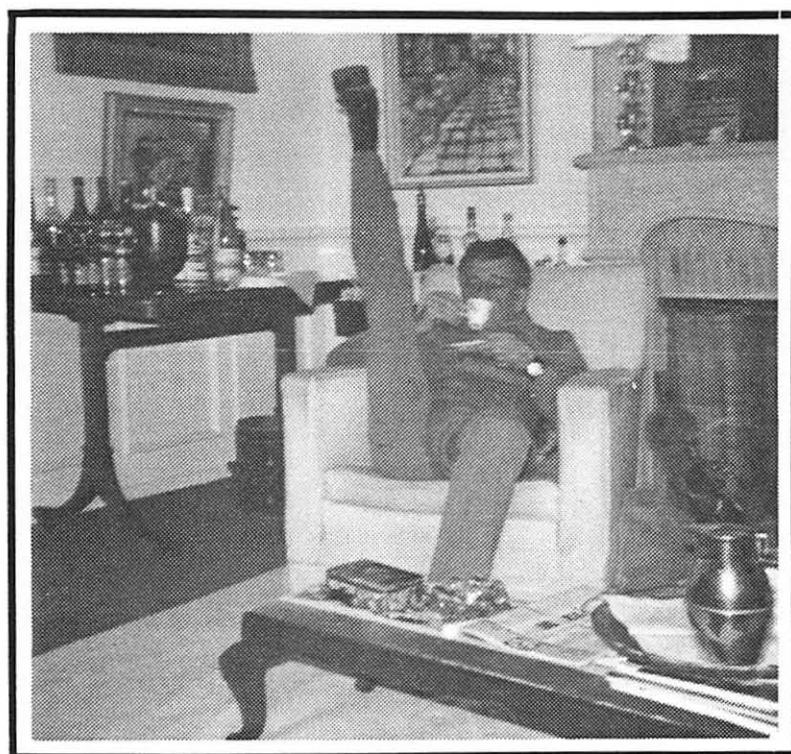
* Taped November, 1976

bit startled and muttered "Crikey!", a Cockney expression of amazement. Into the elevator he came, asking "Are you sure?" (he always pronounced it shore).

He was staying in the new wing, the auto entry of which opens into a quiet Beverly Hills side-street. Suddenly, he insisted that he'd walk me to my car, which he did. I had parked it at the next corner, under a street light. As we approached it, I pointed and said, "See those aluminum mag-wheels and those new radial tires? A very dear friend who lives in Switzerland gave them to me this summer!" He giggled a throaty cigarette-smoker's laugh and said, "Veddy sweet, indeed!" (a Coward-ism) and layed his arm across my back.

However, he stayed on the corner as I crossed the intersection, got into the car, and through tears, waved goodbye. Since both of us dreaded farewells intensely, that was all, except for a short "toot" on the horn as I drove into the dark and on back over to Glendale.

When I wrote later, asking WHY he'd walked all that way to my car at that hour of the night, as obviously tired as he was, he answered simply: "I thought perhaps I'd never see you again."





Ben Wilson

Cole Lesley

Cole Lesley, 70, Aide Of Noël Coward Did Biography of Writer

By C. GERALD FRASER

Cole Lesley, who began his career as Sir Noël Coward's valet and cook and later became the playwright's secretary and biographer, died in his sleep last Friday at Chalet Coward, which had been Sir Noël's home, at Les Avants sur Montreux, Switzerland. He was 70 years old.

Mr. Lesley had been scheduled to visit the University of Southern California next month to participate in a Noël Coward tribute.

In 1977, Mr. Lesley wrote "Remembered Laughter, the Life of Noël Coward." Last year, with his companion, Graham Payn, and Sheridan Morley, he wrote another Coward book: "Noël Coward & Friends." This book included pictures, programs, letters, sheet music, lyrics and memorabilia associated with the multitalented writer.

Stayed for 37 Years

Mr. Lesley, who was born in Farningham, in Kent, has been described as a stagestruck youth who was neither a cook nor a valet when he went to work in 1936 for Sir Noël to serve in both capacities. But he stayed on for 37 years, becoming Sir Noël's companion, until the playwright's death in Jamaica in 1973.

One result of the association was Mr. Lesley's massive, authorized and sympathetic biography, "Remembered Laughter," for which he used the letters, diaries and notebooks his employer had made available to him.

Writing in The New York Times Book Review, Mel Gussow described the book as "a treasure trove of anecdotes and memorabilia, a richly illustrated affectionate love letter to a treasured friend, a musical with a cast that includes Beatrice Lillie, Tallulah Bankhead, Lawrence of Arabia, Gertrude Lawrence, Laurence Olivier and George Bernard Shaw."

Rolland Roe Morris, Junior, was reluctant to come into this world, arriving almost two weeks late at approximately ten o'clock on the evening of June 23, 1922. When he was subsequently introduced to his mother, appearing as he did with three inches of very bright red hair, she broke into sobs and ordered: "Take him back, he isn't mine!"

The scene of this little hospital drama was Littleton, Colorado, near Denver, where Junior was not accepted at his mother's bosom until it was proven to her satisfaction that he was the only baby born there that night. A former waitress, Lucy Mae (27) and her very skinny auto mechanic husband, Rolland, Senior (31 - known forever to his friends and co-workers as just plain "Bill", never Rolland), met each other on a blind-date arranged by a mutual friend who also worked at the same repair facility, Bill Moser.

Both Rolland and his personable wife (known as "Chubby") decided to move from their apartment building soon after bringing their baby son home, as a result of sly jokes made at their expense by teasing friends ... it seems there was a red-haired janitor on the premises and both Mom and Dad had hair of an almost ebony black!

Three years later, a diminutive sister named LoRene Mabel joined Junior, so tiny during her formative years, they feared she was a midget.

The Depression, combined with "Bill's" ill-health, caused the family to migrate to California in 1927, arriving the day Lindbergh landed in Paris. For one thing, "Bill" had been blown through the roof of a garage when an acetylene tank exploded, and for another, the gaseous fumes of garage interiors seemed to create symptoms alarmingly similar to TB. However, things were just as depressed in Los Angeles and Lucy was so homesick for her four brothers and three sisters (a fourth, Mabel, had recently died very tragically), that she cried every day. So, the little family returned to Denver, settling on the North Side, a generous mixture of Irish and Italian families.

It was there, in 1928, that Junior reluctantly started attending school (Ashland Elementary), learning to read and write with a speed that amazed teachers and parents alike. He was learning how to tell time when his father received a better job offer back in Los Angeles, also arranged by Bill Moser.

They arrived with a total fortune of \$20 to their names, but it was enough in those days to pay a month's rent in advance on a furnished two-bedroom home on West Gage Avenue (near the Mosers, who loaned them grocery money), with schools close-by and a large front and back yard for the children.

Lucy had a budget of only fifty cents a day to feed a family of four, sending school lunches off with the two tots who walked hand-in-hand up to 68th Street Grammar School, where in 1933, Junior was separated from others in the 4th Grade and put into a room called "Opportunity A". Although this was an honor of sorts, he never got over the feeling of being somehow different. For the next two years, he stayed in the same room with the same teacher, a gentle saint named Mrs. Burr, coordinating specific studies for classmates who ranged from 4th through the 6th grade. Everyone studied the same basics, including Music Appreciation with Miss Blythe and Spanish with Miss Hoffman. Rolland (with two upsetting L's instead of just one like a Knight they were studying for The Age of Chivalry) discovered that (a) he had a knack for writing when compositions of his appeared in the school paper, The Pen and Pencil, and (b) he had a natural gift for acting, participating in school plays directed by yet another favorite teacher, Mrs. Hill. She had an important influence on his young life, encouraging his artistic talents in every way she could: "Let the others hit the ball with that silly bat, that's all that some of them can do," she advised in her Southern drawl.

Eventually, John Muir Junior High School was not far away either, but Rolland, Junior, decided to roller-skate and for years roller-skated through the entire area, having been denied a bicycle. There were no playmates on his immediate street, so it gave him a chance to explore as well as develop a knack for self-reliance.

The opportunity to appear in the Graduation Play of 1937 initiated his real interest in dramatics, another form of expression, which was further developed at George Washington High School, 1937-1940. A trick of fate, for it had been arranged that he attend this school instead of the one in his own district (John C. Fremont) because his homeroom teacher at Muir and her art teacher husband decided that Rolland's talents as a would-be artist could best be nurtured at Washington.

As it happened, he disliked all of his art teachers with one exception and by a system of electives, really concentrated on journalism and drama, becoming a radio columnist on the school paper, The Surveyor, tying it in with

his interest in radio drama as an art form while a member of an active campus organization called The Washington Radio Guild, which presented programs and shows not only at Washington, but also on local radio stations as well as other schools. (He was always The Announcer). An interview for his column led to his regular appearance 1938-1941 on a network dramatic series aimed at teenagers. Being featured in the 1939 Senior Class play Seventeen gave him confidence to try out for a professional play that summer: The Great American Family, in Santa Barbara and San Francisco.

Summer 1940 found him graduating with honors, deciding to concentrate on radio acting as a career instead of commercial art or architecture as hoped-for by his parents. He enrolled in the radio drama courses at Los Angeles City College under the tutelage of an amazing academician and coach, former actress Vocha Fiske. However, it proved to be unchallenging to a young man who was, in fact, appearing on 108 stations every Saturday via the Mutual network. He dropped out of LACC after six months, and was in Detroit, working in his first motion picture when he learned the radio series was cancelled. This after an unsuccessful screen test at Paramount.

World War II, so far as America was concerned, was "waiting in the wings" and involved everyone following the attack on Pearl Harbor -- even would-be thespians. Against family pressure, Rolland joined the Navy and for the next three and one-half years went into Pacific limbo which included duty aboard ship in the Aleutian Islands (south and west of Alaska) and ultimately at Iwo Jima (north and to the east of Guam). Not content with being just a Radioman, Second Class, Rolland, now "Rusty",* also functioned when required, as a Yeoman, Signalman, Sonarman, and Storekeeper. As operator of the ship's store, he received an additional \$15 per month, on which he lived, sending everything else home. He also wrote magazine features which were never approved by the Area Command Censors who felt Iwo Jima was too sensitive an area to warrant the publicity. His only important contribution to the war effort, in his opinion, was losing his appendix in a quonset hut -- he longed to transfer to duty aboard an aircraft carrier, but was always refused. When the war ended and his ship returned to the States, he was one of seven of the original crew which had put it into commission -- "The Unexpendable Seven", he maintains.

Following the war, he became active in radio acting again, as well as in theatre, motion pictures, television and commercial modeling, which ultimately fostered a latent talent as a photographer. He worked all over the U.S.A. in a variety of showbusiness activities.

Bitter memories of the acetylene tank explosion returned when Rolland, Senior died of a brain tumor in 1956. Grieving all alone in California, Lucy, who now preferred being called "Lucille", gradually became disturbed. Since his fully-grown Sister had married in 1945 and moved to Memphis where she had her hands-full raising two small sons, "Rusty" returned to California from New York in 1962 and took his mother under his supervision until her death in 1983. For lack of agency representation, he was unable to continue as an actor and so endeavored to establish a photographic service for actors, models and their pets, but circumstances made it all but impossible and a series of health problems brought most of it to a close after 1974.

In subsequent years, he has worked successfully in the technically demanding field of word-processing and computer programming, but only on a temporary basis at each firm, so that he was able to give any and all necessary time to family matters in addition to six personal hospitalizations.

Other than "REMINISCENCES OF AN ALMOST ACTOR", he has also written a showbusiness novel and a screenplay based upon it, as well as nine articles (with photographic illustrations) for Popular Photography magazine, plus two features each for Screen Actor and Tape Recording magazines.

Currently unsure about retirement, "Rusty" lives quietly in Glendale, California, writing and studying the piano, developing an interest in, as he puts it, "the culinary arts," thanks in part to a collection of ninety-three cookbooks.

☆

* A welcome nickname earned in Boot Camp for sunburn as much as for the color of his hair.

After his father's funeral, "Rusty" spent a week in Salem, Oregon, with his father's sister, Flossie Billington. One day she brought out a collection of treasured family photographs and on the back of one, in his grandfather's Spencerian handwriting, he noticed that "Roland Morris" was spelled with only one "L". Aunt Flossie then revealed there had never been two "Ls" until World War One. An Army Induction Typist evidently made a typographical error and his father never bothered to have it officially corrected.

It has been "ROLAND RUSTY MORRIS" ever since that lemonade day on the Billington farm!



(Photo by Kerr, NYC 1961)

☆ A C T O R A L M O S T

r u s t y m o r r i s / t h e a t r e

THE GREAT AMERICAN FAMILY

Produced by Homer Curran

Lobero Theatre, Santa Barbara
Curran Theatre, San Francisco

1939

THE STORY OF MARY SURRETT

Produced by Lewis & Young
Directed by John Patrick

Lobero Theatre, Santa Barbara
Geary Theatre, San Francisco

1947

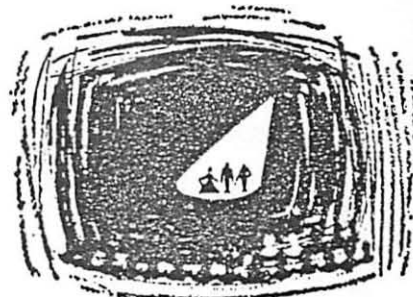
STRIKE A MATCH

Produced/Directed by Mel Ferrer

San Francisco
St. Louis
Houston
San Antonio
Austin
Fort Worth
Dallas
Shreveport
New Orleans
Memphis

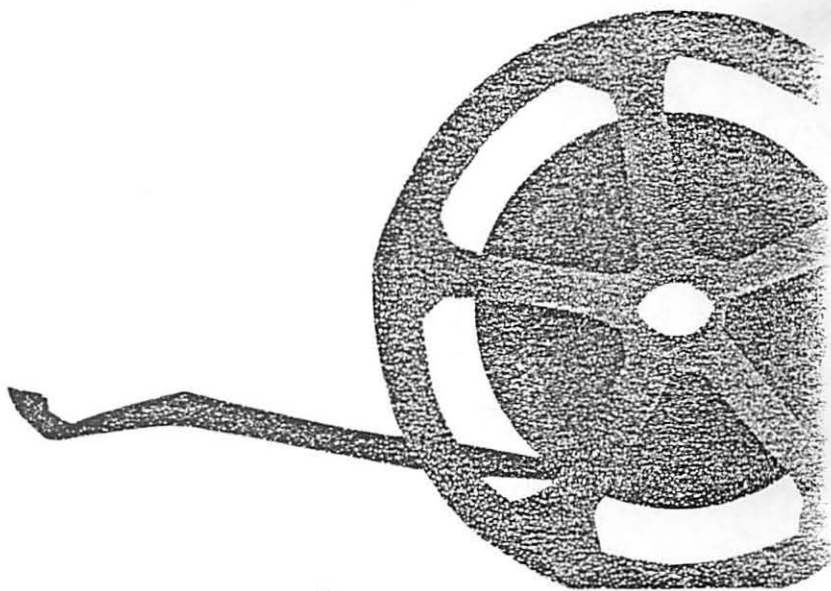
1952-53

☆ Principal Roles
All Productions



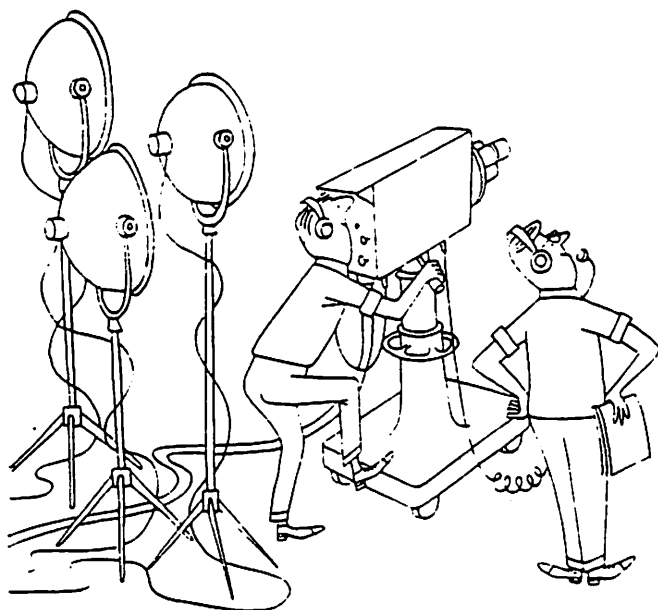
r u s t y m o r r i s / m o t i o n p i c t u r e s

THE ACCUSED	Hal Wallis-Paramount
PAID IN FULL	Hal Wallis-Paramount
CACTUS CUT-UP	RKO
DOG OF THE WILD	RKO
STRANGERS ON A TRAIN	Warner Brothers
ON MOONLIGHT BAY	Warner Brothers
WORKING HER WAY THRU COLLEGE	Warner Brothers
THE WELL	Popkin, United Artists
I WANT YOU	Goldwyn
FLAT TOP	Allied Artists
FIGHTER ATTACK	Allied Artists
BATTLE CIRCUS	M-G-M
SEA OF LOST SHIPS	Republic
AS YOU WERE	Lippert
FRANCIS GOES TO WESTPOINT	Universal



r u s t y m o r r i s / t e l e v i s i o n

MR. GODIVA	Death Valley Days (Lead)
SUM OF SEVEN	Bigelow Theatre
BEAUTY IS A JOY	Stars Over Hollywood
CHRISTMAS FOR SWEENEY	Stars Over Hollywood
RETURN OF VAN SICKLE	Stars Over Hollywood
THAT'S MY POP!	Chevron Theatre
A LITTLE LARCENY	Racket Squad
WHERE'S RAYMOND	Ray Bolger Show
WHERE OH WHERE	Ann Sothern Show
FROM THESE ROOTS	NBC-TV Daytime Serial Live from New York City
OMNIBUS	CBS-TV (Starring Jack Benny) Live from Hollywood
THE RUGGLES	ABC-TV Live from Hollywood



rusty morris / television commercials

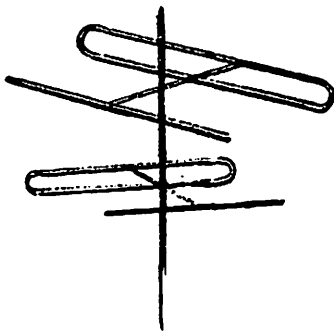
LIVE

FILM

TAPE

1952 - 1960

American Family Flakes
American Telephone & Telegraph
Aunt Jemima
Busch Bavarian Beer
Canco
Cavalier Cigarettes
Continental Gypsum
Dupont
Eastman Kodak
Eastside Beer
Esso Gasoline
Eversharp-Schick
Falstaff Beer
Fortisun
Gillette Razors
Hallmark Cards
Heileman's Beer
Hoffman Television Sets
Iron City Beer
Ivory Soap
Lipton Tea
Mobil Gasoline
Mor-Bif
New York Telephone Company
Oldsmobile
Pabst Beer
Pillsbury Flour
Ping
Pride Wax
Salada Tea
Swanson's TV Dinners
Thermopane Glass
United Drug Company
Vicks
White Rain Shampoo
and
Schlitz Beer (1963)



r u s t y m o r r i s / r a d i o

THE RAILROAD HOUR - NBC
HALLS OF IVY
WOMAN IN MY HOUSE
DENNIS DAY SHOW
PAT O'BRIEN SHOW
MYSTERY IS MY HOBBY

LUX RADIO THEATRE - CBS
DOCTOR CHRISTIAN
THIS IS HOLLYWOOD
STARS OVER HOLLYWOOD
MAKE BELIEVE TOWN
ALIAS JANE DOE
FRANK MORGAN SHOW
BACKSTAGE WIFE
RIGHT TO HAPPINESS
DATE WITH JUDY

SCREEN GUILD PLAYERS - ABC
THIS IS YOUR FBI
MAYOR OF THE TOWN
DEADLINE MYSTERIES

FAMILY THEATRE - MBS
LET GEORGE DO IT
STRAIGHT ARROW
SONG OF LIBERTY
TARZAN
CLYDE BEATTY SHOW
ERSKINE JOHNSON SHOW
CASEBOOK OF GREGORY HOOD
THE CISCO KID
CALIFORNIA TALES



AFRS - Trans
VOICE OF THE ARMY
DAMON RUNYON THEATRE
FAVORITE STORY
CONQUEST
PREMIERE PERFORMANCE
PREVIEW THEATRE

Opposite &
Supporting:

Bette Davis, Bob Hope, Jimmy Stewart, Ronald Colman, Irene Dunne,
Lionel Barrymore, Claudette Colbert, Edward G. Robinson, Mitzi Gaynor,
Gregory Peck, Eleanor Powell, Jimmy Durante, Gary Cooper, Beulah Bondi,
Gordon MacCrae, Dorothy Kirsten, Jean Hersholt, Esther Williams,
Fred MacMurray, Rock Hudson, Piper Laurie and many others!

rusty morris / miscellaneous

NARRATION (Voice Over)

"The JayCee Story" - Dallas Jones
"Top Assignment" - Atlas Films

Union Oil Slidefilm - Graphic Films
Oldsmobile TV Cmcls - Fairbanks

RADIO COMMERCIALS:

American Telephone & Telegraph
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Chicago
Equitable Life Assurance Society
Bell Telephone
Colgate Toothpaste

INDUSTRIAL SHOWS:

Quaker Oats - Jerry Warner Productions
Chicago, Akron, St. Joseph

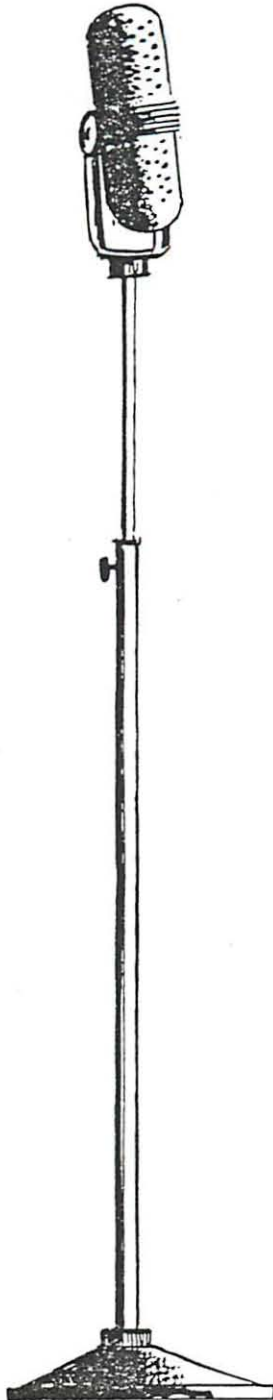
INDUSTRIAL FILMS:

Cathedral Films
Hal Roach
Jerry Fairbanks
Roland Reed
John Sutherland
Graphic Films
Atlas Films
Jam Handy Org.
Dallas Jones
Galbreath Films

AUTO SHOWS:

Demonstrator for PLYMOUTH and PONTIAC
at Chicago Auto Shows
Stock-Yards Amphitheatre

☆ One speech every
five minutes
four hours per day
for 10-day period

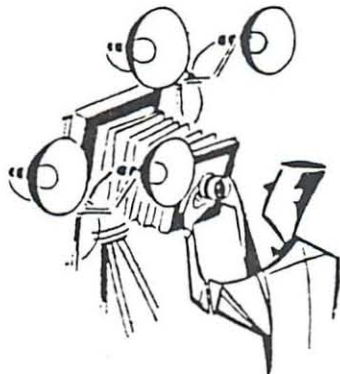


rusty morris / advertising model 1946-60

Admiral TV Sets
Alden's Catalogues
Allstate Insurance
American Brewer's Association
American Kitchens
AMI Jukeboxes
Apeco Copying Machines
Armstrong Linoleum

Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream
Bell & Howell
Belton Hearing Aids
Borg-Warner Transmissions
Brunswick Bowling Products
Budweiser
Buick
Bullocks Department Store

Calvert Reserve
Carling's Red Top Ale
Carling's Black Label Beer
Carson, Pirie Scott & Company
Casco Stools
Catalina Sport & Swimwear
Chambers Stoves



Cheer
Chicago Title and Trust Company
Chicago, Eastern Illinois R. R.
Crane Company
Coca-Cola
Commonwealth-Edison
Continental Can (CANCO)
Cooper's Sport & Underwear

Dayton Company of Minneapolis
Desmonds
Dodge
Dr. Pepper
Duo-Temp
Dupont

Eastman Kodak
Elgin Watches
Emerson Electric
Emery Sky Freight

Farm State Insurance
Flintkote Building Products
Frigidaire
Feltpro
Four Roses

Gantner Swimwear
General Electric
General Merchandise Company
Goetz Beer
Goodyear
Gorham Sterling
Greyhound

Hammond Chord Organ
Hammond Electric Organs

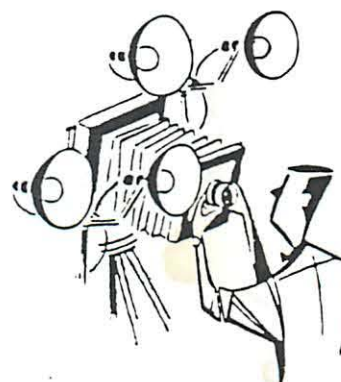
r u s t y m o r r i s / advertising model - cont'd

Hanes Underwear
 Healthknit Underwear & Socks
 Heet Anti-Freeze
 Holeproof Hosiery
 Hotpoint

Jantzen Sport & Swimwear
 Jewel Tea Company
 Johnson Outboard Motors

KATY Railroad
 Kent Cigarettes
 King Corn
 Lambknit Sweaters
 Lee's Carpets
 Lilly Pharmaceuticals
 Lowe Brother's Paints
 Luster Creme Shampoo
 Lonestar Beer

Marshall Field & Company
 Masonite Products
 May Company
 Meisterbrau Beer
 Men's Apparel Guild of California
 Miller's Highlife Beer
 Mistol-Mist
 Mitchell Air Conditioners
 Mobil
 Montgomery Ward
 Monsanto Chemicals
 Motorla TV
 Mowmaster Mowers
 Mueller Climatrol
 Pabulum
 Paddle 'n' Saddle Sportswear



Papermate Pens
 Pepsi-Cola
 Peter Hand's Reserve Beer
 Plymouth
 Pontiac
 Presto Cookers
 Professional Golfer's Association
 Proctor and Gamble
 Pullman
 RCA Portable Radios
 RCA Whirlpool
 Red Ball Transit
 Reo Powermowers
 Reynolds Aluminum
 Rheingold Beer
 Roper Ranges
 Santa Fe Railroad
 Shaeffer Beer
 Sears
 Seagrams
 Sealy Posture-Pedic
 Serta Mattresses
 Seven-Up
 Slenderella
 Spiegel Catalogues
 Stag Beer

r u s t y m o r r i s / advertising model - cont'd

Standard Oil

State Farm Insurance

Storz Beer

Sunbeam Products

Swift & Company

Taylor Wines

Texaco

Texolite Paints

Thomas' English Muffins

Thompson Restaurants

Thor Power Tools

TWA

Union Oil

Union Pacific Railroad

United Airlines

U. S. Gypsum

U. S. Treasury Bonds

Van Heusen Shirts

VM Phonographs

Walker's Imperial Whiskey

Watkins Products

WebCor Tape Recorders

Webster-Electric

Weekend Decorator Paints

Wilson Brothers Sportswear

Wilson Sporting Goods

Winston Cigarettes

Youngstown Kitchens

Zenith Hearing Aids

Zenith Television

Zenith Portable Radios

Publication Features:

Better Homes & Gardens

California Men's Stylist

Chicago Sun-Times

Chicago Tribune

Esquire Apparel Arts

Good Housekeeping

Ladies Home Journal

Life

Look

Men's Wear

Playboy

Saturday Evening Post

