

COLUMNIST WINS STARDOM (ALMOST) WITH SINGLE WORD

Relates How He Got Role By Accident

But Once in Part, He Is Magnificent; Film to Be at Circle.

"Exclusive," the vehicle for your Hollywood columnist's screen debut, will open a week's engagement at the Circle Friday.

By PAUL HARRISON

HOLLYWOOD, July 20 (NEA).—Well, I'm in the movies now, and after my picture is released I probably shan't be able to call my soul my own.

Not even these next few weeks will be free from the responsibilities of what seems to be my new destiny.

First, I'll have to get an unlisted telephone number, a whole wardrobe of sports clothes and some unusual hobby.

Then I must practice writing autographs, and I shall have to think up answers for interviewers who will be wanting to know what I like to eat, what qualities I most admire in American womanhood, and how I broke into pictures.

I may as well tell you how I became a movie actor. Actually it was just a whim of fate, because as long ago as my eighth year—when I lost my essential article of costume in a Sunday school cantata—I had abandoned all hope for a future in any of the Thespian arts.

But it happened that some of us correspondents were standing around the set of "Exclusive," a newspaper picture being filmed at Paramount. We were engaged in a favorite sport of picking flaws in Hollywood's ideas of how a metropolitan daily's city-room should look.

They Found Flaws

The floor was too clean, the typewriters were bookkeepers' machines with carriages about 18 inches long; the furniture was too fancy; there weren't enough telephones; the—

Just then Director Alexander Hall strolled over to us. I knew that on the previous day he had fallen from a horse and had suffered a slight concussion, and I recall now that he had a rather strange look in his eyes when he spoke:

"You guys look something like newspapermen, and I've got to have somebody holding down these desks for a scene. How'd you like to be movie actors?"

Right away it occurred to me that I ought to engage an agent and let him discuss the terms. And I should ask for a script, so I could decide whether the story and my role had sufficient dramatic quality. Also there was the question of whether I wanted to risk being typed as a reporter; my fans might consider me an imitator of Stuart Erwin.

But there was Director Hall, awaiting an answer. So, along with the others, I agreed.

So He Takes Job

He assigned us to desks and I drew one in the middle of the room. It was a good spot because the scene was to be a trucking shot with the camera passing by me as it followed Frances Farmer through the news room to the editor's office.

For an hour they adjusted the 38 lights (I counted 'em) that glared down on us. I had on a fancy pair of suspenders, so I took off my coat. Hall said:

"Now, fellas, I want you just to act naturally, as you would in your own offices, only quiet down when Miss Farmer gets to the editor's secretary and the dialog begins."

Gives so much leeway, none of us could think of anything to do but light cigarettes, put paper in our typewriters and sit there. The only good men to come to the aid of the party—"During several rehearsals, when Hall yelled 'Action,'" the cadence was so regular that any stenographer would have known what we were typing. Determined to be different, I switched to another tempo. I wrote, "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog."

He's Almost a Star

Hundreds of people spend years in the movie business and never speak a line. I thought of them with a twinge of compassion when Hall came to me and arranged for me to say something. It seemed there was an awkward spot in the action of one of the copy boys racing through the office. It was necessary to delay him at a certain point, and the point was my desk.

Such was the confidence of the astute director in my histrionic talents that he didn't ask me to rehearse my speech. Of course it was a awful long speech. When the young man carrying a sheaf of galley proofs reached a certain desk, I spoke. I called him. I said, "Boy!"

Just "Boy!"—but I gave it everything I had. On the first take I was a little too quick with my speech, and when the boy whirled at my command he bumped into the boy behind him. On the second take I was a bit slow, and ran into Frances Farmer. The third time, everything went off smoothly and Hall pronounced the director's benediction: "Print it."

Lated there was quite a bit of discussion on the subject as to what I actually had said.

Several people declared that I excluded "Loy" under the impression that Myrna was around somewhere. Others were equally certain that I said, "O!" in the manner of a Hebrew comedian.

Anyway I said something. And that's how I broke into the movies.

LOWE HELPS HITE LIGHT UP



Lowe and Stanley give Hite a light for a custom-built cigar.

Arising to my full six-foot height, I looked Henry Hite squarely in the third vest button and said I was glad to meet him.

Mr. Hite swallowed his interviewer's fairish sized hand in his own and remarked that he'd be glad to talk as soon as he had changed his costume.

A strapping youth of 22, Mr. Hite, of Lowe, Hite and Stanley, is the Lyric's big attraction this week. He stands seven feet, nine inches tall, weighs 266 pounds, and can wear ready-made handkerchiefs and neckties. The rest of the wardrobe is not so easy. Mr. Hite requires a size 22 shoe, and his coat would look like Prince Albert on you or me. Beds, doorways, chairs and such are a never-ending bother. But Mr. Hite doesn't mind them, not he, Icked by curious crowds.

Cantor Painfully Earnest

Everybody knows about the serious and erudite Charlie Chaplin. And Eddie Cantor is a painfully earnest man who will get all wound up in an inspirational lecture if you give him half a chance.

There have been paragraphs about some of the Hollywood tough guys and villains—How Victor McLaglen

Film Gangsters Turn Out To Be China Fanciers, and Bang Go More Illusions

For Instance, Cagney Is Meek Fellow, Mae West's A Stay-at-Home and Harold Lloyd Is Quite Glum Off Screen.

HOLLYWOOD, July 20.—(NEA)—Explorers in the Hollywood often are astonished and sometimes distressed to come upon beetle-browed screen gangsters who collect French china, sensuous sirens who will argue heatedly over baby formulas, funny-men who aren't funny, and sweet little ingenues who are colorful compendiums of cuss-words.

But that's the way it goes. A large number of screen people aren't what they seem. Usually this is through no fault of their own. They are workers in the world's daffiest industry, and although most of them would rather be known for what they are in real life, their real life bosses say "No."

A few bask contentedly behind the smoke screen of illusion and dare anybody to find out what they're actually like.

James Cagney, Mae West, and Harold Lloyd are three examples of illusion-destroyers. Cagney is a very meek fellow away from the cameras. Reads honest-to-goodness literature, appreciates the other arts, and converses barely a whisper.

Mae Regular Church Goer

Miss West drops with sin on celluloid, but after working hours she's a stay-at-home and a regular church-goer. She has received a million dollars' worth of publicity through her reputation for risque wise-crackery. Actually, though, she is likely to prove a little dull. She never could hold up her corner of a gag-session with say Gene Fowler, Frank Scully, Helen Broderick, Martha Raye and Carole Lombard.

Lloyd is a comic, but outside the studio he is as glum as a Schmitzler novel and never associates with the cliques of hilarious Hollywoodites. In fact, few people even recognize him off the screen.

Cantor Doesn't Stutter

And there are reports that Eddie Cantor would like to leave her ivory tower for parties and friendships and the normal course of living.

There are lots of people who aren't quite what they seem. Rose Ates doesn't stutter except when he's acting. Herman Bing rolls his r's only into the mike. And a couple of screen cowboys are in expert riders; their galloping scenes are done mostly by doubles.

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raises roses, Humphrey Bogart has a passion for symphony concerts, and Ricardo Cortez won't even shoot a rabbit.

Joseph Calleia is a deep student of the drama and a fine pianist. Jack LaRue is afraid of guns. Cesar Romero has the most social accomplishments, or at least is most in demand for parties, of any of the Hollywood bachelors.

Glamor Girls Mothers

Glamor girls Marlene Dietrich, Claire Trod, Joan Bennett, and Frances Dee are all mothers, but only Miss Dietrich dislikes being reminded of the fact. She won't pose for photographs with her daughter any more. Daughter is taller than mama, and the actress has an idea that such pictures might be detrimental to her career.

Some of the stars have reputations of being difficult to interview because they constantly are being watched and restrained by the studios. Otherwise they'd talk too much.

Claudette Colbert used to be that way. Gladys George is now. William Powell is inclined to be over-frank on certain subjects in which industry policy is to be considered.

That's great! Thanks for fixing up the date for lunch.

"I'm glad you are going to have lunch with Miss Lindsay because—

"That makes two of us who are glad," interrupted the writer. After all, even at 9 o'clock in the morning he could remember that Miss Lindsay had a nice, broad smile.

"You're having lunch today with Margaret Lindsay at 1, so you'd better come down about 12. Better still, why don't you come down right away and spend the morning on the lot?"

The writer blinked and pulled himself together. Lunch with Margaret Lindsay at 1. That must be the Warner press agent on the telephone. But then you never could tell. After all, you can't expect much from a stranger unaccustomed to Hollywood methods at 9 o'clock in the morning.

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