G.S. NOTES ON "HIS HOLLYWOOD PARADE"

Note. "Note to my editor."

Dear Editor,

Here we go with a brand new recording machine, the finest Jane and Sony makes. I don't know whether that will help the quality of this story, nevertheless, I find myself immediately impaled upon a title.

I know you say just go on, but without a title, it's most difficult for me. So I've been thinking of the following titles: "MY MOMENTS OF TRUTH" - no, that's certainly too long. Why don't we just call it "MOMENTS..." How about "THREE SCORE AND ALMOST TEN"? -- "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS" -- "SECOND EDITION"! -- "STELLA DALLAS", No, I knew you wouldn't like that one. -- "BEN HUR"! -- "CAPITAIN BILLY'S WHIZZ BANG", "WINTER EDITION" -- "HUCKLEBERRY FINN"? -- "ONCE UPON A LIFE" -- "MY LIFE"! -- "ONCE UPON MY LIFE"?

A funny thing happend on the way home from the theater - I decided to be born.

It was October, in the middle of a blizzard. My parents were living in Jamaica, Long Island. There was no transportation into New York City where the hospital arrangements had been made. It was impossible to get through. My father's car was frozen or it would have been but we didn't get a car until the following year. He managed to get his friend, the Florist, who had a delivery wagon and a team of horses, packed us up and off we went. We got as far as Long Island City - St. Jospeh's

Hospital. My father tore in like a mad man to awake the staff, however, in the meantime, I decided to be born with one foot in the flower wagon and the other foot in the hospital.

By all tradition, I should have been named Joseph. However, my mother was the O'Mooney being half-Irish Catholic and half-Irish Protestant. On my father's side, Hungarian and Jewish, so I was named for my uncle George - whose name wasn't George or Sidney - he had taken it. George is a free translation from the Hebraic of the name Gadalia. Well, that kind of ties in with being born in a flower wagon but the less cracks about that, the better.

For "Sidney", he decided to find a nice name; he went through English literature and found Sir Phillip Sidney, he thought that would be a nice relative...he took a royal relative name. He also figured out that 6 and 6 is exactly the size you can handle on a theatre marquee with a spacer in the center and spacers on either end. George Sidney looked better than Sammy Greenfield Kronowith.

Outside of being the fourth child and the only one to survive, nothing eventful happened for the next year or two, it wasn't until the age of three that I managed to ride a tricycle into some poor unsuspecting vaudevillian's act and make some noises while he was trying to peddle his monologue. He quickly put me under his arms, and it helped the act. He said it gave him a great idea and he would love to borrow the kid for the rest of the tour. But for some reason??, my folks were adamant. I guess they just thought I was too young and the Gerry Society of New York would put a stop to it.

Really, I just bummed around and didn't do a damned thing for another couple of years until about the age of five and a half.

We were living in Denver, Colorado, where my father had four theaters. We lived in a lovely apartment over the lobby of one of the theaters. All day I would go from one theatre to the other and watch the silent films.

At that time, I became fascinated with the organ...a very nice lady, a lady called Carmen, was the organist. I would tug on her feet and she would pull me up onto the bench so that I could see the marks she put on the keys of the organ enabling me to hit the chimes and the gunshots. Of course, the cowboys came out when the chimes should have rang and vice versa. But in those days, in the 20's, in Denver, Colorado, the movies were still too big a mystery and it didn't really effect the performance, to an audience of oilers, cowboys and cattle handlers.

This I suppose you could call my first musical education but I became quite proficient and also started taking violin lessons at the age of five playing a mini-mini fiddle which, within two or three years, I promptly gave up for the piano.

The fascination of movies had really taken its bite. They decided to do "LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY". Oh, at this time, I should mention, I had long blond curly hair, black velvet suit, lace collar and angelic face, honest!!

After that, the great Western star, Tom Mix, came to Denver to make some films and I co-starred with him as the "LITTLEST COWBOY". I was about so large and he could hold me

up and throw me from hand to hand across the horse. I daresay I was the envy of every kid in America who would have loved to have been "The Littlest Cowboy", and I must say at the end of the film, where Tom had to kiss his horse, which is traditional, I got to kiss "The Littlest Squaw", who was a six-year old potential glamour girl.

I worked in all sorts of local films. I also exhibited the prize cattle at the stock show, the huge bulls would lay down -- 1,500 lbs -- and I would try to prod them up, with my 3 gallon hat. It was always a big laugh, and the crowd loved the bull bit.

One day, I went down the main street of Denver into a barber shop and said, "I want a regular boy's haircut...cut off these blond curls".

The barber, who naturally knew me, asked, "Does your mother know about this?" I said, "Oh, yes, yes...cut off these curls."

They put the board across the arms, I climbed up. As fate would have it, my mother happened along. She looked through the window and there was her little angel being defrocked of the blond curls. Well, she almost had heart failure.

However, after that, a strange thing happened. The hair turned dark and with it, so did my mood. I became allergic to being directed and became most difficult; there was really no way to handle this very difficult child artist. At about this time my birthday was coming up. For a birthday present, my father had a replica of a motion picture camera made for me. It had a glass lens that could focus, it had a crank, which I could crank around two and a half times and it actually had

a spool with some film in it. It was like a real movie camera, but it could not take pictures!

This was wonderful. I would go to the main street, which was quite wild in those days, set up my camera and tripod, put my cap on backwards with the peak in the back and photograph, cranking away supposedly. This is how I would play. People would come along; they knew very little about motion pictures, so they figured I was some kind of a midget cameraman, taking their pictures with that new fangled thing that had been invented called the flickers.

My father, Louis K. Sidney, or better known to everyone as "L.K.", or "the Chief", was the ultimate showman. He could do everything -- write ads, write copy, draw the pictures, do the artwork, paint the scenery, write the music, play the music, stage the songs and dances, run the projector, re-edit the pictures and exploit the films, as well as stand in front of those silent movie palaces in the evening, with a boiled shirt, tuxedo, always complete with a white flower. He was a big, powerful, ruddy faced, athletic man who started out life aiming to be the heavy weight boxing champion of the world. He did this for a while and he was getting very proficient until his mother decided enough of that, so she sent him to the Ushiver School to make him a Rabbi.

This didn't last too long and at an early age he became the water boy at the old famous New York Hippodrome, serving water in little paper cups between the acts. This led to going on the road and doing everything and anything in show business.

He married into show business, Hazael O'Mooney, one of the famous three O'Mooney Sister, who herself had been in show business since the age of 4, having played one of the little angels at the original Ziegfeld theater, west of Broadway on 42nd Street, played in all the children's pantomimes. Hazael O'Mooney was playing at the Winter Garden in an Al Jolson show when they finally decided that they could be married. I say, finally, because this was the story of Abie's Irish Rose which gave great conflicts on both sides but love found a way and there was never a greater match. Louis had found his Louis' Irish Rose in a little colleen from Ireland.

On my mother's side, of course, was certainly a big conflict because my grandfather, Henry O'Mooney, LL.D., Columbia Law, was Irish Catholic from County Cork and me grandmother was from County Antrim and Protestant. Much later in life I once asked my mother, "And when did my grandmother convert to Catholicism?" My mother said, "Oh, never!" So I can imagine this must have been quite a rugged life.

As a showman, my father did everything and I was always on his heels, followed by mother on my heels. In Denver, he would take a truck, get a motion picture camera, go out and photograph people in the streets as they waved and giggled. The film then had to be sent somewhere in Chicago to be developed and back again to Denver. Then if you'd come to one of his theaters, they would run this bit of film. If you could identify yourself, he would let you in for free next week or treat you to a 25¢ dinner at the Manhattan Restaurant.

But that was the day of the showman. L.K. used to paint white footprints on the streets at night, leading to the theater. He'd have a barrel with wire over it and a sign saying, 'Don't come too close - dancing snakes'. Naturally, the people would all come to look at a sign which said, 'go to Fox's so and so theater and see this film'.

One time things were very low and he was looking for something to jack up business; there was a film that had been made about the Klu Klux Klan called 'Night Riders'. He decided he would do some kind of promotion with it. My father booked this film, and the Klan, thinking that it was for their benefit, called upon L.K. to express their gratification for his concern for the Klan.

My father said, "I'll tell you what I want you fellows to do. You drive into town in the middle of the night, climb up to the second story where my office is, and put a note on my window demanding that I play this film. I'll be very frightened but I'll play this film ... it will be great for the Klan. Also, it will be great for my business."

So naturally, everyone in Denver did not sleep that night, and as a kid, naturally I was looking out my bedroom window across the street when down came 8 cars - Cole Eight cars, I think they were called; the men came in their white robes, hoods and torches. They climbed up to the second story and pasted the letter on the window which demanded that my father exhibit this picture. Naturally, as a showman, he had all the press in town out there photographing and covering the story.

The picture turned out to be a big success.

After this success, my father was called to one of the famous private men's clubs in Denver, Colorado. At the club, he was joined by a group of men who said what he had done for the picture was wonderful but they couldn't understand why he did not belong to their organization.

My father asked, "What do you mean?"

They said, "You know, the Klu Klux Klan."

My father said, "Well, gentlemen, don't you realized I'm Jewish?"

Actually they didn't because I don't think they'd ever seen a Jew west of Chicago. So that was kind of a bizarre compliment, being invited to join the Klu Klux Klan.

Denver was a wild town and it was a wild time in the growth of the West. But came a time despite the wonderful Rockies, that we had to move on.

The Chief had a chance to go to Texas and take over some theaters, or to go to California where all the actors coming through, like Jolson, Jessel, Burns, Benny, Cantor, etc. All these people would come up to our apartment after the show and put on the act. They were coming out to see this new thing called 'the movies'. My uncle George, with his friend, Charlie Chaplin, already was flirting with it. But, my father decided to go against Greeley's advice...instead, we went East. And thus should close chapter one.

CHAPTER 2.

The next voice you will hear is the President of the Director's Guild of America, Mr. Frank Capra, addressing a testimonial dinner.

CAPRA QUOTE: "It gives me the greatest pleasure to present this gold medal, the first one ever given, to our past president who has served the Directors and Assistants for the last 8 years above and beyond all duty." (Note: Sidney continued President for another 8 years.)

The membership of the Guild rose to a standing ovation as Frank Capra pinned this 'once in a lifetime' gold medal upon Director George Sidney.

The year was now some time in the late 50's. However, we have skipped ahead so let us go back to 1927 when the same Frank Capra, having directed his first two films in Hollywood, came East to direct a film called 'For the Love of Mike' at the old studio at 127th Street and the Harlem River. This film starred George Sidney (the elder), Ford Sterling, a young leading man, Ben Lyon and a brand-new girl, who was being given her chance, Claudette Colbert.

The Sidneys hung around the making of the film, as they were all fascinated. Even Uncle Jake from the Vaudeville, Jack Sidney, the Jack of Spades (another blackfaced Al Jolson imitator), but most eager and anxious was young George who, like all theatrical kids, was gung ho about becoming an actor.

One day, after watching his uncle, George, do a scene where the elder George was playing Solitaire, cheating with the cards,

etc., etc. and etc., when the director, Frank Capra, said: "Cut." He looked around and young Sidney's tongue was hanging out. Capra said, "Okay, junior, you get in and let's see how you play the scene."

Well, young George didn't take a second asking. He jumped right in, imitated his uncle and played the scene. Naturally, the scene was shot silently.

When it was over, Frank Capra called young George aside and said, "Look, junior, I just saw you play that scene and I'd like to tell you something - I'd like to give you some advice: When you grow up, I wouldn't take acting as a career."

Young Sidney was really heartbroken but Frank continued, "I think you should try for an easy job like being a Director."

This put a whole new light in this young man's eye and, day by day, he would hang around the studio watching from 'way back, watching from up in the catwalks, just watching this man, Capra ... A man with a cap on his head and a jauntiness ... he told everyone what to do and how to do it ... he laughed and he cried but he was the captain of the ship. I don't think there's any question that this had great influence in the shaping of young George Sidney's career.

However, it took another 56 years before that story could be told. On March 11, 1982, George and Jane Sidney were asked to go to La Quinta, California where a dining room was being dedicated in the name of Frank Capra. They went to the affair, seated at a table with old friends, like Tom Pryor and Chuck Champlin. About three-quarters of the way through dinner,

someone tapped George on the shoulder and said, "Oh, incidentally, you're the Master of Ceremonies tonight and you're going to present Frank Capra ... you are to do the whole thing."

This was the night that I told the story of how I had known Frank 56 years -- his advice; yes, he remembered it all, a great night of warmth and nostalgia.

But, let us return to the roaring twenties. Bobbed hair, women didn't smoke, at least not in public. Be nonchalant, light a Murad. Atlantic City bathing beauties wore full-length black stockings.

By this time, we'd gone to Pittsburg where the Chief was going to manage a shooting gallery called the Aldine for Loew's Incorporated. Whoever built this theater built it up an alley which is about par for the course as how people built dressing rooms in theaters. That's another story.

I stayed with my father at all times, day and night. If I fell asleep, my mother would put me in a chair in the auditorium; if I was sleeping when it was time to go home, the Chief would throw his coat over me, pick me up and take me home. There I was -- even on the payroll. His title was the GENERAL MANAGER; mine, GENERAL NUISANCE. But I suppose I was more than that, although I did work. I was replacing the burned-out bulbs in the footlights and ran the dimmer boards and tried to pull the curtains, etc.

One time, Marcus Loew, founder of Loew's Incorporated, the parent company of MGM (later), came through town. I met him

and complained. I said, "Mr. Loew, I have to get more money."

He asked what my jobs were and I told him about all my jobs. He made a Solomon decision and raised me from 35 cents to 50 cents. I got that every week in a little envelope, just as everyone else did in those days with my name on it, and with my title of 'GENERAL NUISANCE.'

This theater had originally housed a shooting gallery, burlesque shows, prize-fights, smokers, but my father re-did it into a stage show and movie theater. Papa recognized very early that a new toy called radio was going to be very important, so he organized a group called 'Sid and his Gang.' He would go on the stage with his group of people and entertain as he broadcasted. He also would broadcast from a department store which owned a radio station. And, of course, the thrill was to hear, when people would call they had just picked up the radio signal 8 miles, 12 miles, 13 miles away; in those days, you would run in to proclaim it over the microphone to the people you had just heard on the telephone saying we're listening to you 8 miles away. And in those days, you'd say, "Wait a second," and you'd turn away from the microphone for two or three minutes and then you'd come back and you would continue the show. But that was the start of this new baby; it was a real baby which ultimately became sound, motion pictures and television.

One of the big thrills living in Pittsburg was that I'd got to meet a real live movie star, Buster Keaton. Buster Keaton came to town to see a world series game between Pittsburgh and Washington. He spent a great deal of time at our house. He fascinated me by his card tricks and things he did:

his walk, his falls and his dirty stories. Little did I know that many, many years later, he and I would be associated together at the MGM Studios in Culver City.

My father put on these dazzling stage shows in the Aldine Theatre; he had a grand orchestra of five pieces. He wanted class, so he would play an overture like March Slav or Poet and Peasant. He had a piano player in the pit - his name was Oscar Levant who in later years, went on to other things. L.K. finally found a violin player -- he made him a conductor; his name was Dave Rubinov who went on to all kinds of radio fame.

Once he decided that he would like to have a college show, he went to the University of Pennsylvania and found some kids known as Fred and Tom Waring who had a band. They were brothers -- so he put both boys on at the theater. That was the first professional appearance of Waring's Pennsylvanians.

And then for the big thrill, I met the great Harry Houdini, the great Hungarian artist-magician and mystic. After he did his show, I was so fascinated that my father took me back-stage. Of course, he and Harry Houdini played it completely straight as he introduced me and I looked up and said, "Mr. Houdini, you're a great showman." Well, this practically broke Houdini apart, more than the chains.

Then there was a time in St. Louis when my father decided to really go the full way and have a line of four dancing girls. He looked around and found a man called Russel Market who had a dancing school with some girls he called 'The Rockettes.'

The Chief hired four girls; they were a hit. If 4 were good, more would be better -- then, more and more. That was the start of the famous 'Rockettes' of Radio City Music Hall fame.

Later in Cleveland, my father hired Phil Spitalny -- that was before he had a girl orchestra or Evelyn and her magic violin.

In Pittsburg, I finally got a chance to be in a prologue, playing George Washington. I know I was very small but they put a box in the boat; I stood up depicting the famous painting of George Washington crossing the Delaware. I was doing just fine ... the curtain opened and there was a light effect, of ripples on the water. The audience broke into a nice little applause. George Washington, complete with wig, turned around and took a bow and with that, he fell into the Potomac. That kind of slowed down my acting career in Pittsburg.

One night after the show, that's when rehearsals were held to prepare for the next week's program, a fashion show was being staged. Models were directed to walk from one side of the stage to the other, displaying their costumes as well as themselves. There were many problems as to who walked to this and who walked to that when from nowhere, a little kid sitting among the audience said:

"Wait a minute-- that girl...she should walk over to that side and the other one should walk over to this side and the other one should come down the middle."

Everyone looked and then agreed -- "Yes, that's fine, yeah, that's fine."

And you know, many, many years later, when I was doing the film 'The Ziegfeld Follies' at MGM, I did the Fred Astaire number, 'Bring on the Beautiful Ladies' and it was about the same: "Let them walk over to the left and let them walk over to the right and let these come down the center." So nothing is ever lost except this time it was with Lucille Ball in Cyd Charisse's film debut.

Making the Aldine respectful and making it a landmark in Pittsburg was quite a job. After months and months of hard work and all my father's talent as a showman, they finally went into the black for 50 dollars. My father received a telegram from Marcus Loew saying, "I knew you would do it - congratulations."

This gave my father a chance to build the dream that he had for Pittsburg and that was to build Loew's Penn Theater. Because the Aldine showed this 50-dollar profit, they allowed him to build this magnificent movie palace as a gift to the people of Pittsburg.

We were all there for the opening night. The show went on and we were sitting watching it when, all of a sudden, in the middle of it all, my father walked on the stage and asked for quiet. He announced that Mr. Marcus Loew, on his way from New York to Pittsburg for the opening, had passed away. He asked that everyone please leave and that the theater would

open a few days later. This kind of took the whole fun out of Pittsburg and we left shortly for New York and the big time.

"NEW YORK, NEW YORK." It hadn't been immortalized by 'New York, New York, it's a hell of a town,' or 'New York, New York' or Harry Warren's wonderful '42nd Street' but all of that excitement was there. You found the music of Gershwin, the feeling that Broadway was alive. This was it, this was the BIG TIME! The Palace was playing the big star acts! My father had Loew's capital; he was producing stage shows with all the famous people -- everything was happening all at once. The traveling electric sign on the Capitol roof proclaimed every minute: SHOW UNDER THE PERSONAL SUPERVISION OF LOUIS K. SIDNEY.

In Vaudeville, the saying was, '<u>Here's to 40 weeks a year, may they never end</u>.' At that time, there couldn't be any dream of it ever ending. And, of course, there <u>couldn't be any dream of me ever going to school</u>. That was just ridiculous with all this going on. I was down on Broadway and 42nd Street and every place else, in the back and front of every theater, seeing what was going on, trying to learn everything. What about the capitals of Europe? History? Math? Hell no, show business, that was important.

One time that they did get me into a school called P.S. 87, they found what I could do ... that was to put on a classical presentation of the life of Daniel Boone. Needless to say, as I looked around the school, the only person that could possibly play the part was myself. So, without any to-do, I took it!!

We had some Italian Indians, Irish Indians, Black Indians, Lithuanian Indians, Hungarian Indians and all other kinds of Indians - plenty of Indians. But not enough Chiefs.

We did this wonderful performance and I just loved it! No one knew their parts, so I was feeding everyone their lines until at one point, there was the damndest silence throughout the school auditorium. I looked around ... everybody else had said their lines and suddenly I realized it was time for me! I hadn't said my lines! Well, I'd spent so much time in coaching everyone else that I didn't know my own dialogue. So at that moment, I quickly realized that when you're on your feet, that's it! And that's the greatest excitement and thrill -- just get up and say it! So I said it and we finally got off the stage without being booed too much.

But public school theatrics were a far cry from going backstage at the Capital where, as a fledgling saxophonist, I would join in with the saxophone section and play along or pick up my clarinet and join in with them...at times, for the supper show when no one was in the theater, they would let me conduct the orchestra and stage show. Well, man, that is power, that is the greatest power possible to an individual to stand up in front of 50 or 60 musicians and beat it out, and to read the music and know what you're playing.

This was the day of the West Point musical conductor; it didn't take so much a musician, as a personality -- a man to wear the uniform, to point dramatically at the section to play, to flay the air -- but always with a convulsive flip of the head as if a swarm of bees were attacking -- and then, of course, finish up together.

There was a wonderful Hungarian violin player in the orchestra called Gene -- he called my father "Mr. Sidney." Maybe one day he could conduct the Capital Grand Orchestra? "Never, Gene, never," L.K. replied - "You're too good, so I'm going to fire you, go find a job in the concert field where you belong." L.K. would not take any of Gene's pleadings. Weeks went by; L.K. told Gene to find a legitimate job -- so he left, never reaching his then goal of conducting the Capital Theatre Grand Orchestra. He did manager to conduct the great symphonies of the world. Gene's name was Eugene Ormandy; he was always grateful to the man who fired him for being "too good."

Other alumni of the Capital Orchestra were Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Lou Bring, Paul Specht and a cadre of great jazz musicians.

That was my beat of show business. How could you expect me to be interested in school?

One day I woke up to go to school and there was a big notice from my parents pinned on my mirror: DON'T GO TO SCHOOL TODAY. BE DOWN AT WARNERS AT ONE O'CLOCK.

Something new had happened ... something that was much more important than school. Last night SOUND had arrived;

it didn't take much persuasion -- at one o'clock that day I was down at Warner's. On the screen I saw a street car moving down the tracks, then a bell went clang, clang ... that was the first sound on film; it was a picture called 'Little Ole New York.'

Of course, this was followed by the thrilling experience on the night of Atonement ... Al Jolson's picture, 'The Jazz Singer' opened. Jolson's magnificent voice could be heard singing! This was the new dimension ... the audience cheered and cried and screamed and it was wonderful. Little did I realize that night that 30 years later at the 25th anniversary of the Hillcrest Country Club, my father and I would produce a show that would bring Al Jolson back ... it was his first appearance following an illness which almost took his life and during which he married his nurse who accompanied him to this celebration. This live performance by Jolson was the first time that the new and lovely Mrs. Jolson saw the great Jolson perform.

It was an all-star show which included Benny, Mickey Rooney, Iturbi, Sinatra, Carmen Miranda, Skelton, etc., but the real star was Al Jolson who closed the show. This was at the time when he was making the recordings for "The Jolson Story."

Jolson stood in front of these people and said, "Look, there's the director, George Sidney ... big director! I remember him when he was this high ... I used to hang over his crib and between bites of salami, I'd sing to him ... in Denver, and Little Mooney married my pal L.K."

The Chief had rebuilt the Capital Theater so that, in keeping with the times it had an orchestra rising out of the pit and other new innovations. It was here that he staged shows with Milton Berle, Jack Benny, the Burnses, Abe Lymon, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Ruth Etting ... no one had thought about doing the Ruth Etting story but many, many years later, there would be a

happy assignment for me to work on the original story with Danny Fuchs. Incidentally, the original story we did, won an Academy Award. And there was Fanny Brice and James J. Walker, the mayor Hizzoner, the Mayor of New York.

Then there were the wonderful episodes of Texas Guinan coming to the Capital, playing in the theater and giving the "little girl a big hand." (All the gangsters and hoods in New York came to help.) And then my father had a great coup, he managed to hire Amy Sample McPherson, after her return from the desert with her desert prince, an organist or something from the Temple. That was a coup. As everyone in show business said, Amy Sample McPherson would be the box office act of all times. Well, I don't have to remind you what happened. No one came, but no one came. That was the biggest flop that Broadway had ever seen, didn't even pay for the candles.

However, there were other successful exploitations: Ruth Elder had flown the Atlantic Ocean so he played her at the Capital ... that was a big, big excitement. While she couldn't fly the airplane around the theater, she just looked beautiful. She was a lovely lady who later married Buddy Gillespie, an art director at MGM Studios. He and I worked together many years later.

Then at the time when Doctor Felix Von Eckner brought the Graf Zeppelin to the United States on its maiden voyage, my father got aboard and photographed it all. He made a whole motion picture out of it and while it played in the theater, he also brought in Dr. Eckner, his son Knute and a lady called Lady Drummon Hay. That brought all kinds of excitement to

Broadway, and to show business.

Then there was a time when a young fellow from the Army Air Force was going to fly the Atlantic Ocean. My father said, "If you do, I'll give you a thousand bucks a week for a personal appearance at the Loew's State." (The Capital was for first-class acts, the State for vaudeville.) The young man flew the Ocean and came back but he could never honor that contract because he went on to be our big Lone Eagle and he was way above playing Loew's State. His name was Charles Lindberg.

Opening night was the place to be -- Hope Hampton, blonde and be-diamonded always in the front row, with her husband, Jules Brulator, the Eastman Kodak film distributor. He had a contract with George Eastman which gave him a royalty on every foot of film he sold.

Openings were posh, everyone dressed -- I had my own little tuxedo and looked like a short waiter.

My mother insisted I learn to tie my bow tie at an early age. "You're going to be in show business, so you must know how to tie your own bow." (I've never made a bow that I don't remember her sage lesson.)

One of the great openings, "The Roxy" - 7th Avenue -- this Temple to Show Business, built by Sam Rothafel, known as Roxy.

Here we were sitting in the lounge, all dressed to the teeth. My father pointed to a man sitting across from me on the opposite aisle, "Do you know who he is?" I looked at this smallish, slightly greying man, negative -- "Go ask him if he's

Charlie Chaplin?" The man nodded in the affirmative, "Who are you?" "I'm little George Sidney." He replied, "I know George Sidney, he isn't little." "No, sir, I'm little." "Oh, you're George Little," shaking my hand, "Glad to meet you, Mr. Little." "I'm not Mr. Little, I'm little George Sidney; my Uncle George is big George Sidney." He started to laugh, "Yes, I know, where in your father?" I indicated. He waved across the aisle. "Hello Lou, was with George a few days and etc..." Here was the "Little Tramp" and doing shtick with me -- what a world. Show Biz!!

Chaplin had tried to get Uncle George to the silents very early -- by getting him out on Santa Monica Beach, the two of them doing falls, bumps and takes in and on the sand -- but Uncle George still wanted more of the live audience. He went back, LEAVING THE FLICKS.

The saddest and most distasteful duty as President of the Screen Directors' Guild was when Charlie Chaplin applied for membership and I had to reject his request.

He refused to sign the application. He would allow a lawyer to sign -- but membership in the Guild was a personal obligation -- an applicant's signature was obligatory. In the application, there was the Non-Communist Affidavit; this was the law of the land -- for all labor guilds, unions, crafts ... Charlie could not be persuaded to sign - we could not take him into membership in a fraternal Society of Directors who had the greatest admiration for his talents -- and he, theirs.

We waived the provision of a non-signatory director being

allowed a S.D.G. Asst., Robert Aldrich (who years later I nominated for D.G.A. President) assisted Chaplin.

Chaplin was one of the greatest forces of talent the screen ever had -- his genius was no small part in developing the infant cinema industry into Big Business and an art form. It was very sad that he couldn't, or didn't make truce with intellectual emotions, and lived his remaining days here in filmdom, a land he was undisputed King!

Don't forget, we were still in prohibition at that time and Clubs like '21,' "Jack and Charlie's,' and 'Mama Leone's,' were politely known as 'speak-easy(ies)'. There were great places like Cavanaughs, Dinty Moores and, of course, Lindy's. Lindy's was a famous place where all show people met. That was a place like the Rue de la Paix where you had to go by once a day just to check in and have a cup of coffee. It was inhabited by the song and dance men, gamblers, pimps, bookies, whores, music publishers, actors ... you name it, they were there. In later years, there was a lady called Broadway Rose; she used to stand outside, yell, scream and insult the people until somebody gave her money. Berle was her favorite touch.

Leo Lindy had a policy that he would never give one cup of coffee, not a nickel cup of coffee to anyone. But what no one ever knew, Leo Lindy gave most, practically all of his money, to charity -- a most charitable man. He waged a one-man war against Hitler; he got hordes of Jews out of Germany. I have a deep affection for the memory of Leo Lindy ...

One day, when I was a kid on the streets, I was attacked

by a small group of boys. Leo Lindy came in and helped fight them off.

Then there was a place called the 'Strand Barber Shop' which was in the Strand Theater building. This was the Music Publisher's home, song pluggers, Tin Pan Alley -- they were all there. Here, all the show people went to have their hair cut and there's where I first met Mr. Irving Berlin. Little did I know that many, many years later, after I had directed 'Annie, Get Your Gun', that Irving would come down on the set and say, "George, I have just seen your Annie Get Your Gun," and he kissed me and added, "Congratulations, it is wonderful."

Irving Berlin is as big a man as his songs.

At this barber shop, there was an Italian barber called Salvador. My father decided to have him made a Kentucky Colonel. So he had a scroll made for a Kentucky Colonel. He got a troup of soldiers (actors dressed up), they came and presented it to Salvador. Salvador, needless to say, didn't know what this was all about. But this was the greatest honor that could befall him. Word even went back to Mussolini. We got all kinds of things; they gave a whole block party. He wore the sword that was given him for years, along with the uniform (from Brook's Costume House); it was the greatest thing that ever happened in his life. That was the excitement and the fun that was Show Biz.

So, you see, Broadway was my playground. Basketball or

football or those things had no excitement. A young man from Boston came into New York, he played wonderful piano; it really thrilled me. I met up with him; he was nice enough to give me some lessons.

His name was Eddy Duchin and it was many, many years later that I would direct the Eddy Duchin Story.

I also followed the great singing and dancing act, Buck and Bubbles. Buck tried to teach me; he thought my hand was good because, without stretching, I could hit ten notes.

There was Billy Pierce's Dancing School. You went there to learn tap-dancing. You paid 200 dollars and he gave everybody the same tap routine.

But then my father decided he would just check all of my activities, so three days a week I was sent to a place called Philadelphia Jack O'Brian's -- that was a gynmnasium on 42nd Street where all the pro-wrestlers would train; a great many of the jockeys would train there to get that fantastic iron grip to hold onto the horses.

So any chance that I would become soft or too artistic was easily knocked out of the way by this strong regime I had of show business mixed up with muscles.

Milton Berle, Mr. Broadway, wasn't he wonderful. That was Mrs. Berlinger's boy. Sadie Berlinger would sit in the theater on every performance and start to laugh - "laughing it up." She later became Sandra.

Milton wore a grey suit, white shoes, hat turned up in the front, and a red neck tie. So immediately I would wear the same costume. They talked about Milton stealing jokes; I stole

everyone's jokes. I could also do everyone's act. I could do all the imitations: Harry Richmond; Ted Lewis; Arthur Tracy; Pat Rooney; etc. -- whoever it might be.

Everyone has to go out with the circus and that included me: Sleep under the canvas, know what it meant to hustle the elephants. In Denver, when my parents brought me home from the hospital, after removing my tonsils, they had set up "Christmas in July", decorated tree, toys, etc. -- but they had a 3-ring circus built, with all the clowns, animal acts, wagons, complete with one of the earliest electric trains, to transport my show. The tent was about 12 feet long. I would sometimes crawl in under the canvas, and take a nap - sleeping under the canvas was a thrill to any canvas-back cootie, clown, performer who ever yelled "Hey Rube". Here was living another dream!!

I think of an amusing bit: We were playing somewhere in Long Island with our little rinky-dink circus and all the trucks, everything we had, broke down all the time, everything was an emergency.

One night, early before the show, the darndest summer hurricane hit and practically tore our tent away. After we got the tent back -- "we" -- I like that "we"; you know, -- Me, a kid - weighed 11 pounds...but after everything was put into place, I crossed to a gasoline station and called home. You know how the codgers sit around in a small town. They were there, everybody listening to every telephone conversation, especially since I was calling New York -- that was really

something. Here I was in some kind of circus outfit and make-up, talking long distance on the phone.

"Hello, Mom, I just wanted to tell you that the storm hit the tent and everything, but we're fine, no one's hurt; everything's fine, don't worry. Love you too." I hung up. These old codgers, sitting around the pot-belly stove whittling on the wood, said, "Gee, we never knew you circus folks had mothers!" And that was about the way the world looks on all show folk.

I travelled with the circus and carnivals or anything else to anywhere for experience. It now became time to broaden my education because I certainly wasn't getting any in school because I never attended.

On one of those rare occasions (I was going to Collegiate School, founded in 1633 by the Dutch Reformed Church), the Headmaster asked if I could help out with the school show. They needed someone to sing. I talked it over with The Chief. He got me a great girl singer. Needless to say, I was the M.C. and when I announced next "Bringing her moon over our mountain, Miss Kate Smith" ... and there she was! When they got over the shock of one of the big names of Broadway, she was a smash and so was I.

The Chief signed her for 12 weeks at the Capitol. He was criticized by some of the people at Loew's, Inc. She wasn't the svelte singer of the period. He held fast. From this exposure, she went on to radio and became one of the true, great American

singers.

The only education I was getting was from Smith and Dale, or "Who's on first?" - "What's on second?" - "Here I am again, doctor." All those routines I could do, so I was sent to Europe spending two years on and off, going around seeing everything: La Louvre; Follies Bergere; Concert Mayol; Arc D'Triumpe; Nappy's Tomb; Les Ambassadeurs; Cafe de Paris; The Paladium; Gormont Palace; The Empire; Edgar Wallace cycle; Changing of the Guard; The New Studio; Le Circe D'Hiver; Paris Opera House; Josephine Baker; and even Maurice Chevalier at the opening of one of his Hollywood films. He apologized to the audience because in the film he spoke only English. This was a very brief encounter; later we will learn about how we worked as Director and Artist in a film in Las Vegas.

It was during that time that I had a wonderful offer to go into a French movie. They were going to make a series and they wanted a big fellow on whom a bunch of little kids could jump and hang onto...that would be me. It was kind of an "Our Gang" comedy in French. Little did I know that some years later, I would be directing the original 'Our Gang' comedies. However, my folks didn't think it was such a good idea that I go into a French movie so they had me come home. Now, the thing you never do know is what would have happened had I gone into French movies -- would I have become another Eddy Consentine? Chevalier? Or just another American in Paris sitting in front of the American Express Office, waiting for checks from home??

So, once more back to a school for a moment in New York. Writing an essay on 'Fire Prevention"; I received a medal from Grover Whalen on the steps of the City Hall, New York. That

was quite a deal. I personally think I would rather have had a good review in 'Variety' than that, but you can't always call the shots.

Just to keep my hand in, my folks had a wonderful miniature stage built. It all worked, everything worked -- it had the wings and the grid iron, curtains, set pieces, all kinds of dolls and everything to proportion and I would play with that, set up my own shows, produce my own theater, music supplied by phonograph records.

About now, something new was coming along called short-wave and with some help, I managed to build a short-wave radio, so that I could sit up late to midnight and get the Edgewater Beach Hotel, Cocoanut Grove, Catalina and listen to this music coming through the airwaves.

Then for a turn in Vaudeville. Herman Timburg was kind enough to let me populate his Vaudeville act. He taught me the routine -- mine was the straight part. We tried it out in Jersey City at the Journal Square Theater one afternoon. After the first line or two, I ad-libbed and got a laugh, under my breath, "Hey, Herman, that's pretty good; I got a laugh." He looked at me and thought he'd been on the stage 40 years and here I'm on the stage two minutes and I'm ad-libbing.

Then my folks somehow found out that I was working in the Timburg's act; they came over to see what was going on.

In vaudeville, you met so many great people. On the bill, Benny Fields and Blossom Seeley, Mills, Kirk and Martin -- Powers Elephants -- Oh, that was a thrill. The vaudeville acts,

they were just great. With an animal act you learned and you watched what had to be done with the animals before they went on. I'm now at this time an old Carnival and Circus man, so this was not new to me.

Knowing Ed Sullivan and not knowing that many years later I would direct 'Bye, Bye Birdie' and Ed Sullivan would play himself in the film.

But somewhere along in this beautiful life, I believe it was Joe Bigelow who wrote the famous Variety headline, "Wall Street Lays Egg" and the only song that orchestrated our lives was, 'Brother, can you spare a dime'. So aptly sung by Rex Webber.

Show business had hit it, the days of Vaudeville and the presentation -- were over.

Radio was here to stay. Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, The Street Singer, Morton Downey, Three Fellows from California, The Rhythm Boys, Crosby, Rinker, Barris, and now there was a new emphasis because this monster talked. Sound motion pictures were taking over and it looked like this squawkie-talkie novelty would be the future Show Biz.

It was at this juncture that my father took the 127th Street studio, the same studio where Uncle George had made the picture with Frank Capra; he turned it into a sound studio and he started writing the scores and doing the music, background music, sound effects, that would be played along with the silent pictures that were still being made by M.G.M. in Culver City, California.

The Chief signed up every actor he could; anyone who could talk or sing, he put into a short subject. They were god-awful

because the microphone had to be hidden in the bowl of flowers. You had to sit or stand right next to the bowl of flowers. You couldn't move your head, you couldn't breathe, cameras were in these big sweat boxes. The cameramen practically had to be naked because the heat was so intense and the whole show was recorded on the wax. Everything had to be in one shot, there were no intercuts, no one knew how to do that; you did the whole ten minutes without breathing. People turned blue and purple because they couldn't sneeze, then the hot wax would be taken down to Camden, New Jersey and pressed onto a phonograph record.

This record was played on a phonograph turntable attached to the film projector -- the trick was to set the needle in the groove at the precise moment the singer started -- this was rarely accomplished. The sound was always miles ahead or behind; like the trip to the moon synchronization was finally achieved.

My father always had a feeling for music -- classic or popular. He engaged opera stars, vaudeville acts, singers, dancers, talking actors, animal acts. The audience didn't care -- it was the novelty of hearing some kind of noise.

He had Jack Benny as a Master of Ceremonies and put two or three acts together. He shot these things day and night, night and day. I would hang out in the studio and watch this "thing" and get excited with this new Show Biz.

He built a handball court on one of the old stages. He and his soundmixer Mike MacLaughlin (who he stole from R.C.A. Victor) would play all comers handball -- they beat Van and Schenck, the

famous singing duo, and got 3 songs for free.

At the M.G.M. Studios in California, they felt this novelty would be short-lived; they didn't have talking actors, directors, stories or sound-equipped studios.

The box-office said "SOUND WAS HERE." Warner Brothers had bought the Vitaphone which had been turned down by everyone; they bought it and were going strong with Vitaphone. Fox had movietone because William Fox had a contract trying to capture the entire motion picture world by this contract which said any sound on film would have to pay the Fox Company a royalty. Well, "they" finally beat that because it would have been the damndest monopoly control of the motion picture business.

MGM decided that they would try to make sound motion pictures in California. My father locked up his studio and sent all the equipment to California.

He continued on with the radio station WHN where he had the original Major Bowes Amateur Hour. The Major moved over to one of the networks and the Chief manufactured a man called Colonel J. C. Flippen (the Colonel, another Kentuckian) to run the amateur hour. Those were the days when everybody had an amateur hour and radio became a very large thing. The units were still going on. They would produce a unit at the Capital Theater, then they would go on the road. They would take two or three of the stars at the Capital; they might have Bing Crosby, Eddy Duchin and Milton Berle on the same show; then they would replace it with lesser stars and production as it went to the Paradise.

First it played what we called the "subway circuit" -- all

the theaters around New York City. But you could take the subway home to New York at night - about 12 weeks. From there to Baltimore, Washington, you continued for 20 or 30 weeks. There was a joke: You get into one of those units, you say goodbye; you're never seen again.

Paramount Publics, they had a couple of hundred weeks because they had theaters all through Canada.

This new thing was catching on; curiosity got the better of me. After all, I really hadn't been working, I was getting older, I was coming on 14 and maybe I should go west. There was a whole group of nice show people going west: Jack Pearl, who was The Baron Munchhausen; Jack Benny who was doing his radio show with Mary and that whole gang; Sidney Skolsky, a columnist -- they were all going west. My folks said, "Well, will you take the kid and watch out that he doesn't get into trouble, get chewed up by the Indians or something like that, because the kid now, since he was 12 years old, was six feet and weighed 215 pounds and, of course, he thought he was at least 43 years old.

So farewell to Broadway -- this was a curtain to my youth -- as the Century Limited rattled up the Hudson, never realizing that I would come back and play Broadway dozens and dozens of times with films that I would make. I would say that this would bring the curtain downon Chapter Two.

Chicago, the gateway to that West. Once off the Twentieth Century, people fawning around Jack Benny and Jack Pearl, etc., etc. , we were escorted from one station to the other. I

naturally tagged along, not getting myself lost in this wicked town, this wicked town of gangsters, gangland and Chicago Jazz. Arriving at the other station was my first view of the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe. At that time it sounded like a three-act and reminded me of Mills, Kirk and Martin. Well, we were on our way. California, here I come, welcome home another New York bum!

As the Atcheson, Topeka and the Santa Fe rode west and through the rails, the chug, chug, chug I wish I could say that I had the inspiration to write, "On the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe" which later Harry Warren and Johnny Mercer wrote, and that I knew at that time I was going to make a picture called 'The Harvey Girls' and it would star Judy Garland who earlier had made her screen test when she was baby Frances Gumm. Georgie Jessel named Judy Garland. He said, "That child sings like a garland." He might have said nightingale or canary; she could have been named Judy Bird! Her screen test was on radio stationWHN of which my father was the managing director. But the future I didn't know as the train chugged into the western setting sun.

On the way I saw many sights. At La Junta, they put trout on the train. Flagstaff, Arizona, and finally Albuquerque where we stopped for a half-hour so Fred Harvey's man could bilk you by selling you some genuine imitation Indian jewelry which I'm sure was made in Jersey City.

The Indians came aboard; they had all the props -- that's why I used to kid about my Uncle Joe who worked as one of the Harvey Indians.

Buying two postal cards and a turquoise ring for mom, I was now set for the West.

Next stop was San Bernardino, at six o'clock in the morning. You'd get out and smell the oranges, the fruit, the feeling of Southern California. Pasadena at eight twelve - the city of churches. As we stopped briefly in that station, I couldn't ever imagine or dare to imagine that one morning in years to come, I would be out at that very station directing Clark Gable, the King of the movies; Loretta Young; Frank Morgan, a whole fire department, orchestras, dancing girls, cameras, crews, etc. for a film called 'Key to the City'.

Now on to the old Los Angeles Station where an elderly Gentleman called Meyer Mendelson was really the official greeter to Los Angeles. He had all the stars' pictures to prove it. He was the man you had to know in Los Angeles to get your way in and out of the station. My Uncle George, being a movie star, and of the same religious persuasion as Meyer, had all the necessary arrangements greased for the arrival.

As the train pulled in, I was standing in the vestibule, ready to get off from the station platform. A young man jumped aboard sporting a large, large, cigar and a red-brown suede jacket. (This was before men wore suede jackets, so openly). He saw me -- I had never seen him before in my life -- he put out his hand, "My name is Mervyn LeRoy." We shook hands and he went on his way. This was the start of a long relationshp with Mervyn LeRoy which, unfortunately, a friendship that I lost in a divorce. (Mervyn had been Uncle George's first make-up man.)

Orange groves, Pasadena, the Rose Bowl, Huntington Hotel, the old Green Hotel, the bridge across the Arroyo Seco, which much later I managed to fly an airplane under which we'll go into later, the whole look of Southern California -- this eternal land of sunshine, blue skies and the scent of oranges. It was much different from New York and to a born New Yorker; it was kind of being out in the boondocks, out playing the sticks.

However, this opinion quickly melted away when there you saw the studios. Warner Brothers in the Valley, Columbia on Gower Gulch, R.K.O., Poverty Row, Paramount and, of course, finally to MGM, which was to be my home for at least half of my life.

Well, the thrill of having a V.I.P. trip through the studio and having your photograph taken with the movie stars, who know exactly when to smile, when to put their arm around you, the pictures comes out just wonderfully.

I have pictures taken with Lee Tracy who later during a film called 'Viva Via' (that I worked), he got into a little trouble on a balcony in Mexico. He tried to emulate the little boy in Brussels who had a habit of peeing in the street. He did this on the Mexican population; they didn't quite have this same, shall we say, Gallic sense of humor.

A picture with lovely Una Merkel and Madge Evans.

A trip to the commissary seeing all of the different types of people who are working in pictures and then in the background, the really height of all was the 'directors' table.' And that's where they all sat: Pop Leonard, Van Dyke, Jack Conway, Victor Fleming -- the whole group of directors - oh boy, that - to be invited would be the thing, they played a game called 'Chuckaluck' and whoever lost paid for the entire table. There were some people

who would go for months and actually years, never having to pay for their lunch and sometimes some poor guy from New York would be invited to sit down and get hooked for the whole table. This was a great game, played by the giants.

Here it was the reel - R E E L, translating itself into the R E A L real, and it was very difficult to discern just what was and which reel was real real.

No matter how old one becomes, and jaded, every time you drive down a street and see someone with a camera, whether it will be a little short subject or just some kids making a high school picture, you always stop and look. There's a fascination of a motion picture company at work. It's a living entity, it's a living experience and once you've been a part of it, you never quite let go. Yes, it is a disease, making film; it gets in the blood. It affects, infects the brain; nothing is ever quite the same after having once tasted the experience of saying, "Roll 'em - Action."

As a visitor from the East there's a round of parties. People that you'd known and your family had known, invite you out, take you to all kinds of places. A night at the Coconut Grove, the home of the flying monkeys. Abe Lyman in his white suit and his orchestra and his ever-present cigar, with his vocalist, Grace Barry and a little Scotch girl, who later went on as Ella Logan to fame in Glockamorra.

Trips to Caliente, fabulous resort just below the border, gambling, everything, horse racing, dog racing, people racing, everything goes, with a store built right into the casino, so

that if you should win anything on the way out they would take the money away. You buy your lady a jewels, perfume, French lingerie. Lake Arrowhead -- a whole group of film folk lived up there.

The Hollywood Bowl. Seeing all this, I declared, "I AM STAYING -- THIS IS IT!!" I'm going to try it out for a couple of years and see what happens. Long talk with myself - what happens to your desire to become a band leader? Well, that can wait, if I a get a job in the studio I'll practice and keep practicing my piano, clarinet and saxophone at night so I won't lose any time.

My Uncle George, of course, thought I was a complete traitor, because working as a studio messenger boy, I could not sit up all night with him and his old gang of cronies. Sitting up in Vera Gordon's house, a lady who played his wife in so many films of the Cohens and Kellys series. In a tiny place called the George Sidney room, they would sit up all night, what would they all do? They talked of show business.

When acts came to Los Angeles to play the Orpheum, they'd find themselves lost in this land of Indians and Oranges, local show folk would go down town, bring these people back, to sit around all night and what would they talk about. "SHOW BUSINESS." Then we played another week, remember that was the week that Finks' Mules was on the bill and far into the night.

I did manage a messenger boy job at MGM; they all felt that - oh well, he'll be here for a few weeks, try to smell the glamour, see the young little things running around, then as the swallows desert Capistrano, so, too, he'll go back East

and that will be the end of him." That was the record of most of the young men who had a connection to a messenger boy job. But they didn't know me -- I was a little more stubborn; I had come to stay. Afraid? Sure ...

Well, the messenger boy job was great because you walked, ran from one end of the hundreds of acres to the other, delivering messages that probably didn't mean a damn, but it paid $8.00 per.

That led on to a very good raise (not financially); you got to be an office boy. Now you were allowed to come inside and you could take messages from one office inside to the other. Of course, there were the rains where you wore rubber boots. Culver City was practically under water but the messages had to go through.

I was assigned in the production department to a place called the planning office. The planning office was run by a lovely lady called Miss Pearl Porter. She had a little office and a second chair but one did not sit in that second chair because in that second chair, she had a dog. This dog was paralyzed to a degree. My first assignment was to take the dog out. The dog didn't walk and you carried the dog to the grass and the dog did its business and you brought it back. I said, well I guess that's part of making movies. She'd give me a dime and send me to the commissary to bring her back a soda. I figured that well, I guess this is the way Cecil B. DeMille started so it was all right for me.

Colonel E. A. Schiller, Vice President of Loew's,Inc. from the East, saw me walking around the lot and asked, "Have you met

Mr. Mayer?" I said, no, no, no, I just deliver messages. The Colonel said, "Come on, you should meet Mr. Mayer; after all, he's Head of the studio and you are working for him." He took me to Mr. Mayer who was sitting in his office, his old office down below. Mr. Mayer looked at me from under his eyebrows and said, "You're working here as a messenger boy, huh?" "Are you ready to take my job?" This, of course, I later learned, was a trait Mr. Mayer always said, "Do you think my work is easy here -- see what you would do if you had my job." But this day, very gratuitously, he said, "Are you ready to take my job?" Without being fresh or no Sammy Glick about it, I said, "Not yet, but perhaps one day." I must say he remembered that and he quoted it. He quoted it years later by saying, "Had George possibly been a little fresher, he would have arrived maybe a month or two sooner, and on the other hand, he may also, I been a little fresher, fallen completely on the way."

On the way, a job in the sound department. There was some kind of a strike going on. Jobs were wide open; they needed people in the sound department. I said, "Thank you; that's for me and I jumped in."

Of course, I came to work dressed in my beautiful white suit, necktie, collar, the whole outfit. I was sent down to the jungle to work on a Tarzan picture. Mr. Cedric Gibbons was directing. He was the great Gibbons, (the art director) "Gibby" to his friends and to his dying day, we had a great, great friendship. Gibby, this black Irishman and this half-black Irishman and half-black Hungarian. However, that day on the set, there was the river that Tarzan, Johnny Weismuller, another Hungarian,

had to swim up and down. Of course, his wife, Lupe Valez, who wasn't Hungarian, she was Mexican (I don't know really where you draw the line), but anyway, she was complaining because she wanted the river heated because she said the water was too cold for Johneeee to swim.

While that was going on, it was decided they needed some sound cables to run across the river they would have to go in the water, on the bottom of the river and up the other side of the bank. It was my assignment, I thought nothing of it; I just took all this cable and bingo, went right in the river, suit and all, never even unbuttoning my coat, crossing and up the other side, the white shoes, practically like the stooges with the fish coming out; all watched. I never said anything -- could I have a towel or some other clothes -- I think that showed a lot of people that I was here to stay, in a quiet way but I had my ideas, ambitions and a little water and mud would not stop me.

Being in the sound department gave me great opportunities to work on the sets of all the musical films that were being made.

"Meet the Baron", the famous "My Dancing Lady" which starred Clark Gable (later we worked together as star and director).

Also an unknown dancer called Fred Astaire, who did one dance, "Let's Go Bavarian" with the big star of the film, Miss Joan Crawford (in a blonde wig).

I really started to learn how stars worked. We were shooting a number on stage 15. It was possibly the worst musical composition that Rodgers and Hart have ever written, but they were asked to write something like 'Go, Go, Go.' They wanted a song that

would denote the 'rhythm of the day.' They wrote a song called 'Go, Go, Go, That's the Rhythm of the Day.' They rhymed electric, connectric and like terrible things, but everyone thought it was great and after all, Miss Crawford was going to dance in a costume, a very abbreviated costume that would be the kick of the film.

The fact that Miss Crawford's dancing career had been more in the title of a film called 'My Dancing Daughters' and some odd types of dancing around New York in her early days. Nevertheless, she was a star and she was doing this big number. In those days, to get the music onto the stage, it had been recorded on film, on 35 millimeter film, the film was run through a machine similar to a projector, on the stage. And when the take was over, the operator would wind the film back to the start mark (That was me), ready for the next take.

And that was one of my jobs.

I would take what was known as a Lilly horn, that was a horn shaped in the form of a lilly about 3 to 4 feet long which used a wet battery the same as your automobile. I would carry this horn and battery to the top of the stage, direct the beam down so that the dancers could hear the music which would be coming through from my little playback machine.

It was rather late in the afternoon, I was rewinding the playback machine, Miss Crawford decided it was time to leave and she announced to the director, Robert Z. Leonard, known to everyone as 'Pop' (a beautiful man) that she was going and

this innocent young stage man, as I was called, said, "Oh, no Miss Crawford, I'll only be a minute and we'll have this playback rewound and then you can shoot." Well, there was silence throughout the stage 15 that rattled it more than the earthquake. Miss Crawford left. That's the last we saw of her that night, her heels going off into the distance, followed by her record girl, her makeup girl, her hair man, her chauffeur and her whole retinue. She had her staff, you see; Miss Crawford was really a star.

Pop came over and put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Well, I guess you've really done it." I said, "Donewhat, Mr. Leonard?" He said, "That'll be your neck; I was getting used to you around here." The next day when I came in, I was told that Miss Crawford wanted me fired from the film, as well as from the studio. I went to see Pop and he said, "Look, I've talked to Joan; if you wait around until after the day's shooting, go and see her. You must apologize." I said, "I must apologize?" Pop said, "You apologize and that's the way the rules are; that's how this game is rigged."

I waited until the day was over. Miss Crawford had a custom on the set. She had dozens of gardenias. She had read about the Lady of the Camelias, and had become the Lady of the Gardenias. Every day she would bestow one white gardenia to some member of the crew, male or female, who in her profound wisdom had done a wonderful job, or was a wonderful person, or somesuch. It was known as the Gardenia Award of the Day.

I saw her coming with her cars and her whole troop into the dressing room. After most had left, I knocked on the door,

telling the maid, "I am here to apologize." I was admitted. After being abject about how sorry, etc., etc., etc., she finally came up with, well, in effect, forgiving is two-sided and both parties must participate. This was a lesson in forgiving I shall never forget. All her crew disappeared. She claimed what she felt was an ancient biblical rite. I guessed I'd missed that lesson.

When the ceremony was completed, I was given the white Gardenia for the day and sent on my way. (I wondered if she had read the Boccacio story of Putting the Devil in Hell?)

The next crossing with Miss Crawford and the Sidney family was when Miss Crawford decided that she could sing in the film and use her own voice. The executives were on stage saying, "Oh darling, darling, you're so wonderful, so graceful, this, that." My father was visiting from the East. They asked him because he being a master showman, records, music, radio and all that, he listened and said, "This is terrible; in fact, it is lousy - you can't be serious - that's disgraceful." That opinion went to Miss Crawford. She went home in tears. How could anyone say that about her? What my father did not know was that you could never be quite honest. What was standard procedure was to let the star record, no matter how bad it was, then later on in the wee hours of the night, someone like Marni Nixon would come in and imitate the star, singing on key, on pitch, and the star would say, "That's my voice," and everybody would say, "My, you're singing great."

It happened with Mickey Rooney who thought he was a pretty

hot drummer. Mickey could play the drums but there are degrees. They did a number, I think it was, 'Strike Up the Band' or something like that. I believe Paul Whiteman was the conductor. Mickey made this drumming take and the musicians jumped up and said, "Oh, Mick, you're the greatest boom, boom, boom." There was a call for Mickey down on the stage. The minute he was gone, out from under the carpet somewhere came Gene Krupa; they made one take with Gene Krupa and cut the disc right then and there, sent it down and played it for Mickey. Mickey said, "Wow, I didn't realize I was that good"! That was how certain stars were treated.

Nevertheless, my father never apologized to Joan so he never found out about her ritual of accepting an apology.

Oddly enough, years earlier Uncle George had won a Charleston contest at a Sunday night at the plantation. His partner? A new vivacious starlet, Joan Crawford.

Through the years, we saw each other as one does in Hollywood. The last contact -- I was making a film in England -- she sent word to me that she wanted to see me when I'd finished shooting. However, I had nothing to be forgiven for and I did not see her.

Joan Crawford, born Lucille Leseuer, was a real movie star in the tradition. We could use more today.

Working on a film called 'Meet the Baron', it was decided that they would have a shower number. We had all these beautiful young things, but how could "it" all be hidden away so that

there wouldn't be nudity? It was decided that by putting a water and steam curtain in front of each shower, the camera would see the figure and not see too much. The set was built with 24 showers, one for each girl.

Walter Lang was directing, James Wong Howe was the camera-man and I was the boom boy. That's the fellow with the micro-phone. I would sit under the camera riding, holding the mike from one to the other as the girls sang, 'Fresh as a Daisy, Clean as a Whistle.' Clean through, do, da, da, da,' or something like that. The number had been rehearsed dry. Now ready, Walter yelled, "Roll 'em"; "Start the water." They did; it was a great effect. We were all watching the girls through the curtain of water and steam.

All of a sudden, we realized that it was getting wet under foot. We started yelling, someone had forgotten that this was real water, there had to be plumbing but no one had built drains in these showers. The stage was flooded about this time; I tried to grab the batteries that ran my lilly horn. When I grabbed those with my feet in the water, it sent me flying through the air like Lilly on the flying Trapeze.

This took 3 or 4 days to get the water out, build plumb-ing and then we started again, but we were held up by a strange phenomenon. It just seemed that everyone in the studio had some personal business on stage 16. All day long we were visited by all the male population of MGM who would come to stand around and have something to say. It was impossible to shoot during the daytime. The schedule was shifted to night shooting. It was

very tedious shooting to get the shot; not too many people knew what was going on. We would work all night; the company supplied a whole bevy of mattresses and everybody had their own sleeping pad. Each girl would go to sleep on her mattress between shots which could be hours. They also had blankets. When a girl was needed -- "Get the dark-headed girl with the big eyebrows" -- you looked around and shook the feet, "Hey, you, oh, no, no, no, you go back" -- "You're the one we want; wake up" -- that is the way this number was ultimately shot. We had to do it at night, wet nights.

I can remember some of the girls who were in the number. One was Gloria Hatrick; she was the daughter of Vice President of the Metrotone News Reel.

Gloria Hatrick became the wife of James Stewart. Gloria Hatrick was a very beautiful, charming, wonderful girl, who gave me the great pleasure of driving her home in my dashing, baby-blue with orange-wire-wheels Chevrolet Convertible. The Hatricks were living in the beach guest house of The Marion Davies Santa Monica Estate. This was the home of many famous parties and ultimately became some kind of a beach club.

These girls were known as the 'baby stars', and, in a film called 'Hollywood Party', they did a number called 'We are the baby stars' babies with babies at home.' This was a picture that somehow never happened, could never be put together--just a headache from one end to the other, including doing one reel in Technicolor, which was just a mess. (At a later date I'll put in more detail about that film.)

One of the 'baby stars' was one of the most gorgeous creatures ever. She came from Chicago, and her name was Margaret McConnel. She quickly got the title 'the dumbest girl in Hollywood', because she came up with some real beauties.

Black and white was the mode. The trick was to do everything in black and white: paint the sets white--white costumes, black costumes--sharp contrasts. In this film the set was pure white. I racked out my sound boom with the microphone on the end, and the cameraman couldn't eliminate the mike's shadow. It was quite difficult--everybody was thinking--in the middle of the problem she said, "I know how to get rid of the shadow." We all looked. She said, "Paint the microphone

white." She meant it. She same up with a few others that earned her the title. Fortunately, she ultimately married the architect, William Perreira, and retired. Forty years later, in Gums Department Store, Moscow, I said, "Hello." She didn't react!!!

Life in the Sound Department was very exciting, and it was very rewarding being on the sets. The musicals--with all the beautiful girls--had many bonuses (shall we put it), but somehow I felt that like "Joey, Joey, Joey, you've been here long enough." The moving hand must move along. I felt I had to find some way to get into the Cutting Department. I realized that much of the making of a film had to do with editing and putting the film together.

Well, a straight line is not the shortest distance between two poles, and it was impossible to get into the Cutting Department, what with the Union problems, this and that, but that was the most desired place to be.

I struck up a friendship with a fellow who was an assistant cutter. I told him how unhappy I was in my work on the set: that I just wasn't getting any sleep, it was terrible down there all day with all those beautiful girls and just a lot of dancing boys, that there were so few single fellows that it was just wearing us out, and it was driving me to distraction, and I was exhausted from doing my day work plus the social evenings.

His ears went up; his antenna went up. He said, "Gee, I would love to do that." I said, "Oh, would I like to be up in a nice quiet cutting room all day with just a little movieola to

fondle--it would be so nice." We finally decided that all we would do was switch our punch time cards. After all, there were five thousand people working in the Studio. As long as the jobs were covered, that's all that mattered. So, we just switched jobs, and I had arrived in the Cutting Department.

The man who was head of the Cutting Department was quite a character. His name was Danny Gray. He really didn't know how I got there, and it really didn't matter. So, after I'd been there running around, covering what the other fellow was doing, he put me in charge of all the screen tests--cataloging, cutting, filing, and running them to the projection rooms.

When anyone wanted to see a test, they would ring my room, number thirteen, request the test, and I would then take it to the assigned projection room--Mr. Mayer's room, Irving Thalberg's or David Selznick's bungalow, or Marion Davies bungalow, etc.

Miss Davies had an entire Spanish hacienda, complete with a high wall. It was in back of the Sound Department.

She ultimately took it to Warners in Burbank, then to Benedict Canyon. Strangely, when Mr. L. B. Mayer remarried, this was his home.

One day I received a call to take the new tests of Miss Davies to the bungalow. I bustled them under my arm, and tout de suite was knocking on the antique carved Spanish door. It opened. I recognized the opener. He said, "Come in." It was Mr. William Randolph Hearst. "I have the tests." He replied, "Good, put them down." Leading me to the bar, "We'll have a drink." I had a coke. He was feeling no pain. There were others, and the

afternoon was young. In vain, I made several attempts to bring the subject back to the tests but, as they say, "When, etc., etc., lay back and enjoy". So it was that I spent most of that afternoon in the ornately carved bed of Marian Davies...but without Marian.

It was after sundown when I returned to the test room to find many requests to run tests plus lots of messages. Little did they know I was getting a lesson in how a great newspaper mogul, his star and their gang of clowns spent the afternoon.

I had never cut film in my life, but that didn't stop my editing the tests. I just did it. This went on for awhile. I kinda got tired, and decided I wanted to cut something more important. Information is the most important thing to have. There was a picture being shot called "Treasure Island", with Freddy Bartholomew, Wally Berry, and Director Victor Flemming, who later directed "Gone With The Wind."

The cutter, a wonderful lady called Blanche Sewell, wouldn't be back for a couple of days. The picture had started. (Blanche Sewell was the sister-in-law of Walt Disney; that's how I got to know the Disneys.) However, the daily film that had been shot the first couple of days was sitting in the cutting room. I went over, walked into the cutting room, and cut the first sequence. Then I thought, "Now I've cut the sequence; I have to do something with it." I went to the head of the Cutting Department, Danny Gray. I said, "Mr. Gray, I have something I would like to show you." We went into a little projection room, for Danny Gray was the kind of fellow who didn't

want to be dumb, so he would never ask anything. I turned out the light, gave the buzz, on the screen ... the film sequence of "Treasure Island", as I had cut it. When it was finished he said nothing about the fact that I had cut it. He said, "Cut a few frames off the kid going up the stairs"; then he walked out.

Well, ultimately Blanche came back and we gave her the film, and she thought it was a pretty good joke.

As the monitor, the keeper of the tests, I would get the requisitions that at one time I had run around and delivered. They would tell when a screen test was going to be made or whatever shooting was to be done. This gave me access to the Casting Office. I would know the tests before they were made. One day I also realized that the Casting Office had ordered three silent tests, and I knew the director, Nick Grinde. He was going out to play golf. I just managed to forget that little item, and when the assistant casting director, Marcella Knapp, said, "Would you please call Nick Grinde and tell him he is due on the set at one o'clock", I did. I called Nick Grinde's phone, but he wasn't there. I didn't tell anyone that he wasn't there, and at one o'clock I went down onto the stage (this is known as Hootspur), walked in and said, "Yes, I'm directing the tests of these three young ladies." I had them sit, stand, walk around, look out the window, show all sides. . . make close-ups from a revolving chair, etc. The three ladies: first was a girl called Joyce Coade--she became a minor film player; the second, Hilda Knight, who had been a show girl on Broadway; the third, a

very exotic girl who ultimately became a very exotic extra, her name--Poppy Wilde. She was as exotic as her name.

That day I said, "I'm directing", the cameraman was a chap called Les White. I told him what to do, and he did it. That's all there was to it. So when the tests came up, as I would with any other tests, I cut them, put them together, and showed them to the people in the Casting Office. They saw my name on the slate, everybody thought somebody else had told me to direct, and that's how I got my feet wet. Oh, boy, once you get your feet wet, you never want them to be dry again. I kept mine going; they weren't dry for many, many, many years. It seemed automatic when there were tests to direct, they would call me.

Like my Mother holding a job in one Broadway show as understudy, and playing a part in another show on the other side of Schubert's Alley, "It's always good to have two jobs." I ran between the Casting Office and the test room in the Cutting Department.

Now I would be called to direct a test that needed rehearsal. I would try to find a stage that was not being used, or borrow someone's office who was on location. In later cases, I had a paper sign printed with my name, which I could quickly slip in--and the owner's out.

Sometimes I would have photos of a wife and teenage children!!!

Next to the Casting Office was the large call board. Each director's name was painted on a piece of tin and slid in a slot.

Next, in chalk, would be written the call, the picture, the time, location, etc. I came by one day, and there was "MY NAME"--I had made the call-board with all the others.

My double life as test director and film boy was difficult. I was apt to run into someone whose test I had directed whilst hustling cans of film. There was an excuse: "I'm helping the kid in the test room." It wasn't a lie.

There was an office over the Barber Shop. No one wanted it. I told the Casting Director it would be a handy spot for me. "Take it." He could care less. So, my first office--desk, chair, and couch. (More later).

Many a night I would sleep in the cutting room or on a sound stage, or any place. I found I could go twice as fast if I could work the day and night shift. As long as somebody was there to do the jobs, no one really cared.

I would run into the studio manager, Eddie Mannix, every once in awhile. He would say, "Hey, Kid, where are you working now?" I would say, "Oh, Mr. Mannix, I'm in this department, or that department, or the other." He would just shake his head.

Then once I was sent for by Mr. Mannix; I went to his office, "Look, it shows on the payroll that you made ninety-one dollars last week." I said, "Yes, Sir." He said, "How could that be possible? You only get thirty-four dollars for this job." Well, it seems that last week I had worked on two and one-half jobs, I had taken the day job as well as a night job, and also an overtime job, so I was getting--I was doing the work of two and one-half people. He said, "Well, that's fine; that's great

ingenuity, but you can't do that." I said, "Why not? I'm strong and healthy." He said, "What do you really want to be?" I said, "Mr. Mannix, I want to be a director." "That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard of. There are three hundred forty departments in this studio, and you'd have to spend three years in each department." I looked right into this Irishman's face and said, "I'm very young; I'll die trying." With that, he looked, and he grunted. He said, "Be ready in front of the studio at six o'clock tonight." It was a Friday. "We're going to Agua Caliente for the weekend." It was a wonderful relationship with Eddie Mannix, who was called the smiling Irishman, who started as a bouncer in Palisades Park, New Jersey.

That's true. I worked day and night, I must say, but I didn't think it a big deal. I thought it was just natural.

I continued being a pinball, doing any and all odd jobs that were available. I would bounce back from test director to Shorts Department, second units from the Production Department. Anytime that I knew a second unit would be going out (it might be someone that was just shooting the background for a process plate, a car going down a road with doubles, well, certainly none of the directors was interested in going through the San Fernando Valley with a camera car) so if they could shift that task off onto me, that was fine.

I took wonderful assignments like going up to the mountains and sitting for four or five days until the sun came up, or, conversely, until the sun went down. Shots of the sun coming

up and coming down over or in the beautiful Pacific. Shots of the ocean breaking upon the shore. There was a time that MGM decided that they needed a replacement for the Leo the Lion trademark, because the negative of the original Leo the Lion had shrunk, and it was getting practically impossible to print. . . they were duping it and duping it -- I didn't say stuping it, I said duping it--and the Lion was getting weaker and weaker, not the magnificent Leo the Lion, which, incidentally, came about by quick adlib. When they formed MGM -- someone said we need a trademark, or mascot. The fellow who was in charge of publicity--he was a young man--just out of Columbia College in New York, and Columbia's emblem is a lion. His name was Howard Dietz. (He went on to fame as head of MGM's publicity, produced and wrote wonderful shows in New York.) He just jumped in quickly and said, "I've got it, of course, I've got it." The first thing that came into his head was Columbia's lion. That's how we got Leo the Lion.

Nonetheless, getting back to my experience with Leo the Lion, we photographed, photographed, and photographed, trying to get a lion to imitate the original lion. We needed a new, clean piece of negative to replace our trademark. We practically did everything, including bringing the lion into the projection room and showing him what we wanted. Thousands and millions of feet later, we could never duplicate the original Leo, so they put some wonderful men on the job to find a way to restore the original negative.

Those were the kind of jobs. There were seagulls diving in the water, or any old thing that would come along. Sometimes in a film, everybody looks and they cut to a baby in a crib going 'Ga, Ga, Ga,' Well, that was the kind of work I did--I was very good at that, photographing babies waking up and sleeping and crying. I know at one time, I had to get this baby to cry. It was a very happy baby. I got him to cry like mad. I pinched his toes. The rumor got out that I had used a nail. Well, this caused a whole rumpus with the Society For The Protection of Little Brats, and that got me into the directing of the 'Our Gang' comedies.

MGM released the films from the Hal Roach Studios. Hal Roach Studios was about a mile and one half east of the MGM main studio, in Culver City. There, Mr. Roach did comedies, one-reelers, two-reelers, and occasionally a feature. He had Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chase, and the 'Our Gang' comedies. He was a comedy king. After Mack Senett, he was the most famous man of comedies. MGM had a deal. They released his comedies. MGM decided to take the 'Our Gang' comedies, bring them over and make them on the MGM lot. Well, who else would be better, and bingo, they got me, the big child psychiatrist. At the time, at Roaches, the 'Gangs' were being made by Gordon Douglas, who went on to become a very fine director. So anyway, the 'Our Gang' comedies were dumped upon me, and what no one seemed to know or care about, really, was that the oldest kid in the 'Our Gang' comedies, Spanky McFarlane, was only my junior by seventeen months. However, he was very small and pudgy and I was very tall

and pudgy--about two hundred fifteen pounds. I had just cancelled out smoking cigars and was now on a pipe. I had been smoking cigars since I was twelve years old. My father gave me a beautiful box of Havana Cigars on my twelfth birthday. He and I were exactly the same size and the same weight. On my twelfth birthday, he and I shaved once a day. My father said, "Good cigars will never hurt you, and I don't want you to smoke cigarettes." So, I started smoking cigars, and then they kinda got in the way. Then, later on, I started smoking pipes, which I did for forty-eight years until I gave that up. However, I . . . back to the 'Our Gang' comedies.

I started to direct those little monsters, and I use the word advisedly, because it was really rough. Rough in other aspects than you would think. One thing is being on a set all day long and hearing those high-pitched voices, but then at night, coming in and looking at the film you've shot the day before, and again hearing those high pitched voices--you were going home and your head was in compression. It was just like Chinese torture. I really couldn't stand the frequency.

I went to the studio. "Look, what would you say if I could make two of these at once? In the same time that it takes to make one, I will make two. I will have a script on the left hand side of the page. It will be script A, and the script on the right hand side will be Script B." It's the old joke--in one scene the Cowboys chase the Indians, and then the Indians turn around and chase the Cowboys. I used that method which I had picked up when I was at one time down on Poverty Row. The

studio said, "We really don't give a damn, as long as you make so many of these a month." I said, "By doing this, do I get a week off from the yelling and screaming?" They said, "Sure, it's all yours." So that's what I did to save my head and some kind of reason.

The 'Our Gang' kids -- those kids were brought up in a world that was a never-never land. They were in the Land of Oz. They were in a land that was unreal spelled, R E E L. Anything could be possible, including the dreaded whipping machine.

When Gordon passed them on to me, he said, "Save the whipping machine for when things get very, very difficult." So I held back. Only when there would be absolute mayhem on the set, would I mention bringing in the whipping machine. Those kids knew that we could turn on light, turn on the rain, turn on the snow, make the water go over the waterfall, make the water go back the other way. . . we had every magic at our fingertips, so it was just possible that there was a whipping machine. They were not going to press their luck . . . "Warm up the whipping machine" usually quieted them down.

However, results were slow . . . we shot one word at a time, because while I would not deprecate this group of young actors, they were not what you'd call 'talented'. They had been picked for other reasons . . . They were visual oddities

...a strange looking group, and it was this very dissimilarity that made them interesting and funny.

They are still running those shows in the late afternoon T.V. time slots. Occasionally I go to someone's house where there are young kids, and I'll be introduced with: "Here he is! He is the hero! He is the man who made the 'Our Gang' comedies." With the kids, that makes me R E E L big!

However, the 'Our Gang' children lived in a world that was so unreal that their ultimate tragic endings were not difficult to predict.

Alfalfa Schweitzer, for example, was some kind of a hillbilly. His 'talent' was that he could sing off key -- a lock of hair sticking up the back of his head -- while his eyes popped . . . . But, Carl (his real handle) grew up to be a kind of a bad boy. He was always in trouble. Finally he pulled a knife on someone in a bar in North Hollywood and Alfalfa got a bullet right between his eyes. That was his demise.

Spanky McFarlane was certainly the ringleader, and had the most talent. He followed the famous first fat boy called Joe Cobb. Spanky tried to work in Vegas and different places in Nevada -- as a greeter and doing little odd jobs -- still hanging onto the image of Spanky.

You know, show business is wonderful -- it's wonderful and it's dastardly. If you've ever been in it and had a little

recognition, there's always a crumb to nibble on. In Vegas, on or off the Strip, even way downtown -- in some shooting gallery -- there will be some act or personality who was once a little something and they're still hanging on. Whenever I go into any town, I always grab a theatrical paper, and I always find a name from the past -- still plodding away. Well, that was what Spanky tried, but it never came off.

Darla Hood was a typical theatrical child. She was a very beautiful, charming child, although she was like a little old lady, in a sense. She had perfect manners. You know, she grew up to be a little lady with white gloves and all the trimmings. She sang in an act with Jimmy McHugh, the song writer of 'I can't give you anything but love, Baby.' He did an act with beautiful girls. She went on the road and sang. They played here at Ciro's -- nothing really happened. Darla died at a very, very young age.

Another girl who had been early in the 'Gang' was a Mary Cornman. Her nickname was 'Corny.' She married a cameraman. (I can't remember his name...we can fill that in later) but, she just disappeared. It's kind of like Annette Funicello hanging on to being one of the Mousekeeters.

People still say, "Whatever happened to Edna May?", meaning Deanna. Well, she is in France and she is fat -- no, she isn't fat -- she's thin (according to a letter from her.) But, what happens to most of these people is frightening.

Now, Buckwheat was the little black boy -- a lovely young man. He recently died. His name was William Thomas and he had managed to throw off the cloak of being the Buckwheat of the 'Our Gang' comedies, and went on to lead quite a normal life.

We would bring in other juvenile actors, who would not be in the 'Gang' -- but would play opposite, usually as a heavy or the new boy -- Scotty Beckett, Tommy Bond, and Bobby Blake -- who continued as an exceptional adult actor and television star.

Then, there was the cutest little boy. I believe he was from the South. His name was Porky. He was just one of those kids. I've no idea what has happened to him, but he managed to throw off the name 'Porky' and lose his identity as a member of the 'Gang.' He may be a weight lifter somewhere by now.

You may recall the famous Rose Bowl Game when a man named Roy Regals grabbed the ball, ran the wrong way, scored a touchdown -- the other team won. Well, when Roy went out to get jobs in the outside world, and said his name was Roy Regals, all laughed and said, "You're Roy Regals -- the fellow who ran the wrong way with the ball..." He ultimately had to change his name or kill himself. His saga was used as the opening of a film.

But, for these kids it was a never-never land. They used to play little pranks -- mean ones. They'd always be ganging up

on someone. There was always some action going on.

You'd line them up in a straight line and issue instructions: "You, stand here; if I point to you, you say your word.

The kids would get big nails -- like huge spikes -- that we had on the set, put them in their pockets, and during the take, one kid would poke the other through his pocket. They had a code. One kid would be bawling, but you could never find out who did it. You'd have to be the detective.

On the detective's front we had, in the back of the set, all the mothers and fathers who wanted to be close to see that their darlings (and livelyhoods) were making it. One day I was being mischievious. As we were lining up I yelled at my assistant whose name was Sid. "Sid, stop hitting that kid."

You could hear the Charge of the Light Brigade . . . all those hooves, all those shoes -- running, running, running -- their heads popped around the side of the set. And there was Sid -- taken aback completely. He was just standing there, lining up the six kids. He looked at me and said, "I didn't hit a kid." I said, "Don't you ever do that. Don't you ever hit a child."

I looked around at all the parents standing there, and assured them everything was all right so they went back to their seats. A few minutes later, I said, "Sid, don't you dare hit a kid like that! You can't do that." Again they came running. This was a little bit of my revenge on those people

who, if you let them, would try to outmaneuver you into making their kid look better than and steal from the other kid. So, if you would permit it, you'd have eleven directors.

There were sensitivities back that far. I was told I had to reshoot a scene because I had the little girl, Darla Hood, stand next to the little boy, Buckwheat, who happened to be black. They said the picture would not be accepted in any of the Southern States, because you could not have a little white girl standing next to a little black boy. I thought this kind of strange, but those were the rules.

The kids were lined up. I made a close up of this one, a two-shot, and a three-shot -- just straight across -- and I pointed. This kid said a word, the next one said a word, and the cutter practically used a sewing machine to put it all together.

I'm shooting away, the script clerk is hitting me in the side, says, "You've gotta stop, you've gotta stop." I said, "No. No. No. Leave me alone; we're shooting." The script clerk points. At the end of the line a little boy had managed to get ahold of a very personal piece of his anatomy. He had it out and was examining it. Now, I'm sure, had I not cut and left that in the picture, that probably would have been the start of what the screen became. Now, what I'd really like to be able to tell, is about the man who became a star later in

'Hair' and went on to be a big sensation, but that I just can't tell you.

The 'Our Gang' comedies were all done on formula. Basically there was only one story. It was the story of how to get the money to buy the uniforms. They'd put on a show, sell biscuits or cookies. Sometimes the plot was varied and someone's grandmother was sick. Then they'd have to get the money for the doctor . . . but it was always the same. And the amazing thing is that it worked, and still does. Despite the star—war age we're into, there is still an audience who watch this kind of bucolic entertainment.

However, in my 'Pilgrim's Progress' from one department to another, from one assignment to another, before I was assigned those monsters of the 'Our Gang' comedies, I decided that, in addition to the screen tests, I would like to be in the Shorts Department. I managed to hang around to pick up this and that until, finally, among my other duties, I was also in the Shorts Department.

I was working as kind of an assistant to Pete Smith, the man who had acid deliveries and was popular for his candid and usual anti opinions. He did a series of shorts called 'From a Smith Called Pete'. . . that was kind of the big time, so I had to connive on how to get me in.

In those days, the Shorts Department was populated by a

group of people that were later to all make their mark, more or less; Fred Zinneman, a wonderful director; John Farrow, who directed 'Around the World in 80 Days'; Dave Miller, Jacques Tourneur; Harold Bouquet; Jules Dassin, and others. I was low man on the totem pole. I was the assistant director, second assistant director, up to ninth assistant director on a donkey baseball short, or a dog short, or anything I could get.

I had the distinction of being assistant director on a glider short, which we were shooting atop San Jacinto Mountain, right above Palm Springs. We all were tyros as far as knowing anything about gliders, when the director yelled 'Action", we pulled the glider and off it went sailing off into space. Then the director yelled, 'Cut, bring the glider back."

Well, the fellow tried to land the glider but the thermals sent it higher up, skyrocketing into the sky. Finally, the glider landed somewhere in San Bernardino. As Assistant Director, it was my job to find it and bring it back up the mountain so we could make the shot the following day.

But I was always there, trying to figure out what could I do. I figured that the pen is mightier than the foot, so I sat down and wrote a short called 'King Winter' which had a twofold purpose: I might get to be the

director and since it was written for location shooting at Lake Placid, N.Y., I could go back home and check out Broadway.

They read my script in the Shorts Department; rejected it...said it was nothing, lousy, terrible.

I said,"Well, if it's so lousy and terrible, is it all right if I sell it somewhere else?" "Oh," they said, "Go ahead. Sure, sell it!"

It so happened that Warners was making a lot of shorts in the old Warner Brothers Studio in Long Island, Astoria, Brooklyn. I sent it back there and the studio bought it for $400 which was a lot of money for a one reel dummy short;..(meaning silent short.)

When the news reached MGM, it impressed everybody. But now I had to figure out exactly what did I have that Freddy Zinneman or Dassin or Miller didn't have. What was my ace in the hole...what was my weeny?

I had been trying to play a game called Polo and interestingly enough, Hal Roach, who had the studio down the street, also had a ranch on Robertson Boulevard where they had outdoor sets. It had a small Polo field and it was there he kept his Polo ponies. Mr. Roach allowed me to exercise his ponies and actually take them out and play in Polo games...they needed to be played and I was young and strong. It was great...it wasn't a courtesy for me...it was all for the ponies.

They read my script "polo" and liked it until they realized none of them knew a damn thing about Polo...Polo was a game for a bunch of sissies who played with mallets or something. Finally, they were deciding they couldn't make the short when someone came up with the brilliant idea: get the fellow who wrote it. Let him direct it. Who was that? That was me!

Off I went to Fleishman Field in Santa Barbara. As I look back, we paid them nothing to use their horses, their equipment and themselves - and there I made my very own short, put my name on the top. It was photographed by a man called Charles Clark, who later became a famous camera-man and president of the ASC and a man with many photographic honors.

Working as the Asst. Director on a 1 reel short - starring Charles "Chick" Sales, the creator and popularizer of "The Privy", it was called "Windy" and Chick played the title role. In one scene it was necessary to have a rattlesnake threaten a little girl. Windy would come along and shoot it; the director, Bouquet, said, "Now, you get the rattlesnake." "Oh, yes, yes, yes." I ran, got a casting book of animals, there it was Reptile Specialist. I sent for this man, he came up to my little office, my cubby hole - it was a broom closet above the old barber shop - the man entered, carrying a large briefcase, larger than a brief-case, more of a suitcase, he wore a black suit, cane and pince-nez glasses, vest, chain, etc. "Now, I have a scene

here and I want a snake to do this, that and the other." He opened up his case, he threw the rattlesnake right in front of me on the desk. He said, "You know this snake is a picture snake." I said, "Oh? He said, "Yes, he's trained, he will never look at the camera." I said, "Oh... are you sure he won't look at the camera?" "No, absolutely." I said, "You can take him away." "You want to see any of the others?" I said, "No, I have taken a liking to him. He looks fine. You're sure that he won't look at the camera?" The guy said, "No, he's a pro." "Okay, you be here at five o'clock in the morning with my friend and we'll go on location." I went back to the director, Harry Bouquet, he said, "You get the snake." "Harry, have I got a snake for you. I got a rattlesnake - this thing is trained, absolutely will not look at the camera." Harry gave me a look, being a long time assistant director and director, knowing that I had been had, which I didn't know.

The next day out on location, late in the afternoon, we were shooting in a place called Chino which was just a little church, and the schoolyard - now it's all condos - the little girl was there, caught outside of the school, this rattlesnake is going to menace her, along comes 'Windy' and shoots the snake. The director, "Okay, get the snake out that won't look at the camera." "Where do you want it." Harry says, "Put it right down there and we'll shoot the scene - see if

the camera's all set up." The director looked at me, "Okay, bring on your actor." I brought on my fellow snake charmer, he reached in, took out the snake and put it down on the mark, that's the last the world has ever seen of that snake. He just took off and he was in Mexico in nothing flat. The director just looked at me and said, "Hey, that's the snake that won't look at the camera, huh?" Well, I had a little problem living that one down. We got another snake nearby and shot our scenes. That, with the kids in the 'Our Gang' comedies, is why I don't like kids, and why I don't like snakes.

I was really big with all the animal acts. I went to Stanford University, where they had made a great deal of tests with mice, going through all kinds of contraptions, mazes, and labyrinths - these were orientation studies - the right man for the right job, finding the blow-off point - we call this short "Pups and Puzzles", we went through all the scientific stuff (which I will go later into detail). I got some great pictures of mice running around, etc., etc. That particular short won the Academy Award that year. I realized that we had a lot of film laying around that never got used.

Thus we did, 'Willy and the Mouse' and there we showed the difference between man and animals (so called), man and monkeys (so called) where a man instinctively will use tools. A man in the earlier stages, pre-Neanderthal, would take a stick to knock down a banana. Now, leave the stick, hang the bananas overhead, bring in the Chimpanzee, although a Chimpanzee is the closest to us of all the simians, he does

21 acts that so-called mammalians do, but he will never pick up that stick and use it to hit the bananas down.

We managed to do some interesting film where he would run up the stick, and try to grab the bananas. In one place he gets caught with one hand on a banana - (a bunch of bananas) and the other foot hanging onto the stick, which gave the scientists something to think about. But this was another award winning experience, everyone was very happy.

At the same time, I was still doing the screen tests because, of it all including movies, testing is "the" great thrill, the excitement of creation in making screen tests, because you're creating people, new talent is the life blood of our industry as Mr. Mayer would always say, "Give me new people - we'll make them stars."

There were always plenty of people to test. There were days I would start testing at nine o'clock in the morning, and still be testing at one o'clock after midnight.

The people would just come in, and you'd turn around. "What do you do?" The fellow says, "I know the last speech of 'Last Mile'" to the crew, "Okay, 'Last Mile' and bingo, the prison cell would be in place.

We had a stage that was called 1A. It was back of the big music recording stage at one time, it had been the music recording stage. Before they moved into stage 1 for the big orchestra.

This little stage was left and became the test stage.

That was my pride and joy, where I say, "I spent my youth." People say, "What school did you go to?" I say, "I went to MGM, lA" We had usually the same crew, it was all black and white, with just a couple of fellows, so we did everything. I mean, no one was watching so I was allowed to photograph a lot of the tests as well as direct them, also acted in the tests.

I went to see the Irish players, playing here, the Abbey Players, I went backstage and I told an actor, "You can come out to the studio next day, I want to make a test of you." He came out and I had the guts to act with him in a scene with me Irish dialect; but after all, I do come by it legitimately, to an extent. After all, my mother's name was O'Mooney. I played this whole scene with this actor. I thanked him and a couple of days later, when the test was shown - I was called into the front office...they were furious, said "You made a test of foreigners, this man, he can't even speak English, you can't understand a word." Well, this same man went on to win the Academy Award for 'Going My Way". His name was Barry Fitzgerald and he still talked the same way when we made the test.

Another time I ran into a chap whose name was 'Tiny', that was his nickname, he was most handsome and most manly. When a test of a person is made, the director supplies the person that assists. I had 'Tiny' assisting in this test. When this test came up, the front office went crazy, said, "You're making a test of a midget, you know no leading man could ever be like that, he's too small. Plus, he has blond

hair and you don't have blond leading men." I said, look at this man, he's perfect, his body's - he's a perfect size - unbelievable. He's certainly a man." They said, "Oh, no, no, no."

Anyway it was the girl's test. She took it to Paramount, to see her test. They saw "Tiny". "We'll sign him up." They signed up our friend, Tiny, his name was Alan Ladd.

But, of course, it is a two-way street. 20th Century Fox had Spencer Tracy, they just didn't know what to do with him. A couple of pictures like 'Up The River' and they threw him out. The king of the movies, Clark Gable, he was around this town. He worked in all the studios. I believe he started as an extra and bits, and things until MGM picked him up. It was a picture called, 'The Secret Six', opposite Jean Harlow, that really launched him.

Jean Harlow, she had been around in many studios also The late Marilyn Monroe - it doesn't speak badly of a studio when they miss a person.

I met a young lady from Texas, a charming, lovely young lady. I had room to put someone in tests to assist the other person being tested. So I used her. The studio knew that she and I had gone out for dinner here and there, or something like that, and they were furious. They said, "Don't put your girlfriends in tests, don't waste our film with your friends, this is business." Well, that test went over to Warners and they signed her. Someone made up a word called 'oomph'. Her name was Clara Lou, but they changed it to Ann. Her name was

Ann Sheridan...and that's how it happens. RKO had Van Johnson but they dropped him...this story could be told about many people who proved to be great talents.

Then there were other times you'd have a real lucky day. One day I made a test of Van Heflin and Donna Reid. They were both signed to contracts. This made you feel very, very good.

The Wilshire Ebel Theatre used to have live talent shows on Sunday nights with about six acts of vaudeville. If you were in the talent department, you were at the Ebel. Since I was in the Talent Department, the Testing Department, even worked as the Test Director, the Shorts Director, including the broom (I knew what to do with "it", also), I was there!

Mrs. Ida "Kay" Koverman was Mr. Mayer's Executive Secretary. She was a very great lady...a great dame and a master of the backroom Republican political power in this country. She also liked to find talent.

One Sunday night, the three Gumm sisters sang at the Ebel to the piano accompaniment of their mother.

Mrs. Kay said, "Bring them to the studio and make a test of the little girl."

I remember distinctly that the next day, the little girl with her mother arrived on Stage 16. Mrs. Gumm sat at the piano and played while the little girl did a number about some kind of a baseball game. She used a little basebell bat as a prop and sang. How she sang! She was signed...and that was the beginning of Miss Judy Garland.

Also a girl named Edna May Durbin, the studio had two pre-teenage girls. It was questioned what to do with them - the two girls made a short called 'Every Sunday' and Edna May, "Deanna" as later known, sang classical. This other little thing, Judy, sang hot. Hot vs. classical, that's what it was all about.

Something happened where Durbin's contract lapsed. They forgot by mistake to pick it up, because no one was really interested. Universal had been waiting, they signed her, when MGM discovered that, they said, "Oh, my God, what a loss, they got the pretty girl with the big operatic voice and we got the little ugly one with the big mouth."

At Universal, Mr. Joe Pasternak came along, latched onto Durbin and made her a star. Joe was responsible for making the screen kind of semi-classical conscious. He brought out Leopold Stokowski, played good music on the screen, had people sing and dance and brought a whole new popular culture. Later on, he was responsible for bringing Jose Iturbi, Lauritz Melchoir and people from the legit to give the screen a little class.

MGM was left with this little girl, it was quite a problem. What's going to happen to her because, one thing, this little girl had such a big voice, you just couldn't believe that it came out of her. She was sent to do radio with Bob Hope, you couldn't see her, you could just hear her sing, which was wonderful.

It looked rather bleak, she opened a flower store. Garland Flower, a store on Wilshire Boulevard. I have

pictures here of the opening night. The way she got that name, of course, she was singing on a radio station in New York, WHN, as fate would just have it, my father was the managing director, it was his station. The poet Laureat of show business was there, Georgie Jessel. He said, "God, this girl, she sings, her voice is like a garland." And that's how she got the name - Judy Garland. Now George could have been less or more poetic, he could have said, "She sings like a nightingale." She would have been known as Judy Nightingale, or "She sings like a Meadowlark", and then Judy Meadow.

That is the way show business goes, it goes round and round; the metamorphosis of Judy is the true story of the Ugly Duckling, who became the Swan and the great lady. Of course, hers is one of the tragic, tragic stories of our show business. One of our truly great talents.

I remember working with Judy and Mickey on "Babes on Broadway'. I was sent East to do a sequence with the old town cryer, Alexander Woolcott. The studio gave me instructions; they gave me $5,000 in the form of a check. Said, "Now don't take this out of your pocket until you have all the film; the minute he sees the check, goodbye, that's it." And have lots of chocolate ice cream and let him eat his chocolate ice cream and you just keep shooting until you have everything you want."

I went back, rented a studio, built a little set, and had the pages for him.

The great man arrived looking very much like Alexander Woolcott. I had chocolate ice cream right there, that impressed him and he gave me 'the young man' business. He confessed he thought I was kind of a nice fellow, but I'd get nowhere being a nice fellow - the only way he got any place was being a bastard - he was no one until he'd managed to say such terrible things about the Schubert Brothers that he got banned from their theaters, that's what made him a critic, that was his road to success.

We had a lot of fun with that, I'd finished shooting, I just wanted to test if what they'd told me was true. I said, "Mr. Woolcott, here is the check, now there'll be just one more shot - it will take us a few minutes to line up." I walked back towards the camera, that is the last that I ever saw of the Town Cryer. His derrier beating a fast retreat out of the Fox 10th Avenue Studio, as the setting sun went over the Palisades.

Of course, it wasn't all work, it just seemed like that. And, especially to a fellow who had a convertible, turquoise blue with orange wire wheels, Chevrolet. He was in quite demand for many things. I lived at a place called the Altanido Apartments in Hollywood. I would come down Franklin and every morning on the corner, I would pick up

a chap about 8 or 10 blocks from where I lived, I would give him a lift to the studio. His name was Spangler Arlington Brugh. He was under contract to the studio for $35 dollars weekly. He had made a test at Goldwyn's - they didn't take him.

He was used in tests to assist or anything else. They tried other names, he was called Bob Bruce, a very handsome chap and actually we called him 'Doc," because that was his nickname. He had gone to Pomona College and he played the cello. He was put in a 'Crime does not pay' short, and he was quite good.

Those were the days of the 'A' units, 'B' units and the 'C' units they used to make some little detective pictures, hospital pictures, and detective pictures, they were ready to make a hospital picture, at 5 o'clock the night before, I forgot who the actor was, but the actor wanted more money or whatever it was, the studio wouldn't give in, the actor walked out, "Get that kid with the funny name and who was in that short." He was put in the lead, called Robert Taylor, that's how Bob got his start. So it all intertwines.

A whole gang of us would go around, use the word 'dating', go around places it was kind of the hamburger, coca cola, bowling, swimming, weekend Catalina, - Caliente - weekend in Arrowhead Springs, kind of set.

I was living in this, what I called the largest theatrical boarding house west of Broadway - it was a four-

story apartment called 'The Altonido'. We called it "The Alter Cocker". There were all kinds of theatrical people living there. At night, you just left your door open, there was a group everywhere sitting around with corned beef sandwiches talking show business. When I say theatrical, this means vaudeville films, circus, radio and on to the legitimate theater. A last outpost of Broadway,

Mr. and Mrs. Norman Phillips Junior, Bunny Granville, his daughter, Bonita -- etc.

Uncle Jack said, "There are some great friends of mine called Keno and Green, they do a vaudeville act, you've seen it for years. I said, "Yes. They have a little kid who became a big movie star when she was about 8 years old." Uncle Jack continued, "She's not 8 years old any longer. She's grown up, she's coming out of her teens, hasn't really found her way back into show business, going through that ungainly stage, I'd like you to meet her. I think you two would get on fine.

I met Mitzi Green and bingo, that was LOVE at first sight. We were just right. We came from the same place, show-biz, from theatrical families. We matched. All we talked about was show business, show business, and more show business. Then we played another week we also had two common interests, each other and we were both career crazy.

Mitzi had been a big star, $4-5,000 a week, as an 8 year old, because Mitzi could do great imitations, especially George Arliss.

I was still in the $38 a week class, my days of having

been a silent star as Lord Fauntleroy, and with Tom Mix, were way in the past. We had ambition. I wanted to be a movie maker - she wanted to be a star on Broadway and the movies, both wanted in show business, we got on wonderfully. You know, as they say, show business is a weird way of bringing people together and I suppose, conversely, it can take people apart. With everything being equal and everything being right, there is no question that Mitzi and I should have stayed and remained together.

This also was show business, I was here in California trying. She had matured; being a teenager, it was time to stretch. She went to Broadway and she did 'Babes in Arms'.

I was involved with some film -- it's like when you're playing in Vaudeville, you play on the same bill in a town, then you never quite catch up again. That's what happened with us, although we would manage to visit each other, New York or California, but it just didn't work. I know I always had more than a very tender spot, a great respect and love for Mitzi.

As show business goes, one night she was pouting, rehearsing 'Babes in Arms'. Robert Sinclair was directing, Rogers and Hart did the songs, songs like 'Where or When' - wonderful songs. Mitzi said she wanted a sexy number, something dirty, exciting, grown-up.

"R & R" came back the next morning and said, "Mitzi, we have this grown-up, sexy song for you." "What's it called?" Larry answered, "The Lady is a Tramp." Now, if you're

familiar with the lyrics of 'The Lady is a Tramp' -- the lady is anything but a tramp; it's an 'in' joke on the subject -- it's just one of the great songs -- she teed off on that song, tore the theaters apart with it. One of the male leads was Alfred Drake and the other, a boy called Ray Heatherton (father of Joey Heatherton). There was a girl called Nan Wynn and a young chorus boy called Dan Daley, and brother-and-sister act, Ray and Grace McDonald. Later, they were in pictures.

I also had a strange relationship with this song. Years later, I was going to make a film called 'Pal Joey', we had the right in our contract to incorporate other songs written by Rodgers & Hart, from other productions, so we took "There's A Small Hotel". I got the idea to have Sinatra's 'Pal Joey' character sing 'The Lady is a Tramp'. I told this to Harry Cohen, I'm gonna have Frank sing 'The Lady is a Tramp'. "How can you do that; a girl sings that song, never a boy." I said it doesn't mean it's a law in concrete; it doesn't have to be. He said, "Look, it's your picture, do anything you want; I bet you Sinatra won't sing it." "We'll see about that."

Frank was at Paramount doing the Joe E. Lewis picture. I went over to Frank, "Listen, Frank, I've got an idea -- I'd like you to sing 'The Lady is a Tramp' to Rita Hayworth." Frank didn't say anything; he was going off to shoot. A couple of weeks later, I had a call; it was Frank - he was in 'Vegas playing at the Sands. "Hey - (We kind of had a thing, called

each other 'Pal' George and 'Pal' Frank), and he said, "Hey, Pal George, I've gotta see you; it's very important; please come up to 'Vegas tonight." So I got up there before the supper show and went back-stage and there was Frances Albert getting himself ready. "Hi, Pal Frank, here I am - what is it?" "You don't look very well." "What do you mean, I'm feeling great." Frank, "Have you eaten?" I said, "I've lunch." He said, "Oh, I think you'd better eat, you don't look well at all." "Frank, what do you want to talk about?" He said, "No, no, we'll talk later, but you'd better eat." I said, "No, I'll go to the room and then after the show we'll get together. He said, "No, no, you go out and sit in Jack Entratter's booth, while the show is on, have dinner and then we'll talk." "All right." So I went out, had dinner, Frank came on and did 8 or 10 songs. In the dinner show, he just did one song, bing, bing, bing, never stopped to talk or joke. The last song, all of a sudden you heard, "da da de de da," and he did 'The Lady is a Tramp'. Well, it just tore the whole joint apart. After the show, I was sitting at what we called 'our' table, the house table, reserved for anybody with the house, the civilians weren't allowed to sit there. I was sitting there and Frank strolled by, he looked at me and said, "How do you like my new song?" "Great, pretty good," and so that's how it became part of 'Pal Joey', which is not in the original score. Now, when anybody does the score of 'Pal Joey', they do 'The Lady is a Tramp'. And somewhere along the line, Lena Horne has kind of become famous with the song. But

that, in one sense, shows you the shrewdness of what Frank Sinatra is. I would say, he knows more about the rendering (not to mean tearing apart) but the constructiveness and the construction of a song, an orchestration, how a song should be done, and the value of a song, vis a vis to perform it, to sing it, to get the meaning. Of course, the recording of 'Lady is a Tramp' was a big, a very big success.

The day we were going to record it, Nelson Riddle, another major monstrous talent, had made the arrangement - he brought it in, played it over. Frank listened to it. "Orchestration fine," Frank got up to the mike, he sang it once. Now, we were listening to the playback and he didn't say anything, kinda looked at me and gave me the blue eyes. I said, "You know, I think in Vegas you hit the last note a little higher." He just looked at me for a long moment, turned away, he unbuttoned the top button of his shirt, loosened his necktie, we turned the sound, ready to do the song. As he hit that last note, 'That's why the lady' and really hit the top of the stage -- by the time the band had finished, because there was a little coda -- coda meaning musical play-off, used for Frank to dance with Rita Hayworth, get fresh, escorting her out of the cafe, hence off to their first affair. By the time that music was finished, he had already buttoned his tie, buttoned the shirt, put his hat on, had his coat. He heard the playback and was gone because he is "the" pro, he knew that I was right, that it could be done better and he <u>did</u> it. He knew he couldn't do it any better, and off he went.

It was a long time since Mitzi had introduced the song. Mitzi had passed on, having had a lovely marriage with Joe Pevney, actor turned director, wonderful children. She had a terrible lingering sickness, she carried on, beautiful, as a trooper.

The funeral was bittersweet, nostalgic, reassembling the "Hollywood Kids" of yesteryears: Jackie Coogan; Jackie Cooper; Bonita Granville; Jane Withers; Johnny Downs -- and so many others. This was the curtain coming down on "Tom Sawyer", "Huckleberry Finn" -- certainly an end of an era. Some had grown out and up from their early fame; others had met middle age in their own way. We all knew our youth was laid to rest.

When Mitzi had played Vaudeville, she would worry no one would remember her. She asked the Master of Ceremonies, J. C. Flippen (who was the Colonel for my father's Amateur Hour on W.H.N.) to please tell the audience "This is Mitzi Green."

J.C. did the eulogy from a wheelchair -- he had lost a leg -- at the finish, his eyes left the flowered casket and, looking skyward, said, "God, This is Mitzi Green."

Mitzi had a stand-in; her name was also Green -- Anne Green. Anne's mother was a wardrobe woman. After Mitzi stopped being in pictures, Anne went on; she finally got the lead in a picture called 'Anne of Green Gables'. Anne, whose name was Green, took the name of her character in "Anne of Green Gables," the character's name was Anne Shirley. She became Anne Shirley and went on to success and fame in films.

In the Thirties there were many, many places to eat. One of the high-class spots was Mike Lyman's. Mike Lyman's was on the site of the Huntington Hartford Theater today (of which I happen to be a board member and treasurer). Mike Lyman, who was the brother of Abe Lyman, the band leader, and Simon, who was married to Fanchon of Fanchon and Marco. And that was their real name when Abe became a band leader, drummer, changed his name to Lyman.

This was the place to dine on Sunday - dinner for a dollar and that included a very fancy chocolate dessert. The captain there was a character. His name was Joe Mann. He knew everybody, he ran everything and he liked me and he liked Mitzi. So he would give us extra dessert. Another spot was a little Italian restaurant, a house, directly in back of the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, where the Roosevelt parking lot is today. All different rooms, it was a home, nothing had been done, they had tables in all the rooms, an Italian dinner for 35 cents, 45 cents, 65 cents, 75 cents and 85 cents that included wine. We never quite found out what the difference between 45 and 75 or 55 and 35 but we always ordered the 35 cents dinner; I'm sure we got the same as everyone else did.

It was always a big adventure to go to Chinatown. The unofficial mayor was a man called Tommy Gubbins; he held sway over Hoggins' Alley. "Bring on the food." Gangs of us would get together, pile into cars, off we would go; it was really fun. Another adventure going downtown on Saturday night -- we'd make a reservation for the midnight show at the Burbank

Follies Burlesque. There were great comics - Phil Silvers, Rags Ragland and Joe Yule, who was very great. And he had a son called Joe Yule, Jr., but he didn't use that name, he used the name of Mickey Rooney. On the bill, Betty Roland, the ball of fire, Hank Henry, and so many great artists.

On Monday night at the Orpheum Theater, a theater owned by people called Cohen (they changed their name to Corwin). Monday night was for show people, a lot of acts would go on, plus those from the East. It was a way of keeping in touch with Show Biz.

There was Olvera Street, the original Spanish square of Los Angeles, and the church, the first - Our Lady of Los Angeles, that Mexican bit was always pretty dull. They had a place where they dripped candles and La Golindrina Cafe you could get tereestas in the food, at that age we ate anything; it really didn't matter.

Years later, when I made "Anchors Aweigh" we had scenes with Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Kathryn Grayson on Olvera Street. But I had it reproduced on Stage 15. Our set was most romantic and beautiful and the smells lovely.

The class spot in town was the Trocodero; that was really elegant. On Sunday nights, they put on shows and acts, etc.. Later in my career, I made a short subject, a two-reeler, "Sunday Night at the Trocodero" that was the big stuff. I was working then as an independent, the studio gave me $18,000 to make this extravaganza. The idea was, anything over $18,000 I would pay for, anything under that amount, I could pocket. Well, I made it most elegant. I had Connie Boswell and she

sang a number with three little girls. I wrote the music and the lyrics (God forbid) and George Hamilton and his music box music. I needed a dance team, and I went to a dance studio of a man called Belcher, he was the ballet master, he had a daughter who was cute as a button. She danced with a boy called Louis Hightower (who was Rosella Hightower, the American Ballerina's brother.) He was killed in the war. This little girl's name was Marge Belcher. They did this dance -- swing version of Liebestraum, high-class stuff. That girl later became Marge Champion. She and her husband, Gower, appeared in "Show Boat" and several other films which I directed.

Note: I made Gower Champion a member of the Directors' Guild. I gave him one of the D.G.A. T.V. shows to direct - I held his hand - he was on his way. His greatest directorial achievements were in theatre, "Hello, Dolly" to "42nd Street" - He directed "Bye, Bye Birdie" on the stage. I was to produce the film, tried to get him, but he couldn't see it as a picture. I directed it later on.

Oh, and of course, to make a film like 'Sunday Night at the Trocodero', I went around town myself with an Eymo camera (that's a hand-held camera like a Super "8" today). I shot close-ups of stars waving to each other, any place there was a Benefit, a dance or the Coconut Grove - I just photographed stars. I cut the shots together; all the stars were waving at each other; you felt that every star in Hollywood was in my picture. I laid

it out to be shot in 24 hours around the clock; I could only get the 'Troc' for that time -- bringing so many extras in at this time, so many extra at that time, then later on, finally ended up with 600 dress extras, then dropped off the same way - but I did my homework so that in the middle, in the day I would have the most going.

Running the lights on gasoline generators in the parking lot, they were running out of gas. "Take the gasoline out of everybody's cars," and we ended up with 50 or 100 cars along the strip without gasoline. But finished, we did the whole thing in 24 hours.

I had made a test. PeterLynn Hayes and his mother was Grace Hayes, wonderful vaudevillian artist; he was, in short .

Note: Look up and see the rest of the stars, acts, etc., etc. that were in that short.

There was Stern's Barbecue in Culver City. You had to practically jump on it and hog-tie it before you could eat it hot! Pork, beans, potato salad and all I can say, "Youth took over and made it possible to digest."

For fish, it was Bernstein's Fish Grotto downtown Los Angeles; one of our favorite restaurants was Milse's - M I L S E. That was a restaurant, a little one-armed joint, right across from MGM. If you worked past your dinner time, in those days, they gave you a meal check; the meal check was good for a 75-cent dinner. Now you'd take check across to Milse, and out of the goodness of his heart, he would give

you 65 cents and keep one dime. Working six days and six nights, you got six times 65 cents; that was a lot of money, especially when you were earning 15 or 20 dollars a week. When you finally became an assistant director, you had the power of signing these meal tickets.

Somewhere along the line, I met up and started to date a spectacular blonde lady called Toby Wing. One thing when you went anywhere with Toby you always got your picture taken. She was sugar to the cameraman, this spectacular looking blonde girl with this contagious giggle and figure. This another phase ... There were places like the Clover Club, the Colony Club, they were the two gambling spots. They had great food, people would lose all kinds of money. Of course, never having gambled, it was a wonderful place to go, plenty to eat, mingle and see all the people dance which we were still of that age.

Hillcrest Country Club, John Steinberg had come from New York to get it established. Some of his traditions are still on deck.

Culver City had the Plantation and the Cotton Club. These places had name bands and floor shows. I shot in the Cotton Club, one of my shorts. I wanted something elegant; they had a lovely long bar with mirrors; I got about 12 show girls that were working there, redressed them or undressed them; anyway you want to put it -- had them walk along the top of the bar to the music of 'You never were lovelier before.' It was my small answer to the "Great Ziegfeld."

We would use these places as live sets, go in, slip somebody 10 dollars and do it. Borrow costumes, borrow people, give them 5 dollars, 10 dollars, and off we would go. It was from the Cotton Club that I took the band, Benny Carter, brought him to the studios. First time for a so-called 'Black Band' in the studios, to record and be photographed with Lena Horne doing 'Honeysuckle Rose'. (We will get to that much later.)

Then there was quite a place called Villa Eugene's, which was right at the top of the strip. You entered, went down a couple of floors. It was actually where the Luckman Building is today. Villa Eugene's opened at about 1 o'clock in the morning, they were open until about 8:00 a.m. It was a night spot, the action was very heavy and if you wanted privacy, candles, music and all that, it was available.

Then, from New York, formerly a Speakeasy, now a legitimate restaurant, was Mama Leone's. They came out, opened a restaurant on the strip, "Leone's of New York." The people in California, being completely chauvenistic, saw the word "New York" and no one came in. They kept away in droves. The restaurant failed and ultimately Billy Wilkinson grabbed it, naming it "La Rue".

Of course, then there was Sardi's. It was a nice place to take a date. Sometimes a drawing of your date would be next to your table, by artist, Zito. I know several of my dates had drawings: Mitzi, Ann Rutherford, Shirley, Toby and etc. But, of course, the big romantic thing was going in your car to McDonald's Drive Inn which was on the corner of Sunset

and Vine. You got a complete 35 cent chicken dinner with waffles and maple syrup, all that you could eat or get on you. Right next to that, on Sunset and Vine was a race-track where they had little automobiles, you could run round and then up above, beyond there, they had some link trainers and we hot shot pilots, like Eddie Norris, Bruce Pierce, Bob Taylor - we'd go down and think we were putting our time in on the link trainer.

And across the street was the Cherry Ho, a Chinese restaurant. It was quite good and a cozy little place. But three doors up, getting up to where Cy Devore's emporium is, was "La Conga," this was a hot place when the Latin beat finally came to the West Coast. Everybody was trying to learn how to do the conga. The conga lines would never stop; people would just drop. It was wonderful! You'd see Greg Bautzer, Lana Turner, Gene Tierney and all the young movie crowd; we would just dance for hours. I lived just down the street, at a place called The Ravenswood. I'd go home, shower, change clothes and back into the "fray".

The Ravenswood Apts., Hollywood: The proprietor, Miss Mae West. She lived in the Penthouse; I lived in the basement. Miss West was a great landlady; she had a white convertible Dusenberg car; if I had a hot date, she allowed me to borrow it for the evening. She would have you "up" for a home-cooked dinner. Her apartment was what you would expect: complete with swan bed. Sometimes Miss West, her exact look-alike sister, Beverly, and I would drive up the street to the

Film Art Theatre where the foreign films played. The theatre is now a market. Miss West was a true star, a tradition, a legend in her own time.

The Tropics, drinking spa, formerly a little real estate office, run by "Suggie" on Rodeo Drive. Everyone's picture up on the wall. Your name on the menu, they'd name a drink or dedicate a prize shrimp to you! This little real estate office saloon became The Tropics - Steve Crane, who was married to Lana Turner, owned it. Now maybe it will become the Iranian Rodeo collection? If you were for excitement, out to Tony Connero's gambling ship. It was anchored three miles in the channel. You could watch people sitting on this filthy, dirty, smelly, gambling ship -- the likes of Max Steiner knocking their brains and money out. Malibu was quite the elegant place.

Santa Monica, where Joe Schenck, L.B. Mayer, Thalberg, Jack Warner, Leo McCarey, had homes, on the beach. It was considered something to be invited into that rarefied movie-and-beach air. I was invited to the Warners; I came from New York -- possibly they felt I was an eligible, nice Jewish boy, with a theatrical family, to marry into the Warners family, but the pairing just didn't work at all. The two major principals just thought it was funny.

There was a lovely girl called Mary Rogers. The fact that she was a lovely girl, even though her father was Will Rogers and very famous. Their home is now a State park. We used to

go there on a Sunday afternoon and play polo. Wiley Post had landed a plane on the polo field, he and Will were to fly round the world. This was always a very warm atmosphere.

There were other polo fields -- Midwick, Riviera, Uplifters -- where I broke my nose and arm in a Sunday game; but was back Monday morning with "Our Gang."

The auto racing tracks -- Al Gordon, Rex Mays -- I almost bought a car. Later I was approached to buy 1/2 the car for Jimmy Dean (I didn't).

G.S. NOTES

Tape No. 5.

Catalina by the flying boat. This airline was originally owned by Charlie Chaplin but usually we would find someone who had a boat or on the big white steamer, the Avalon. It was so busy, Catalina that you could sleep on the beach, or go to the St. Catherine Hotel. But was expensive so you just bummed around to the big casino, dancing to Ted Fiorita, Ted Weems, Irving Aaronson, Phil Harris, local bands.

"BALBOA" where for 10 cents you'd take the little ferry across the bay. Today the same ferry, but inflation. The same casino where the famous dance "THE BALBOA" started.

Dance halls like the Palladium and before (can't remember the name) caught on fire right in back of the Bimini Baths, saxophone player, Charlie Barnett, was playing when it burned. Dorothy Lamour came running down in her nightclothes; he was her boyfriend. Going down to Balboa Casino, that was definitely a weekend bit, lovely and romantic.

The old Culver City Airport, just a piece of dirt, but to all we budding Lindbergs, we would see how low we could come in over the telephone wires. One day, Jack Cummings caught up with the wires and Mr. Mayer said, "That's the end of Jack's flying; all of you birds flying."

Came a time, the cutting department was all hot on having a football team, Cotton War Burton, All American and other famous players from U.S.C. and Notre Dame were working as assistants; also Stanley Kramer, Joe Lewis, Ralph Winters,

etc. Big day arrived at lunchtime; we went to the corner of Overland and Washington Boulevard, which many, many years earlier had been an automobile racetrack. We ran wild "Hey, give me one". We played -- did we play -- the whole cutting room didn't show for work the next day. Interoffice from Eddy Mannix "MGM cutting department no longer has a football team."

Football was a big thing. On Saturday, buses would run from the studio. The shooting company would start work at 7 o'clock and you'd shoot until 12, grab the bus, eat your lunch en route, see the game, come back and do 2 or 3 hours' work that night, to make up the time. Studio people would wear sweaters and shirts, U.S.C. or Stanford or whatever their favorite. U.C.L.A. was just a little school out in the wilds of Westwood.

Actually the song, 'Fight on for U.S.C.', the Trojan march, was born at MGM. U.S.C. used to play at Hobart Field. It was decided by the music department (they were always the instigators of so many things); they decided that U.S.C. had to have a song, so had one of the piano players write them a song for next week; that's how that song came into being.

Romance of the movies against my background of making tests, and film. At the end of the film, 'San Francisco', the people crowd up over the hill look at the city in smoke. I was sent to the back lot to make a closeup of a fellow called Eddy Edwards saying, "We'll build a new San Francisco."

Eddy Edwards was one of a group of people who were always 'being found', known as 'look alikes'.

He had rather large ears; people said, "This fellow looks like Gable, so we'd better sign him to a contract; we don't want any other studio to get him." Eddy was a good actor [redacted] but he was no threat to Gable. He didn't give Clark any sleepless nights; ultimately, he'd had enough of it. The last time I saw Eddy he was up in Phoenix, Arizona; he owned a radio and television station. So it all doesn't work out too badly for him being a 'look alike'.

There was the 'back-up system' -- sign someone who looked like a star, to worry the star into line. I made a test of a great girl, the studio loved it, signed her -- she would be a threat to Myrna Loy. They even put her opposite Gable in a film Myrna had turned down. This girl never was a menace to Myrna, but had a fabulous career as Rosiland Russell.

Another back-up was Debohra Kerr to frighten Greer Garson. It didn't work, but Debbie went on to her own career.

I remember making a test of a dashing young Irishman, so very, very handsome, full of the blarney. We made this test, "He just hasn't got anything." The test went to Warners, they signed him, a smiling, dashing Irishman, Errol Flynn. And that's how someone's mistake is someone's great gain.

We made a test of another very interesting Englishman. I had some reporters interviewing him, he told stories about his adventures around the world; whether they were true or hypocrifal I'll never know. Of late, he has become an author.

He added writing to his long list of credits. In the test he told of being a machine gunner in Nicaragua, that he was left to mind a little boy on a ship, the little boy did his business in a spitoon, the kid got stuck, he couldn't get him out of the spitoon. He had these charming, charming stories, but MGM didn't think he was charming. What would they do with this fellow? The test went around town. Sam Goldwyn knew what to do with David Niven.

The famous theatrical family of the Jewish theater, the Group Theater, Miss Stella Adler, arrived. I was assigned to make her screen test. Of course, what Miss Adler did not I remember, which was fine with me, when I was about 13 and a half, Major Bowe's wife, Margaret Illington, who was the great legitimate actress thought that I should be a legitimate actor, get away from vaudeville, that form of show business. She got me an agent, I think his name was Dick Pittman. He sent me around to all the legitimate theaters. Stella Adler was doing a show, they wanted a young boy who could play piano and I auditioned. I came back two or three times; they gave me the part. Going out, I ran into the boy who had auditioned with me and lost, and he was so nice. He said, "Gee, I'm glad you got it, I really needed the part, but I'll get something; that's great for you. It's a wonderful part and you get to play the piano." I said, "Look, you'd better be back this afternoon; I may not be able to come. I realize that I have a part in another show." I never came back. Now I'd like to tell you that that boy was Jules Garfield .

I had to make a test of Stella and like all good actresses in Jewish Art Theater, she went on and on and on but I guess, ultimately, we got the test made. Today, she runs an acting school.

From Show Business I made quite a test of a vaudevillian. It was said, "You can't do anything with him." His name was Richard Skelton ("Red"). And we made a very extensive test. I made the first picture where he did a straight-comedy leading part character, as well as his antics. The picture was 'Bathing Beauty' with Esther Williams.

In the Ziegfeld Follies, I re-shot a piece of his test "Guzzler's Gin" for his number in the Follies.

I just made a photographic still in New York of a girl called "Ava" from the South, then a silent test. She was signed. The problem was the girl did not speak English, not one word. She came from the South; you could not understand one word. Mr. Mayer said, "Don't worry about that." He saw the face and figure and that was enough to keep him going -- "make a test in another year." So, when she was 17, she made another test, they still couldn't understand. He said, "Make another test a year later," so he saved his chestnuts until the girl could learn.

When she got to be about 21, I decided that she would be great for the part of Julie in 'Show Boat'.

I'd made photographs in New York of a girl called Dinah Shore who had a big success singing 'Don't go near the water,

my darling daughter'.

In those days a lot of people used to put their nose in your business. Like Hedda Hopper, she wrote in a column, Dinah Shore is the only one to play. She demanded that Dinah play the part of Julie. I liked Dinah, she was a lovely lady, a wonderful girl, I made a test of her, but she was just not Julie.

Arthur Freed was producing the picture; he went right along with me about Ava. I took a soundtrack recording of Lena Horne and had Ava learn to sing to that soundtrack. We made the test and, of course, it proved that she should do the part.

A voice double was used for the recordings, but Ava was excited about doing the singing herself, and worked very hard. She had a coach, a very good vocal coach at home who worked with her. She was actually married to the vocal coach -- his name was Frank Sinatra.

We shot the picture. "Can't Help Lovin' That Man," "Bill" and everything to the track that the double recorded before the picture was released, Ava came in, and using earphones for the music, resung all her songs so anything you see in the picture today is Ava singing for herself.

In making a test, I would put two people together, both who were sent to have tests made. I teamed this couple, selected the material, we worked; they came back, we worked some more, worked two or three times, but there seemed to be

something that wasn't quite working between these two -- I could not understand it. I figured maybe they were embarrassed, nervous, something like that. I finally asked the girl, "Is something wrong, is he being fresh?" "Oh, no, no, fine, fine, nothing." I asked the boy, "Anything with the girl?" "Oh, no, no, she's fine." Well, finally, we broke the scene down; it was a very intimate scene, they couldn't go on, they confessed what it was. This couple had been married for several years, and strangely enough, I had mentally found and put them together, because I felt they looked right together. I'd like to be able to tell you that they got back together again, like Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, but nothing like that ever happened.

Then we used to have the "contest winners," the beauty contest winners, a trip to Hollywood, a screen test, etc. I was the etc. etc. making the screen tests. Most god-awful

Once there was a very lovely girl from somewhere, naturally the studio always assigned someone from the publicity department to escort them, in this case a young man named Les Peterson, these two fell in love, married ever since -- 45 years later. Leslie Peterson is not a publicity man any longer; he owns 12 savings and loan banks in California and lives down in Newport. A real success story.

I remember making tests of Roddy McDowell, having him in films like 'Holiday in Mexico' and giving him his first shave, on the screen, Roddy's first kiss with Jane Powell and something else, oh, smoking his first cigar or pipe and getting sick, I smoked so hard showing him, I got sick!

I made a test of Dan Daily, Jr. and Eleanor Powell - the studio was trying to make up their minds about re-signing or not! I made a test from a script was called 'Me and My Gal' which was laying around, and if I say so myself, it was a wonderful, wonderful piece of film, and everybody loved it. They resigned Dan and they resigned Eleanor. They went ahead making the picture and the studio gave the parts to Gene Kelly and Judy Garland. But that's show business.

From Europe, we had all kinds of imports - Marta Eggart and Jan Kapoura from Hungary and Poland respectively. We made this test of Marta Eggart - she played in several films but what was great in Europe just didn't happen.

A few years ago I was getting off at Templehof, Berlin and there was Marta and Jan and I said, "What are you doing Jan?" "Playing the 'Merry Widow'", which I think is wonderful - he wears a rug, his little belling sticking out with the stuffing, and playing 'The Prince.' What I'm saying before, there's always some place in show business.

M.G.M. was into the music business, and their biggest recording star, a girl called Joni James, to resign her recording contract, she insisted on a screen test and me to direct the test, because I had made first tests and discovered so many stars, and brought so many girls through it. I had the reputation for being rather proficient in doing that.

With her, we put an English boy called Rodger Moore, who later would become "007." I made a close up of Roger Moore this test being done in three strip technicolor - this was big stuff, with his blondish hair and those big, beautiful blue

eyes, he was so gorgeous, he made her look like a dog. And when they saw him on the screen, they said, "he's too beautiful, I mean he's just too much." He had to get older, a little messed up before he could become a big star. Just last year, in the White Elephant Club in London, he and his family sat next to Jane. Rodger and I we talked about the test, and he introduced us to his daughter and said "his daughter is going to RADA, Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, in England, because," he continued, "I feel someone in our family should be an actor." Well, he was always a wonderful guy, and gets better.

We had to make another kind of test, this was a political test, but not in that sense. People that were running for office, Mr. Mayor allowed, whether they were Democratic or Republican or whatever, to come to the studio, we would photograph them and rephotograph them and give them the benefit of our experience on how to speak, what to do, what not to do. I was assigned to Governor Harold Stassen, who was running for President. (One of the many, many times he was running for President.) I showed him how to face the camera and how to use sunburn on top if you have a bald head you can't walk around with a hair piece - it looks too ridiculous. We changed his neck ties all the tricks of the trade. The only thing that happened from here he was going up North to debate a little fellow called 'the groom on the wedding cake.' His name was Tom Dewey, a little tiny guy. "I'll just knock him in, I'll be well on my way." The only thing Hal forgot, this little fellow from who looked like the groom on the wedding cake, had been the District Attorney of New York. Don't get

into a debate with a D.A., even if they're only four foot seven. So that knocked Harold out for many, many years.

One of the more enjoyable jobs was testing the Zigfeld girls, a search throughout the land, finding the most beautiful girls, bringing them out here, putting them together, which hair? this and that? and the other? a very arduous, difficult, and very tiring time, from the standpoint of so many people trying to get to you - "have I got a girl for you" - you go through that routine from all sides.

I ran into it in a strange way - I was doing a film called 'Pal Joey' - in the picture, if you do remember, Frank Sinatra gets burdened with a little dog, a little puppy called 'Snuffy,' he has to teach Snuffy some bad habits, one of them to teach the dog to dunk a bagel in coffee and eat the bagel. So we got a sensational idea, - we would audition all the dogs at Nate N' Al's (a deli).

Everybody thought it was a wonderful gag, permits from the health department, etc.

The whole switchboard at Columbia studios got blocked, people calling with dogs. I have been used to people calling me up and saying, "Look you've got to do me a favor, it's my niece, it's my girl, it's my mother-in-law, it's somebody - let them in. You've got to give them a few days work or I'm in trouble."

Now everybody was calling me to get their pooch in the movies. Now it can be told, the real dog was a ringer. He was already a motion picture dog who had been trained for three months to dunk and eat the bagel. But that's show business.

Another girl we tested, was a girl who was wet in San Francisco World Fair called Esther Williams. She was in the Aquacade and we made a test of her. Fairly provocative in those days. I had her in a dress and then she turned around, the dress disappeared, she was in a bathing suit, then when she turned around again she was in a dress. We kept doing this four or five times. The executives said immediately, "That's a very interesting girl." That was a grabber. Then after that, someone decided she could play opposite Clark Gable. Clark wanted to test with her. He didn't know the scene, just wanted to test with her, we started making the test, Clark reading the script on the table. After awhile he got a little tired of the whole thing - and Danny Daley was there and I had Danny to step in and read some more of the scene. Then Danny was called - he was shooting on another stage, so I ended up, she made a test with three leading men, Gable to Daley to Sidney. I don't know what kind of a win place or show that is?

But there were all kinds of people. When Billy Eckstien became so big and popular, he had all the quality of a leading man, which he certainly had. We made a test of him but what he had in his voice just couldn't come across on film.

The greatest example of that was many years ago, a fellow came down from San Francisco, he sang with the band of a guy called Tubby Garron - his name was Alan Morris. He could sing like mad but just couldn't act. He went back to San Francisco. 4 or 5 years later he came down again, his name was now Tony

Martin, he had more polish, he wore the same white coat, but his acting was also still the same. The life of Tony, he was always being discovered, rediscovered and put into pictures by one studio or the other but he never could come off on film, this magic that Tony had. Tony in a cafe would sing, 'Begin the Beguine' and just tear the joint apart, Tony sitting around with the boys at Hillcrest, he was a man's man. Tony had one of the great track records of all time, but it just didn't happen on film.

Someone once said to me, what do you consider a star? "A star is someone the audience watches when he, or she is doing nothing."

END OF TAPE 5

G.S. NOTES

The private life of a test director. Exciting, tiring, exhilerating. The test director played Pigmalion, interviewing people, finding out what they should be. Actually, 90% of all females, have the wrong hair, the wrong color, the wrong style. They dress incorrectly for what they have. It was my job to see through this home made camouflage, reshape and mold. Trying various scenes, wardrobe, make up, hair, to discover their weakness, their strength, to melt these factors, these facets into one interesting personality.

In a sense the test director became a horse player, betting on the hopefuls, hoping the front office would agree and sign his charges. It became very personal, they were a part of your creation, or even if they had been dropped by our studio but signed by other studios. This proved he was right. Yes, there is a big ego factor in being right and this being right over influenced people's lives, young people mostly, seeing them get on in their desired profession. In a sense it was a 'God' game. If the test was successful, it could lead to Stardom, fame, fortune and then the question mark? If failure, going back home and marrying the traditional greasy faced kid in the garage. Or hanging in there, biting the bullet, treading the boulevards, trying to play a bit player, dropping down to an extra player. Yes, I've seen them end up in the Main Street Soloman's 10 cents a dance emporium.

Frequently a salesperson, a secretary - people in all kinds of jobs - in the working panorama will say, "Mr. Sidney! You don't remember me, you once interviewed me, gave me a test? No, I'm not in Show business any longer. I'm married, Maryann is 10 years old. Yes, I have her in dancing school. No, she's not going to be an actress, she's going into marketing or be a dental technician. As for me, maybe I'll try after I've raised Maryann, doing character parts or maybe I'll be lucky and get a good commercial like Mrs. Olsen - who can tell?" That hope is always present.

A telephone call several years after I had made a test of a most attractive young lady, she informed me she was no longer in show business, I made the mistake of asking "What are you doing?" - she told me --- She went into business for herself, if I know anyone who could use her services here was her number - she'd treat them right, "Yes, Mr. Sidney you treated me magnificently, if you would call I would love to see you but it would be on me!!!"

A young man was sent from the east to have a test. He had the right credentials, not that of being an actor. Better, his credentials were from Mr. Nicholas M. Schenck (the general) the president of Loews M.G.M., Incorporated. We "must" make a test. Here he was. Eastern clean cut looks. Ivy League buttoned down collar and he played the bass fiddle. He could not act - he sang after a fashion, but at Newport, Rhode Island, was sensational at all the private parties where the boys wore blue coats, white trousers, and straw hats.

We worked over him like a dog, to make the test but it just didn't happen. It was sheer disaster. The front office in their honesty, (now the ball was in their court,) said no interest. The young man came to me. He was absolutely lost. He wanted to stay. He wanted just the slightest encouragement, but no way. If I had lifted one little finger, his life certainly would have been ruined - he just didn't have it. I sent him away. Sometimes being cruel and honest is the nicest thing one can do.

Some time later, he sent me a Dunhill pipe with his thanks, etc. - as the years went on I heard from him at Christmas. He had gone into radio management.

After awhile I didn't hear from him personally, I read about him. He owned a successful eastern network. How lucky he was so very bad. If he had been say, fair, he might have held on for a year or two, playing little tiny nonsensical parts, it certainly would have been a different life than one as a successful magnet in the newly founded electronic show business.

At the present site of the Comedy Store on the Sunset Strip was a new elegant restaurant, 'Ciro's' It had a glass dancing floor, over water, gold fish swam beneath your feet as you danced. I suppose this was like the old joke - "I'd like to be a little fish froze way down in the ice and having pretty girls skate over me - Oh my, wouldn't that be nice?" Anyway this was one fancy place. The waiters wore white tie, tails, white gloves. There was a most handsome young waiter, of course, someone said that he must become an actor. We

made a silent test, test of his looks, and they said, that's it - we'll sign him.

He hung on for a year or two. He would get to say maybe one word, when Clark Gable or someone would walk into a scene and he'd have to say "hello" to a lot of people, this fellow would say, "hello." I mean that was a big part and that was about it. I may be exaggerating, he may have had parts where he had one or two lines, but nothing more. During this period, he could go back, dine with his chums at the restaurant. Finally came the axe, "You're not going anywhere, you are finished." I said, "Go back and be a waiter again. Some day you can be a captain and someday a maitre, maybe someday you'll own your own restaurant. There's nothing wrong with that." He said, "I can't go back and be a waiter now, I've failed and I must act." Unfortunately he did. He hung on, he became one of the faces, one of the empty faces on Hollywood Boulevard, he lost his wife, his family and I think, more importantly, he lost himself. In time, he disappeared into the passing parade.

There was a very personable young man who was the track steward at Saratoga. He was a friend of the Vanderbilts and everyone. He took care of everthing at Saratoga of course they saw him and I think Merv Leroy was one of the people responsible for bringing him to California, having him make a screen test. Well that was all fine but he too couldn't act. He too didn't want to go back to the race track and have a very steady job forever. I must say I never knew whatever happened to him but he also disappeared.

Then there was a young lady who was the pride of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her name was Grace Ford. She was under contract and she had talent and she could read a scene, she was a nice looking young lady, only one real basic problem - she could never be a real "star." So she was convinced that stardom was not going to be hers, she went and got married. She married a South American gentleman called Henry Salvatore and became the lady of the home that dominated Republican politics in the State of California and onto the White House.

A very successful test could lead to failure. The great Diva Rise Stevens, Metropolitan Opera New York was given an extensive test. Assisting in the test, was Nelson Eddy. I was told to make her a star, do anything, spend anything, the entire works, M.G.M. wanted to make "The Chocolate Soldier." Jeanette McDonald was no longer at the studio. When the test was finished, it was a sensation on the Bel Air, Beverly Hills circuit. It was running nightly in the projection rooms in everyone's home. At last Nelson Eddy was going to have a new partner and from the Metropolitan.

I was running the test, sitting next to Mr. Louis B. Mayer who was in rhapsodies. "Star her, sign her," "If it were me," I chirped up, "I would not sign her." This threw a thunderbolt into the projection room. Mr. Mayer said, "You're joking, this is such a great test you've made." I said, "Mr. Mayer I would not sign her." He pressed the button stopping the projector. He thought I was joking but I wasn't. He demanded why. I put it politely, as you never used harsh or descriptive language with Mr. Mayer or he with you - I

said I didn't think the movie going public will take a fancy to her - she's large, has a great voice and is great for opera audiences - dressed as a boy with the white wig but not for people on Main Street. - "No," I gave it to him - "I do not want to kiss her." Mr. Mayer pushed the button, the film ran. Looking up at her on the screen, he said, "But I want to kiss her." Then I gave him the coup de gras, "Mr. Mayer, there's a very great difference in our ages." This gave the great man something to think of, yet the film sparkled, it spoke for itself and Mr. Mayer was sold. If I could do this well, I who was just a youngster and a test director, Jack of all trades, certainly a famous director could take up where I had left off. He hired a very famous expensive director and the picture was made. Unfortunately I was right. This lovely lady, great artist did not capture the American audience. The film was a disaster, unlike Melissa Korjus, a large obese, blonde, Vienese pastry - with a magnificent voice. She was starred in the "Great Waltz." She appealed to the baser instincts in the American male. Something like a singing Mae West. Shall we say in this zoftig song bird there was something the American male audience wanted to kiss - As the years and tests went by, I would have another hopeful on films to show Mr. Mayer, with this sly twinkle "Boy, do you want to kiss this one?"

Someone had the idea to test the great Yiddish art player Mr. Maurice Schwartz. He took his place along with the Adlers, the Tomashefshi's (whose grandson is conductor Tylson-Thomas), and that whole group prestarting of the group theater. So Mr. Schwartz coming here took on the aspects of the master. Of

course I enjoyed it thoroughly because we did scenes from Shakespeare, 'Up and Down', he who gets slapped - some people thought he could be another Lon Cheyney. One day 'King Lear' next 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame." All the makeups and when we finished we had hours of film and when they ran it, he had played various characters from G. B. Shaw to Noel Coward, the tests were fine, but everybody congratulated the young director, who happened to be me, but the only trouble was whatever character he played he was still Maurice Schwartz from the Yiddish Art Theater.

An interesting experiment was handed to me to make a motion picture, to test the script, it was quite controversial at the time, whether they then would go ahead and make the motion picture. The project was 'They Gave Him a Gun.' We used a wonderful New York stage actor called Myron McCormick. We made all the key scenes in the script, we shot it in an abstract impressionistic form. I put black velvet up around my stage one A, for the scene in the bedroom we just had a bed, a lampstand and a lamp. That was the entire set. For the carnival grounds, where he walks along the carnival fair and gets the 'gun', he finds his power, I used a few people as extras and records. These people who were under contract were just sitting around, I used sound effects, sounds of the carnival, so the whole thing was abstract, for me it was a great experiment. My picture ran about an hour, the studio saw it, thought they could go ahead and make the film, the only difference, they put Spencer Tracy in the lead, Myron McCormick never did anything out here. He went back and the

next time he really surfaced in New York was in 'South Pacific.'

For me the reward they gave me, the job as the Assistant Director on the film. Colonel W.S. Van Dyke, who was very famous and a very fast director, got the job.

Colonel Van Dyke was a very military man - a marine - he would make his pictures way under schedule. Eleven, twelve, thirteen days. He had come from the Quickie School - Westerns with a man called Colonel Tim McCoy.

Van's trick was he got a bonus if he came in under schedule. He would run right through a picture and come in under schedule. The studio was happy because at least they had a coherent picture. Then other directors would go back and put in close ups and things he passed over, Mr. Van could say he'd made the picture in fourteen days.

Later on he made many of the McDonald/Eddy pictures he even directed Garbo. Van never knew anyone's names so he always called everybody 'kid.'

The studio decided to have Van Dyke direct Miss Greta Garbo. This was going to be something. On the first day Van said to Miss Garbo, "This is okay honey, go over there and say your lines, drop your title and go over there" -- They shot it, one take that was all Van ever made. He was on the next set-up, called her 'honey' three or four times, finally she stopped and said, Mr. Van, please my name is Chocolate! She had a great sense of humor, they became great friends.

A stage musical - written by Rodgers and Hart called 'I Married and Angel,' was being made starring Jeanette McDonald, as the angel, and Nelson Eddy as a gay, (not in the sense of

the word 'gay' today), but as a real bon vivant of Vienna. The picture wasn't really getting any place, they removed the director and brought Colonel Van Dyke to make over. Van, of course, he just went like a bull in a china shop and his crew came running in, bing, bing, bing. I had been working, in who knows what capacity with the producer of the film, Hunt Stronberg, who said, "Van has no interest in shooting the musical numbers, we'll let George shoot the musical numbers, and stage the whole thing. That was a big plum, I went to the art department, made a story board on all the musical numbers in the film, in complete detail, music as well. I'd better go fetch Mr. Van and talk to him. He was coming out of stage 1 it was raining, he had got into his side of the chauffeur driven transportation car, I jumped in the other side and sat next to him, we were both wet, he looked at me and he said, "Hi kid." "Colonel, I've been assigned, and am so happy that I'm going to do the musical numbers for your picture." He said, "Yes." I have all these sketches, I've laid out all the numbers." And I started to open up the book with all this beautiful art work. He took the book, closed it slowly and he handed it back to me. "Look kid, I've used all my ideas that I have on this picture. For the musical numbers you'll have to use your ideas." He tapped the glass partition, stopped the car, put me out in the rain, here I was.

What that did, it gave me more of an impetus to do everything I could and I must say I did. I ran cables from Lot 1 to Lot 2 so that I could bring all of Paris up on cue. All

kinds of different things like using all the power in the studio. Van just went on about his way. He would finish the dialog, turn around, not even say 'Cut', walk right off the set, I would carry on and do the numbers.

I must say the first day with Jeanette McDonald I was so excited, I was going to direct this big time star. At 9 o'clock in walked Jeanette. She had on a wrapper and her hair was all in a big gauze. I said, "Ooh, this will take three hours for us to get her hair done." I said, "Jeanette, you know, we've got to move." She said, "Don't worry." I said, "Oh, what am I going to do? My first day and already three hours behind?" She walked in her dressing room and in two minutes she came out looking beautiful. What I never had thought about is she wore a wig. She was a wonderful person to work with and so was Nelson. They were a lot of fun. People do not understand - they kidded amongst themselves. This mystique they had, how they brought operatic singing to the screen, "stout hearted men" and all of that - they had a great sense of humor about it all. Thank goodness they didn't take themselves seriously.

M.G.M. made a film called 'Rosalie.' Nelson Eddy played captain of the West Point football team. We had to find a bunch of young boys, for West Point, who would be contemporary to Nelson Eddy, these young cadets who were maybe double the age, but in those days, it all worked.

Colonel W.S. VAn Dyke - it was rumoured the reason he shot so fast, by 2:30 - 3:00 p.m., he could go home. He always asked for a drink of water from his ever present prop man,

Harry Olbese, who always brought him a glass of water which Van drank it was rumored that it was straight gin! Now this may be true and it may not be true. However, in those days there was a great comraderie amongst the directors.

The younger directors would come around at night and drive the older directors around. And many times, because I was working at M.G.M. it was my duty to drive Van around. We would go from bar to bar, everywhere you went into, they all knew Mr. Van, they'd reach under the bar, and bring out the cheapest bottle of gin, which Van would drink, he was quite good at that, then over to a place on La Cienega, which was kind of a Turkish bath, he'd have his Turkish bath then go to sleep. He'd wake up about 5 o'clock in the morning, raring to go. It was at those moments, ice cold sober, he would go over his script and make all the notations and memorize exactly what he was going to do the next day. He would throw the script in the back of my car, everything had been noted. Van always went in and said, "Well, just put the camera here, just throw it on there," he'd make believe that he'd never looked at the script. When we would deliver him to the set, at 8 o'clock he didn't bother with the director's chair, he had a little ladder, he liked to climb up when he'd get excited or angry, he'd kick out the rungs of the ladder and he would say, "Let's go." He would not wait for anyone.

Once he was doing Joan Crawford - he wanted to know where she was - and they said, she hadn't arrived as yet. There was this scene between Miss Crawford and the maid. Van said, "Set up close on the maid." So he made a close up of the maid

and did her lines and by this time, Crawford arrived ten minutes late he made the 'two shot.' "Okay that's it, now over here." Crawford said, "What about my close up?" "I only make close ups of people that come on time." And that was the last time Joan was late. (With Mr. Van.)

But Van really had the indian sign on everyone. On this film where I assisted him, "They Gave Him a Gun," the first morning he came in, "Now how much work have you got laid out for me?" I showed him all the sets and all the actors, everybody standing by. He said, "Is that all?" "That's all possible for today." "Yes, that's all possible." But I had been warned about him so I had other sets still in my back pocket. He started shooting, boom, boom, boom. By one o'clock, he said, "That's it, I'll have to go home, there's nothing else to shoot." I managed to come up with a few more sets. The following day he came in, "Now how much have you got?" I had what had been laid out for three days work, "Here it is Mr. Van, this is all laid out, I have all the actors." With Van you always had the actors hiding away in the dressing room in case he did three or four days work in a morning, you'd need the actor who wasn't supposed to be called for four or five days, but you'd have them hiding out. This day he just ramrodded, boom, boom, boom, shot everything, and he said, "Now do you have anything left?" "No, the sets are not built so you've shot out everything." That made him happy, so he could go up to Eddy Mannix, (who, incidentally along the line, was his father-in-law), because Van married Mannix's niece, "Uncle Eddy, how can you make pictures, you haven't

got any sets built?" Van would go home at two or three o'clock.

But he was one of the great characters. When the war came along, he managed to get a lot of the people to enlist in the Marines, he took his group, his platoon or whatever the devil it was, they put him on a train and rode down to San Diego. He got off the train at San Diego, Van lined up his brigade, stood in front of it and reported and saluted very smartly, like it was a scene in a movie. They said, "Fine Colonel, you can drop out Colonel," they assigned his whole troop, they just broke it up, they told him he could go an sit at a desk. I think this really broke his heart. I don't think it was too long later that he left the Marines.

He was one of the traditions of Hollywood and a great creative artist. He was the man who figured out when Myrna Loy and Bill Powell were walking the dog, Asta, to go down the street and they would stop, and all you saw was the leash going out of the picture, when the dog was stopping at a fire hydrant. He did all those wonderful things. Like in the middle of a dramatic scene, he'd have the lady who was in tears, incidentally sit on a balloon and the balloon would break, he had his own brank of life and he lived it all the way to the hilt.

P.S. we might add aobut Van. He came from a theatrical family. It was a Pacific Coast theatrical family. His mother was a star, he had become leading man to his mother down town here, San Francisco Warfield, and places like that. Or as they were known, the shows that played in the Pacific were

called 'Coast Defenders.'

But the magic of being in films was envied by all. The politicians, ice skaters, prize fighters - 'Prize Fighter and a Lady' with Max Bear. Very fine picture, Max was just a natural screen personality. We had swimmers, flyers and even editors. Bennett Cerf was very anxious to become a movie personality, I was asked to make a screen test. "Let him just be his self, because some people find him quite amusing." We did some things he said, "I'd like to tell a couple of stories." I listened to the story and said, "Now that isn't any good, this really doesn't work." He said, "Please I want to tell this tory, I know what I'm doing, I know myself. I'm a success." "Go ahead, it's your test." It's not like you're dealing with some young hopeful. Plus the fact, the studio was trying to develop an "in" on new material from Random House, we wanted the first peek. He told the story of a man who went to his doctor, the doctor said there's really nothing wrong with you, the doctor, for some reason, had dirty hands, he put his fingers down the man's throat and the man vomited, the doctor said, "Ah, see that's what you have, you have an upset stomach." Well, I must say, when that got on film and Mr. Mayer saw, Bennett Cerf quickly was sent back to New York and Random House.

Sometimes the strangest people managed to get into films.

A most handsome young man came to the studio a test was made he was rather dodgy about his background but his good looks were just beyond - he was Cary Grant style - he started to make a little bit of a headway, one day the FBI officers

came looking for him. He had escaped from a prison and he he was, working at the studio with an assumed name. Well, he didn't work there too long.

Alcohol and film do not mix - I was making a test of and English stage actress about half way through the test, I went into her dressing room and there on the makeup table, was a half empty bottle of Scotch. "Come on, you can't drink while you're making films, we just don't do this." She said, "Oh that's the only way I act. When I'm on the stage in London I always finish a bottle by the time I've finished my performance." We made the test, apparently it didn't seem to have any ill effect on her performance. As a matter of fact it gave her quite a lift. However, the next day when we reviewed the film, the performance was all there - it was fine - but when you got to the closeup, the alcohol had dilated the pupils, her eyes had a zombidic look. The eyes were somewhere far away and the body and the mouth and what was coming out was two different people in one body, thanks to Haig and Haig, her partners... It was quite apparent that some of the movie queens of the earlier years, when they made these big gauzy closeups, where they had that etherial look in their eye, it was helped on by the bottled partner...

There were many kinds of screen tests, many reasons for giving them, why to make them so elaborate. It made sense that if you had someone you felt was potential star material, it was worth while to go ahead, make clothes, make silent makeup tests, to get wigs, to do everthing to the person. Some times we would send a person away to take weight off, to get

them in condition to make the test, the whole point was, so we spent money, we used to have an orchestra, sometimes special material written for the test and music because it was cheaper to know why you did not want to sign the person as much as why you wanted to sign the person. If you signed a person, you would pay them salary at least for six months, or a year, then put them in something and they would not make it good, would not be on their way to stardom, then you'd wasted time, you'd wasted money and you'd also wasted the opportunity which was much more important. In those days, it was felt that if you take a newcomer and put that newcomer with an established star, that would really help the build-up rather than have the newcomer just sort of bumming along alone. The testing was really the apex of the studio to keep the flow going and that of course, that was for everyone. You had a different kind of testing with the shorts department, you were testing directors at the same time, they had a department called the Junior Writers, where they would pick young writers, promising writers from colleges, bring them out, put them under an old seasoned hand, try to build them into screen writers. Try to build them in their image, and from that school certainly, wonderful writers came. They did this in all the studios. I mean, Dan Taradash, Dory Schary, the Ravitches, and into the night of writers, there had to be ways for talent.

Today that has all disappeared. Today it's a do-it-your-self business. It's hit or be hit. That's what usually happens. The person makes a hit, then they are not only hit, they're

they're murdered. But we will get onto that later.

Apropos of absolutely nothing, just sitting here talking, the name Marlene Deitrich came up. That's always a name to content with. And it goes back to the time when, in the thirties, Marlene was making a film called 'Knight Without Armor.' It was co-starring Robert Donat, photographed by Harry Stradling, Sr., a man whose last picture was 'My Fair Lady' and won the award.

This picture for years was considered one of the classically photographed pictures. Harry made wonderful shots of Marlene running in a kind of gossamer dress across meadows in the early dawn, water on the face, dewdrops. Finally they came to the day they were going to do "the bath," the scene in the bathtub. They had a bathroom, it was ringed by the proverbial catwalk overhead with electricians at the large lights shooting down.

Marlene came in, she had on a bathrobe. The director talked with her, went over the scene, Marlene took off the robe and she got into the bathtub. And she was soaking herself waiting to get ready, and the lights started up and people started to fall off the catwalk, near panic, nothing could be done - Marlene saw what was going on, she stood straight up in the bathtub and whistled, big, loud whistle. "Now everybody look." And she sat down in the water and no one bothered, (more later).

A corollary to the Deitrich story was many, many years later I was making a film, we'd built a very elaborate bath-tub out of marble. We were doing a most lucious thing with

Janet Leigh in the bathtub. I said, "It's going to be all within the censors' office. Within the good taste of lots of soap bubbles, pink ones of course." To Janet, "Look, you mind of we get some pictures, we can get into Playboy?" "Oh, no, that would be great." I said, "Okay, don't do anything, I'll take care of it." So I planned to have an independent photographer get in on the set, get up in the catwalks and take the pictures.

We were shooting away, my assistant came, whispered to me, "Something terrible has happened. An independent photographer has gotten in was snapping pictures of Janet in the tub." I said, "Where is he?" "I locked him...in the dressing room." I said, "Does anyone else know about this?" He said, "No, not a soul. I hit him in the mouth." "Looky, idiot, he's working for us, he's taking our pictures." So we sneaked him out of the dressing room and let him go up into his monkey heaven. He got the pictures, these are pictures you occasionally see in Playboy when they talk about bathtubs.

Of course, Cecil De Mille was the one who started to make the bathtubs synonymous with Hollywood.

When making 'Pal Joey' we had a scene with Kin Novak in the bathtub, so just to make it better, she is in the bathtub with the bubbles of course and she's reading the comic paper. I got an idea that we would send and get all the comic papers from all over the world. So she sat there in the water, and bubbles, we'd slip her one comic paper, snap - take a picture of it - the next one was Toledo, the next one was Sweden - the next one was Norway, and so we had all these pictures and

let them out on the world and got great coverage.

Kim, - and again it has to do with water - we were shooting a film on Long Beach, doing some beach scenes - we were living down there because we didn't want to take the time to come back and forth every night and morning on the freeway, my publicity man, Ted Galanter, a wonderful fellow, said, "Listen I want to do the drowning bit, have Kim saved by a local lifeguard." "No Ted, not that one - they'll never go for it." Ted said, "Please I" I said, "Look, I want no part of it. If you want to do it, and I talk to Kim and it's fine with her - when I finish shooting my scene, I'm then going back into my trailer to work. I want no part of it."

So we finished our scene we broke up late in the afternoon I said, "Ted if you want to do it, go ahead I want to know nothing about it." So I went back to my trailer. That night, at dinner we got a big hurry up call from the studio. Harry Cohen, he was frantic. "How badly is she hurt - what happened to Kim, is she all right? Will she be able to work?" I said, "What are you talking about?" Harry "It's all over the radio. Don't you know, she almost drowned. It's even in television, it's in all the newspapers." There was this stupid picture of Kim's supposedly, inert figure coming out of the surf but what she didn't realize was that an inert figure has no semblence of form, it's just like an old sack, but Kim has an arm extended and here's this big guy, this lifeguard - carrying her out of the water. It just hit every place in the world. It even fooled the studio. Then when I

saw the picture, I started saying, "My god, maybe it did really happen to her." But it's fun to be fooled and I don't think the public really believes it, but they kind of like it. It's like the time that George Cukor was shooting a scene up in Monterey, with Greer Garson, each take the surf was coming closer and closer, finally they kept on shooting Geer was in the water two life guards had to save her. It hit the paper and again the people think, gee isn't that great - a movie star and people come and save you.

Having to do with bathing brings me to a time when we had a bathing suit interview. It was a film called the "Swinger" this picture was being made around a Playboy kind of magazine we needed that type of girl, after we had exhausted the Screen Actor's Guild and the Extra's Guild we then were allowed to go to outside, meaning those people who do not have cards. Went to all of the girly magazines and got the girls that posed the center folds this, that, and the other we were going to have this interview right after lunch on a sound stage, we had platforms and lighting, so we could see the girls and pick them out.

When I would interview girls like that I would always have several ladies present - one lady I had there that day was Miss Edith Head to kind of hold me up and also to see what problems she would have to hold up to dress or undress. Now we cut back to the Commissary - I was finishing lunch an agent came up to me and said, "Look you have my life in your hands." "How do you work that?" "My girl is on the interview you must pick her, you just must pick her or I'll get my head torn off

she is the girl in the leopard bathing suit. She is a beautiful girl, she is this and that - otherwise it will be awful." It was raining like hell, I'm putting on the raincoat, I get outside and the fellow follows me over to the sound stage saying, "You must help me please, it's the girl in the leopard bathing suit." I said, "All right, all right." So, what's the difference if the girl in the leopard bathing suit fits the bill then, fine, why not?

I go in on the sound stage, I start to take off the coat, one look and I start to laugh. Edith Head runs over, "What are you laughing at?" And I tell her the story we turn. There were approximately fifty girls and there were about twenty seven leopard bathing suits, apparently it was the suit that Jansen has just put out, the latest thing. Whether we got his leopard bathing suit or not I will never know but I think of it every time I see a leopard suit or a leopard.

Another bathing suit story happened on a picture naturally called "Bathing Beauty" which was Esther Williams first starring picture with Red Skelton. Like everything else, bathing pictures are shot in the Winter - Winter pictures are shot in the Summer. We were shooting "Bathing Beauty" at the pool of Lakeside Country Club in the Valley. The water was absolutely freezing, the extras refused to go in, so the big director, (me), took off his clothes, I jumped in the pool, I swam up and down, broke all existing speed records. I then went back and had near next to pneumonia, but I shamed everyone in. In this poolside scene with Red and Esther, they were surrounded by a bevy of beauties, in bathing suits. This went

on for a day or so, the third morning I came in, we started to work, "Wait a minute - something is wrong - where is the girl in the yellow bathing suit - who should be over on this side of the screen?" I kind of color coded everything and carry the overall in my mind. "Come on where is the yellow girl. You don't belong there - the girl with the yellow -" She said, "Oh yes I'm the girl with the yellow bathing suit." I said, "You're wearing a red bathing suit now?" She said, "I am the girl with the yellow bathing suit but I wore the suit for two days so last night I went down to the Boulevard, I thought you'd like something different so I bought this red bathing suit." I screamed until I could get her and her yellow bathing suit because the whole scene wouldn't match. In time we became very friendly, her name was Hazel Brookes. She was from South Africa, red hair, white skin one of the true beauties of the century. A lady who was well versed in poetry, but not quite in picture making, although it was so that with her looks and her talent, she was the <u>body</u> in the picture called '<u>Body and Soul</u>' - that was about the extent of her movie career, she married the late great, art director, creator of the modern trends at M.G.M., Mr. Cedric Gibbons, they were Mr. and Mrs. Cedric Gibbons. With or without the yellow bathing suit, Hazel was a knockout.

Bathing suits, wetness - bathing attire brings us much much later to a film called 'Pal Joey' we had built this fantastic cylindrical shower, it was kind of translucent for Rita Hayworth to go in and finish singing on 'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered' you could see her figure through the

translucent glass. Naturally had her in a body stocking, that's a stocking that covers the whole body, it just wasn't working, Rita is a good scout, she said, "Oh to hell" off the body sock "Let's go." As quickly as we could get rid of the people who would come down to see the set!! When we shoot bathing beauties, bathroom, shower scenes etc. you have a lot of friends, people who want to pay you back five dollars they had borrowed, come down with stories, ideas, invites to dinners, parties.

We started to shoot Rita was singing her 'Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered' all of a sudden she let out a howl - the howl was, Frank Sinatra had crawled around on the back of the set and pinched her. My photographs prove what the wardrobe was, however, I didn't photograph the "Howl!!"

Gustav Machatty, director of the famous, infamous film, 'Ecstasty' one of the first foreign, porno imports attested when he wanted to get Heddy LaMar to run through the forest, sans bathing suit, sans anything, and jump into the water, he threw cowdung at her to keep her running.

Machatty's first job as animal trainer in the early days, at U.F.A. he said, this is how he handled actors. Well, whether it is true or not he made a sensational picture of 'Ecstasy' and certainly gave us one of the great faces the screen, Miss Heddy LaMar.

Note to the editor. We have been rambling around quite a bit now I'd like to get on a little on some kind of a track, I have before me my photographic book, from time to time, I will refer to the photographs.

Starting out is the forward. "This book is a factional 'peek in' to what I have witnessed in the past three and a half decades. My companion camera was omnipresent.

The urge to reproduce is a primary instinct...photography a very personal reproduction that you alone accomplish... the eye the inbetween the brain and the lens you are the recording witness. You witness emotions, people, moods, places, things and freeze that fleeting moment. You eyes-drop on life. The mystique of life is transformed into private pictures for your memory bank. Why you took the picture is completely revelatory of your optimism, humor, inner feelings, love hate and sometimes voyeurism. The picture tells as much of the picture taker as the subject photographed.

I hope that "you" who are photographed will enjoy reliving the memories. I'm saddened that so many good friends will never be able to see themselves... and those of you who will see my panorama for the first time, I hope will enjoy sharing the moments of my private world.

In the beginning there is a picture of a very young George Sidney with a very, young Leica camera. Below it is a sketch of a man smoking a pipe profile, this for years was my signature. I smoked a pipe for forty eight years, this little caricature of my profile pipe went everywhere. In the days when people were know by trade marks - Marie McDonald was known as '<u>the body</u>' and Frank Sinatra was known as '<u>the voice</u>' and Gene Kelly was known as '<u>the feet</u>' they dubbed me '<u>the pipe</u>'. I was never without the pipe. I owned my own tobacco company.

I smoked tobacco from a Tobacconist in Lynne, Massachusetts. One day, he wrote "I'm going out of the tobacco business." I was thrilled because I had been married to this damn tobacco I couldn't do anything without it! I tried every other blend, of course, none of them worked. I had to have my tobacco, as we called it. I wrote to them and they said the formula was very valuable and etc., etc. Being half Hungarian and half Irish stubborn fellow I hired a lawyer, sent him to Lynne, Massachussetts and negotiated for the private formula - I have never told anyone what that formula cost me but I own my blend. I brought the formula west and started manufacturing the tobacco here. My friends said, "Oh you have the tobacco here you can supply us." It got to a point where I was making pictures and supplying my tobacco. I thought I would give up supplying tobacco and stick with the other craft. I formed a company, started manufacturing this tobacco, my list of clients was really a Who's Who, starting with Mr. Cecil B. De Mille. At the opening night of the 'Ten Commandments', (I had already seen the picture, Mr. De Mille had shown it to me in private). Harry Cohen and I thought we would go and pay our respects so we put on our tuxedos went to the theater to attend show.

The reception line with the Governor of California and all the important mucky mucks - as we came down to congratulate C.B. he turned to me, "Where's my tobacco - I didn't get my tobacco this week." And that was on his mind; this was a man who had just opened up the Red Sea.

We come to a photograph, shot through the finder of a

motion picture camera, the close up in the finder is none other than Clark Gable known as 'the King.'

Clark Gable rightfully deserved the royal crown. He earned it from the public, his friends and co-workers, whose respect he always had. He did not have to work at being the champ. He just was. He had none of the ordinary quirks of so many actors, like "why can't I stand over there," "why can't I come in the other door," etc. He came to be directed. He really didn't have to worry where he stood, or what he did. The audience always watched him.

He came to work early and at 8:55 a.m. he was completely made up, dressed, line perfect on the set. This was a business man, starting his day. He gave all of himself and expected the same from everyone. He couldn't countenance lateness in other actors. He rarely had to... working with the king was an exciting experience that you looked forward to. Working, hunting, building a cememt walk, or just at play he gave himself completely. This picture here of Clark and myself at his new house on Petit Avenue in the Valley. Clark decided it would be great to lay his own cement walk. We went out hired a cement mixer, a hose and started to try to do the job. Niether one of us were very good at putting down cement walks, Carol Lombard came out of the screen door, screaming at us in no uncertain terms, we should stick to what we could do the best. He played the game of life to the hilt. Stars will come and go but there will always remain only "KING."

It was always necessary to have a stunt man available. The first morning we were shooting at Dockside in San Pedro. At 8:45, I made a shot of this stunt man riding the tall hoist rig from the bottom of a ship's hold up the side and then being lowered onto the dock. Not the most dangerous stunt in the world, but most actors would have made a big thing about doing it. While we were shooting, Clark came and stood next to me. When the stunt was completed, I yelled "Cut." He said, "I'm ready." He got on the hoist rig and did the shot. It could be called gamesmanship on my part...you just didn't challenge "the King" by saying "Do you think you could do it?" He could, and did. There was no excess conversation.

There are pictures of Clark dressed up in a ridiculous Lord Fauntleroy suit. Other actors might have feared wearing such an assinine outfit, complete with Paris garters. He knew he was the King and anything he did would be right with his public. He came to be directed, he came to part of the film. He didn't have any of thos false ideas of who he was or will my audience or my public, etc. how will they take me wearing the silly black velvet Lord Fauntleroy outfit.

We come to a beautiful "Bo-Peep: to Clark's Little Lord Fauntleroy, the Bo-Peep was "Gretchen," better known as Miss Loretta Young. The picture of Gretchen or Loretta in the little girl's costume is one of her favorites, she has always kept it in her house, for her children. Gretchen and I often talked that the two of us would be, the two oldest people in Hollywood. She was a star when she was fourteen years old. People said, "She had to be twenty five at that time." The same as people remember me, they practically had

me working on the original 'Ben-Hur', "We knew him when he started directing he certainly couldn't have been sixteen years old, he had to have been at least thirty years old. I was a full size made it - I have film books that when they give ages, they put Norman Taurog and Willy Wyler some of the other fellows we're all the same age!

Gretchen used to joke because people just will not believe that she is not ancient her looks are just fabulous there she is, a very smart young lady. Her mother, Mrs. Belcher, very smart - she had real estate, apartments and houses she would decorate and rent. Loretta invested and she is very shrewd and quite a lady.

Going back to the King, Clark, he was truly an outdoor man, who loved hunting, fishing everything outdoors. Spencer Tracy, he loved acting. Gable and Tracy were always joking and kidding each other. Gable would say to Spencer - all Spencer wanted to do was to go on and make some faces, (meaning acting) until he died. Gable could have been, if he'd really wanted to, a superb actor, although - the plateau he reached was much better than critics ever gave him. He had talent and he could have gone further but what he was doing was enough, he wasn't going to murder himself. Gable loved fun. Across from the studio was a Ford dealership owned by a man called Al Menasco. He was a great pal of Clark's. Al built Clark a very early vintage Ford car but under the hood, it was hopped up like a Minneapolis car - so Clark would go along the streets, stop at a stop sign, somebody would come along and say, "I can take you in that old broken down Ford" They

would race and of course, Gable would pull away and beat everything. Well, he loved that. He loved all kinds of cars. He loved his Dusenbergs. One time Packard gave Clark a brand new fancy car for having a photgraph taken. Gable said "Is that all you need?" "Yes, thank you very much." And he drove out of Packard up the street and he traded it in for a Cadillac. I must say he wasn't very popular with the Packard people.

At the Pintail Duck Club, Bakersville (which we'll talk a little about later), Clark had a little shack for he and Carol they would love to go there hunting. They actually tell the story of a day they were coming home from the club, Carol was all dressed in mink, lame, hat, jewelry, etc. There on a fence was sitting a beautiful pheasant she yeels, "Stop the car Pappy." She got her gun, put it together, she jumped into the slough, she went through the mud and whathaveyou and shot the pheasant, she went through the mud and water and she fetched it herself, bringing it back, in her hands as a gift to Pappy. This was his kind of woman.

In the end I was not able to photograph Clark close up, in the afternoon - head shakes - he'd look up and smile, we would go on longer shots and work with the other people. He had a contract the only one that called for him finishing every day at five o'clock. Every other actor in Hollywood was envious but he was the King, but he gave you more than a full day's work - there was no fooling around on the set, no visiting, no temperament, he was just down to business. Oh, I suppose you could say Flynn had the same kind of contract

the only reason he quit before five o'clock was that he wasn't able to continue, the vodka had caught up with him. Mr. Mayer talked to Clark about becoming a director. "No thank you." He wanted no part - that would be too much work. He just wanted to go hunting and fishing and living. Had Carol not had such a tragic ending, I'm sure that's probably what he would have done in his retirement, rather than having gone on and making some pictures that were way below his standard.

We see pictures here of Clark and Loretta sitting on a park bench in the park. "It was a slight case of pregnancy on the part of Loretta," that was discovered, she fainted during the scene, she was so anxious to do this film... being reunited with Clark for the first time since "Call of the Wild." She never told us of her condition. Needless to say, we stopped filming. Sad to say, a short time later she lost the baby, we returned to work and finished the film.

Ava Gardner "The girl who didn't speak English."

She has often been called the most beautiful girl on the screen. I feel some of my pictures are proof positive of the point. When asked who is the most beautiful face I've ever photographed, my cop out is "Miss Ethel Barrymore." But certainly, Ava was breathtaking.

A silent test was made of this Southern Belle, aged sixteen, on her first trip to New York. She was immediately shipped to the mental estate called Hollywood. After six montns of coaching, came her first sound test. No one could understand a word that came through that fabulous mouth...her souothern accent was <u>that</u> thick. Mr. Mayer said, "Very good,

train her, we'll make another test in a year." Trained she was. A year later some improvements, but her south of the Mason/Dixon line dialect persisted. The technicians threw up their hands but Mr. Mayer said, "We'll make a test every year until she's ready." And that is how it happened. During this training period, she played a very small bit parts that required no dialogue. One was of a girl in a back seat of a car being kissed. When the scene was over, the young boy asked for an adjustment (money) for doing this special bit. He was promtly paid another six dollars and twenty cents. Ava was steaming and insulted that anyone would ask to be paid to kiss her. This was early in her career.

When it was decided to make "Show Boat," for the third time there was great doubt. It had been a failure twice before on the screen. Ava wanted the part of Julie which had been created by Miss Helen Morgan on the stage. I decided to test Ava. The press had more indignation "How could this nobody, this non singer, play this important role?"

We had other problems...miscegenation on the screen plus finding the star. The boat - after scouting every remaining paddle boat on the Sacramento, Mississippi and Ohio rivers - we settled on building our own Show Boat. It was the largest and most expensive moving prop ever built for a film, (at that time)! powered by two discarded General Sherman tank engines. The Lake on Lot #3 was drained, we started building our Ark. The big day came to reflood the lake and see if Sidney's folly would float. We stayed through the night and at dawn she was afloat, as proud as any lady who had ever sailed

the big Miss. She ruled the lake from 1950 until 1970. She was a great attraction for visitors and played in numerous films. She now has been sold with all the props, wardrobe, and effects from the halcyon days of M.G.M. Last heard she was cut into three pieces and was going back to some place in Ohio and was going to be a hamburger stand. At the time of the auction people came to me and said, aren't you going to buy the show boat and keep it as a momento? I said, "No, it served its purpose it was wonderful and it, like all of us must go and continue our lives, future never the past."

Ava could sing...she studied madly. We made many tests, amongst them, Ava using a recording of Lena Horne. Ava got the part and was off to real stardom. A voice double was employed, but in the end, it was Ava's voice that was used. This revel had won his and her cause. Strangely enough Ava seemed to be plagued by one other star, that was Lana Turner. Ava was always in second place. After Lana would turn down a part, Ava would get it. Ava also dated many of Lana's ex-boyfriends after Lana had passed, that includes husbands as well. I think this rivalry and I don't think there was any dealings personally between the two ladies, was part of what made Ava go off and live in Europe. She lived in Spain for many, many years and wuld only make films in Europe.

One good thing aobut it is that she was able to amass a lot of money I understand very well invested.

Certainly the M.G.M. lot will always remember her - this young beauty from the South, bouncing down the main drag without shoes, she hated shoes, a little skirt a thin white blouse and

braless, she was one of the first bra-less young ladies and, in those days, it was really an eye stopper.

Ava wanted the part of Julie and she dug in with both feet and nothing was too much. I'd given the character a little monkey to carry around, this monkey took an instant dislike to Ava, everytime we'd do a scene the monkey would, bite her or scratch her. Ava would keep on going. I remember one scene I had my eyes pinned own to the deck of the ship there were drops of blood because this little S.O.B. was digging into her arm with his claws. Another time we were shooting the monkey had slipped his hand into Ava's blouse and lodged his little paw on her nipple. Now everyone stopped and the trainer yelled, "Don't move, don't move." There we had maybe 250 people grouped around silently on the deck of the showboat here this little monkey, in her arms and his hand on her tit. The trainer said, "No one can move or come close - he's apt to tear the flesh. All we can do is wait." She stood there sweating, we all were sweating it out, for about five or ten minutes when finally the dumb little monkey got interested in something else and let go. This was quite harrowing experience.

But Ava and Lana were two girls that had natural talent that could have been taken up to really great histrionic heights had they both really wanted to. When they really wanted to dig in and play a part, play a scene they could really be tops but they never had that drive, they never had the drive of coming from the theater, coming from the English background, where you worked and worked. They never had the

drive of a Katy Hepburn, an Ethel Barrymore, they were products of Hollywood, manufactured movie stars.

Lana Turner was a girl who walked bra-less down a street in a picture that made her a star, a household name. Ava with her great, great beauty, made her a star all the acoutrements of being a star seemed to be the more important that the actual performance, not that I'ms aying that neither one of them were ever bad, they weren't, they were more than adequate, but from a dir3ctor point of view, the perfectionist point of view, you would have liked it if they really wanted this until they couldn't see anything else but that is the way in so very many cases in "the movies."

We have just left one of the true beauties of the screen. Ava Gardner and now we come to another type of beauty "SPENCE." To his friends and to the world that is how he was known. I'm looking at this 'Rock of Gibralter' profile, shot in the street at night, while making 'Cass Timberman.'

TRACY

Bedlam of noise ceased whtn Spench appeared on the set. "QUIET," was never needed to be called. He refused to shout or raise his voice, he didn't think acting was shouting... He spoke in normal tones. Soundmen went off their rockers, but they got every sound. spence didn't think trivial dialogue was necessary. He would cut out pages of non-essential dribbling. He would take care of it with his face. He used his face with great economy, so that one shift of his eyes was as powerful as Errol Flynn jumping over a wall, and capturing the town. But he did project - the most important tool of an actor, he thought - you could always read his silent thoughts loud and clear. He was the master of the understament. It made it easy for the actor working with him. His conectration brought out the very best that they had to give. This is why Clark Gable, the King of the movies, fought and would give up anything just to have Spence as his sidekick - to have Spence standing in back of him so that when Clark would turn around he would face that Mount Rushmore a little smile in the corner of his lips or a frown, Spence would set the scene, in perfect context.

I yelled "Print it," and started busying the crew to

the next shot. We had just completed a seven minute take and it wasn't 9:30 a.m. Spence walked doggedly back to his dressing room. I followed to see what was disturbing him. "Anything wrong, Judge?" "No - but..." "But what? You want to make another take? It was fine for me!!!" Spence, "No, I can't do it better, but in the theater I could have played that scene ten times a week for months and have enjoyed it. Here, in seven minutes it's on film and you never really get a chance to live it. If I made more takes the whole damn thing would get worse."

This was true. After several takes, Spence would hit this peak. If there was some technical problem that made it necessary to redo the scene he would continue, but you could notice that with each succeeding take the lifeblood was running out of his performance.

Spence and I both had a weight problem... Mine was less serious as I was not in front of the camera. Yet, I hit over two hundred and fifty pounds. The front office gave orders, "No desserts for Sidney or Tracy." We were to start a film where he played opposite and would win a young, glamour queen, Lana Turner. I talked to Spence about taking off some weight. he promised he would. One day I ran into him in front of the studio restaurant. "How's the diet coming?" He demonstrated, his single breasted jacket was inches too large. I was elated, but a block later I came back to my senses. "How could he have dropped inches?" I phoned the wardrobe department and asked if he had been in. "Oh, yes, we let out all his jackets, as <u>you</u> ordered." This was his way of losing

weight.

We talked for hours on end about eating. We would bet who could eat the most. We promised to go on a food food drunk when the film was over, to see who was champ. We both had an affinity for cheap candy. I would smuggle it into the studio, it was locked in a secret hiding place in his dressing room. After a particular scene, he would request that I come to his room and discuss the next scene. We would enter, lock the door, unlock the secret hiding place and fill ourselves with the magic elixir, chocolate candy.

He recalled as how, as a young man, playing in stock on the road, he was awakened one day by this wonderful aroma of fresh bread. He looked out the window and here at six o'clock in the morning a bread truck was delivering bread to the hotel dining room. From then on he could not sleep at all and would wait for this wonderful odor at six o'clock in the morning. He would run down while the bread was being delivered, steal two loaves of bread, run back up to his room, lock the door and eat the two loaves of wonderful warm bread. Spence was compulsive, he was a compulsive person about everything in life.

Spence was not a very good sleeper. He would call you at five in the morning and ask what you were doing - "Sleeping" - "What's wrong, Spence?" - "Oh, nothing. Just wondered what you were doing."

We played a game "Who is the biggest man." It took us into the remotest fantasies of Walter Mitty. We were shooting in lower Los Angeles at a railroad siting. We had to stop and let a freight train pass. We were back at our game. As

the freight train came crawling and clanking through the crossing, the engineer looked down from the cab, spotted me, and with a big wave "Hellow, Mr. Sidney." This stopped Spence cold. I was the biggest man. What he did not know or realize was, this engineer had run the A. T. and S. F. for us on "Harvey Girls." He was the only engineer in the entire world I knew. It was a million to one shot of fate that made me win the game. We played no more, the mighty had been defeated...

When the studio decided I was to direct Tracy, I was in my early twenties and he had great doubts. "I know the kid well. We're friends. We horseback ride together, but to direct me, he'll never make it. I'll eat him alive." The studio asked him to come and talk with me and then form his own opinion. Spence came to my office - slouched on the other side of my desk.

Spence. "Do you know what I'm like on the set!! I'm a wounded tiger!!"

Me. "No, Spence, I hear you're a complete bastard."

Spence. "??"

Me. "But I won't believe it. But if you are, look out... For I'm half Irish and half Hungarian."

Spence. "???"

Me. "So now we both know what to expect!"

We worked together with the greatest harmony and respect possible. His only comment was, "You'd better listen to this guy. He desn't waste very many words and says them very fast." The first day of shooting with Tracy, you could feel a little spirit, shall we say, floating around in the back of

the stage somewhere, peeping. Peeping from behind a scenery flat, trying to be very non-seeable. This little sprite was Katy Hepburn, she wanted to see how this young man was making out with Spence. She observed, later told that she had also come to the same conclusion about the young man, you'd better listen, because similar to Jack Ford he didn't say too many words, and those words that he said, he meant.

An explanation: some of the directors overflood people with lots and lots and lots of words and somewhere amongst those words will be the hidden meaning. They feel that by using this excess amount of verbiage they will beat the artist down to their own size, when they have them winging around trying to gather sense out of all the words, they'll be able to drop in just the few that they want. But this all has to do with the style of the individual director. There is no correct way to direct. There has never been a manual written, or never will be, at least not one that will tell the correct story.

When the film was completed, Spence gave me the most beautiful set of four matched straight grain Dunhill pipes in a velvet case, "love from the Judge." I understand these traditional, after the film gifts, were not his usual tradition.

Contrary to the impression that one would have of, "What was Spencer Tracy like." On the set he gave as near perfect, economical performance possible. Using the samllest number of words, the smallest number of gestures, the smallest number of body movements, and facial expressions. All that he used were <u>home runs</u>. Now to the other side of the coin. Sometimes

after a scene was complete and you yelled "Cut," he would then go and mimic the exact same scene with the broadest gestures, falling all over the place, ripping off his neck-tie, tearing his shirt, doing the damndest things you can imagine. Many times, unbeknownst to him, I would let the film run and we photographed some of these wild antics of the most quiet, taciturn, subtle actor of the American Theater and Screen. I suppose psychologically, this was some kind of an escape, blowing off a steam valve, letting it all out. In 'Cass Timberlane,' we had an after the wedding, - a going away for the honeymoon scene. This took place on a train with all the friends down to wave goddbye, wedding gifts, etc., etc. Well, when the scene was over with Spence and Lana Turner waving out the window, he started to go wild. He grabbed a bottle, made believe he was drinking, getting drunker and drunker, tearing at his hair, tearing his necktie, tearing his shirt - well, everyone was just hysterical - he kept doing it until he passed out on the floor. This was another facet of Spencer Tracy.

When he had his close-up, he requested Tessa, the script clerk to read Lana's lines - he looked at a chalk mark for her spot.!!

A whole other facet was his interest in Art. He had the deepest respect for Artitsts, I'm talking about the fine, fine artists, and he would love to emulate them. He would go into seclusion and pit his artistic hand agains an empty canvas. The results weren't anywhere near his histrionic ability.

The man who supposedly had no ego, had an ego. It would be expected. I was in New York City and about to come West. Those were the days of the Century Ltd., to Acheson, Topeka, Santa Fe, railroaded your way to California.

He called and asked me about my travel plans, I told him. He told me that he couldn't go out - he was living at the River Club, New York, he couldn't go out on the streets or any place because people would recognize him. He guarded his privacy with great care. We made an agreement that I would pick him up in a closed car with the shades down, in front of the hotel. This I did and had it arranged with the M.G.M. people to rush him in to the side of the station and into the compartment. Well, we got into the compartment, absolutely unnoticed. Here he was with this trench coat up looking like a foreign correspondent. As the train pulled out, we talked, he mused about the days that he could walk up and down Broadway or anywhere, no one would even say 'Hello' and know who he was. But this other thing that Hollywood had done, was it worth it all??

The next day, upon arriving in the Chicago station, Spence started to give me a big time about 'It'll be impossible to get through the scene here at the station would I stay close by as we transfered from one station to the other.' The people from M.G.M. came aboard everything was arranged, you went out the side door into a limo car - drove into the other station, into a freight elevator, came up in the freight elevator, across into the back of the train and into your

drawing room without ever being detected. There we were sitting again. Something seemed to be annoying Spence. "Why don't we get a newpaper?: "I'll get one Spence." Spence shook his head, "No, this is not a safe city for you. Very dangerous. I'd better go with you." So we snuck out came down and opened the side door and walked across the mammoth cavern that they call a station, to the News Stand he bought a newspaper. Absolutely no one recognized Spence and nothing happened at all. "Maybe we'll go to the other News Stand. Maybe they have a later edition." I said, "This is the final edition, Spence." By this time, Spence was on his way, Burberry coat flying, no hat, all the way across the station to the other News Stand. He got there, he asked for the paper and the young lady behind the counter gave him the paper, this was getting very tragic, and very dramatic. Spence now had rolled down the collar, had taken off the disguise of dark glasses, raincoat, she gave him back the change, and said, "Thank you, sir." A very dejected Tracy walked back to the train with me. His whole delusion of the fleeting fame, of tinsel town and being a celluloid Cinderella had gone to nought.

There are photographs of Billy Tuttle spraying grey into his hair, for the part of 'Father Flanagan' - in 'Boy's Town.' He is laughing because it was necessary to make him look older. On the same page is a photograph of Spence some years later, with his own natural grey hair. At this, he is <u>not</u> laughing.

A photograph of Spencer Tracy as 'Father Flanagan' - he won an Academy Award for this protrayal in 1938. The previous year he had won an Academy Award for "Captains Courageous." This photograph of Spence as Father Flanagan, was one of his favorite pictures I made him a copy, had it framed. He always had it close by wherever he was living.

Thinking for a moment about the Marlene Deitrich's story, I failed to tell the corallary. When getting ready to make 'Pal Joey' we had several choices who would play the part of the rich lady - and beautiful lady. There was Rita Hayworth, Marlene Deitrich, and other glamorous ladies.

I was in New York and had met several times with Marlene Dietrick, who evidenced quite a bit of interest in playing the part. One night I had taken her to the Theater and afterward I asked her where she would like to go - whether to one of the fancy places - she said, "No." She would like to go to 'Lindys' on Broadway. Well, that was quite something, Lindy's is famous for all kinds of fantastic German food as well as cheesecake. They practically originated cheesecake. They have cheesecake with whipped cream, cherries on top, apples, strawberries - every kind of cheesecake you can imagine. Well, after we put away all this food, with all these fat ladies looking on and wondering how Marlene could keep her "figure," which she was very generous and displays "it" coming in and standing and letting these ladies really get a good look, it was again the scene in the bathtub. It came to dessert, "Will you have something?" "Yes, I want the

big cherry cheesecake," If the lady wanted cherry cheesecake, she got it. Of course, all eyes were focussed on her as she devoured the cheesecake, she said, "Would you mind if I had another one?" Another one was brought and she knocked that off. This practically killed all these obese JAPs from the Bronx and other places. She then whispered to me, "Look at the way those ladies watch what I'm eating." "They do not know, that I have not eaten for four days!" -- "I trained myself to go on spells of not eating, so that I can really have a big time, like this, once in awhile." I'm sure all the mamas and papas, told all their friends and all the mamas said, from here on in I'm going to eat two cheesecakes and everthing on the menue and I too will look like Marlene Dietrich...

For the same film, 'Pal Joey,' we were in New York and Harry Cohen and I had some meetings with Miss Rita Hayworth. Harry Cohen and Miss Rita Hayworth had had some bad times through the years, they had just come through a rather bad period, and now the truce flag was out. It was being discussed about Rita playing the rich, lovely widow, in 'Pal Joey.' Every evening we had two tickets for 'My Fair Lady.' This was our favorite pastime, seeing this show which we dearly loved and did everthing in Heaven and Earth to buy and make into a film. Harry and I had our usual pair of tickets but there were three of us, so Harry made a Soloman-like decision. "We will split Rita Hayworth in half." "How do we do that, like Houdini with a saw or like some of her ex-husbands?"

"No, look, the show has two acts, we will both have her for one act." Harry being very wise and knowing that 'My Fair Lady' had the longest first act in the history of any Broadway musical, said he would take Miss Hayworth for the first act. I stayed up in the back for the first act and then, during intermission, we changed horses, so to speak. I'm not casting an aspersion, it's just a saying, as a saying goes. He turned Miss Hayworth over in my care. Now, coming back to the second act, here Miss Hayworth had another man on her arm. Needless to say all the tourists gawked as we went down and sat in our aisle seats in the front row.

Harry Cohen also had figured out something else he had sat there for the first act, he had shown his friendliness to Rita, this way he could go home, home being the Sherry Netherlands Hotel, and get some sleep not being caught to go to a Nightclub or the likes. He was a very, very smart man. But that is known as three on two tickets or cutting a great movie star in half.

Moving right along, as they say, "REETA." Reeta was the signature on her personal notes. RITA HAYWORTH was a "star" in the tradition of stars. Born of a family of Spanish dancers - discovered at age sixteen dancing in Agua Caliente. It was obvious she would light up the silver screen and make it red-gold...the color of her new hair.

A many faceted Libran, oft married, always searching for love and permanency.

She was "The" pin-up girl of World War II. More G.I.s in that war carried the Bob Landry photo of Rita in bed than "K"

rations. It has been said she brought beds back into style.

Yes, Rita was everyone's dream girl... and this director's dream... She came on time and to work.

We were shooting "Pal Joey" in San Francisco. We had built a set in back of Coit Tower. The wind blew like hell. Rita, who was clothed only in a frail chiffon dress, by Jean Louis, stood freezing. Yet not a word of complaint. She tried all she could to get the scene I had laid out. She was a tower of encouragement - that the wind would cease and I could get my scene. I had never seen a person actually turn purple before. I asked Benny Lane, the makeup man, could he not cover the purple color over with makeup, it was impossible - she was frozen like an ice cube, except a very beautiful ice cube in purple.

I've never worked with a more cooperative actress. In my book Rita is a beautiful person, who, for the exhileration and pleasure she has given from the screen, deserves a big share for herself.

END OF TAPE 8

The film called 'Pal Joey,' was a Sinatra - Sidney production. Meaning that he and I shared 50% of all profits equally. When it came to deciding how the billing would go, Frank insisted that Rita get the first billing.

It wasn't, I don't suppose, the easiest situation in the world - here was Rita, the ex-glamour queen of Columbia Pictures, and the new up and coming glamour queen Kim Novak. Both starred equally in the same film. Kim being many, years the junior to Rita. To have to stand in front of the lights and the crew and all the people concerned, while the makeup man is continually patching up your makeup, covering the ravages of time, living, just to put it frankly the aging process. Rita never lifted a finger, never opened her mouth. She did exactly what had to be done, and carried it all with the greatest ladylike standards. As I look back, there was no real outward animosity between this ex-glamour queen and now what was going to be the new reigning glamour queen, Kim,
this was a period of abdication and a period of coronation all in one film. I don't think the ladies had too much downright liking for each other, for obvious reasons, but neither one of them ever gave the other one a chance not to like her. They did not work in every many scenes together but those that they did everthing was most pleasant and cordial.

Rita, differently than so many of the glamour girls, never wanted to see how little she could do. She always wanted to do more. She wanted to be directed, she wanted to know that you were getting exactly what you had wanted.

That there wasn't any thing that you were asking , in her performance, any wish, that she wasn't delivering. Oddly enough, this also was a trait of Kim's. She too would go on into the night asking questions, trying to dig into the character and underneath to try to better her performance. Oddly enough, these two girls from such completely different backgrounds, one from a Spanish dancing family - the other a young lady from somewhere in the middly of our country, who started life selling ice boxes and bicycles, only to become great glamour girls of the screen. Both having great beauty, great admiration, yet both so very, very different. However in the end, have they not finished off, at least to this point, quite the same. Rita has gone into custodianship with her daughter and leads a very quiet life. Kim has retreated to Big Sur, California. Where she has a house, a great many animals, plays the guitar, paints, and shocks the gentry with riding her white horse on the beach Godiva style, and keeping a donkey on her lawn... Our business could stand more of these kind of ladies, "to you ladies I bow deep, salute, my hat, my admiration and my heart."

Reminiscing about great ladies, reminds me of my affair with a great lady.

It was my good fortune that Miss Ethyl Barrymore, the first lady of the Theater, was to act in a film I was to direct. I was awed, complimented and frightened to death by stories of the living legend. We started with makeup tests: She played a mother superior of a European Order, the film

took place in Vienna. When the tests were completed:

Me. "Miss Barrymore, would you care to see the tests?"

Miss Barrymore. "Hell no! I've never seen myself on the stage in 50 years, and I'm not going to start now..."

Me. "But...I thought...that..."

Miss Barrymore. "Did you like them?" (Raising the Barrymore eyebrow.)

Me. "Yes, the result is excellent."

Miss Barrymore. "Good. Young man, you are the director... Direct!"

As we continued filming, our relationship became more informal. We addressed each other as "baby," "honey," "doll," etc., etc. I found, underneath this facade of tradition, a warm and remarkable human. She read a book a day. Although most of them were her perennials that she had read every year. I found a woman of great magnitude, our relationship became a true artistic, professional, affair. She had the capability of great humor and by-play.

On this particular day, we made the first take and her acting was far overboard. After calling "Cut," I went to her.

Me. "Baby, you just relax for awhile, we have some repairing to do."

Miss Barrymore. "Repairing what?"

Me. "We have to rebuild the entire set."

Miss Barrymore. (Looking around) "What set?"

Me. "You see, you chewed up all the blank, blank, blank, scenery, so we'll have to rebuild the entire set."

Miss Barrymore. "What!!!"

Me. "Yes, honey, you sure ate it all up."

Miss Barrymore. (Eyes sharply focussing) Your little bastard (laughing) I know what you mean, I was a <u>little</u> over, I'm ready to go, let's give it a try...."

The next take was perfect. Only a lady of this magnitude could you approach in such a fashion. No phony. But a true artist - who didn't hold herself on an unapproachable pedestal.

As the saying goes, a star is a center stage where ever they are. This was true...When she entered a room, she took full command by just doing nothing, by just being there and being herself. It was said, she was the one who would say it, that in different times, earlier times of her life, she had also tasted one of the Barrymore problems - alcohol. She, with her inborn strength, had managed to cure herself - however that did not stop us from drenching the powder puff in Bourbon, the makeup man would remove the excess water on her face the nun's habit was very, very warm, using <u>this</u> powder puff that had been impregnated with Bourbon, she would laugh and say, "Oh isn't that lovely, lovely perfume."

Ethyl and I had so much fun, I played all kinds of foolish and ridiculous tricks upon her. I would send her lovely flowers and say "Happy Birthday darling," and it wouldn't

be her birthday at all. She would then run to someone, "How do I tell him it's not my birthday." There's no question, she was the FIRST LADY OF THE THEATER.

She had an aversion to signing autographs, which makes the photograph on the following page a collector's item. It's signed from "mother Shapiro," that's because her part was that of Mother Superior, the picture had the Barrymore profile, which again she was very reticent about being photgraphed, displaying it. It ways "for my dear Geroge Sidney with love from Mother Shapiro - oy dais mir!!! E.B."

This lady can never be replaced in the theatrical world, of my heart.

The next page has four separate pictures of Lana, Jimmy Stewart, Frank Morgan and Tyron Power, taken featuring the bottom of their shoes that are propped up in front of the camera - so many actors when asked what was the most important prerequisite of being a star "HAVE GOOD FEET" - this might be the proof.

Join the movies and see the world -

Join show business and meet the "GREATS", of our times - The legends in their fields - F.D.R., TOSCANNINI, DISNEY, NOEL COWARD, CHARLES LINDBERG, SWIFTY MORGAN, MR. HEARST, IRVING BERLING, GYPSY ROSE LEE, SALVADORE DALI, HERMAN THE GREAT, FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN," a great friend of my mother and father's as well as Louis B. Mayer and Harry Cohen - would always visit our home when he came west - bringing us little presents. When we were in New York we would always

eat at least one luncheon at the rectory. We were all fascinated by the worldliness of this simple and religious man, yet who met the challenge of the world day by day life straight on the head, like a captain of industry, in which sense he was.

Francis Cardinal Spellman, a truly great and remarkable man. Knowing him even a short time, you felt he was a friend. On our numerous meetings, luncheons and dinners, he never failed to amaze everyone by his vast knowledge of what was happening that moment in the non secular world. One was never conscious of his robes or religion. You only felt yourself in the company of a most warm, understanding, and knowledgeble human.

The day I did a series of photographs in the rectory of St. Patrick's cathedral, New York City, I remarked that there was an oil painting of the Pope on the wall in back of him. I asked if this was all right. "WHY NOT? HE'S MY BOSS," was his humorous reply.

One rainy night, after a non-stop flight from California to New York, I stepped down the flight of stairs from the plane, my eyes focussed on a pair of feet standing in the rain. Those feet, that had traveled so many, many miles around the world, could only belong to Francis Cardinal Spellman. (He had come to meet an elderly sick passenger.) He greeted me warmly, and as we are prone to do, I had to make a "crack." "Your Emminence, it was so nice of you to come and welcome me to New York personally." "My Son, as

you're only half Catholic, I came. If you were 100 percent, the Holy Father would have been here." The next day, the entire arch docese of New York had heard the story.

We see a screen test of Judy Garland and we come to a photograph that says, "Judy Garland, Flowers Incorporated."

FLOWERS INCORPORATED - was the most obvious thing for Judy Garland to open as a side business.

As we know, having been born Francis Gumm, it was George Jessell, who hearing the talented child sing on Radio Station WHN New York, gave her a new name. Judy Garland was born.

Nothing in show business is ever certain. Judy's future, at this moment, didn't look too promising, so having a small business to fall back on was a sage move. It really wasn't necessary as shortly Judy sang herself into the hearts of the world, and along the way "Flowers Incorporated" withered and died. "MICKEY AND JUDY," the world's most popular teenagers - that is what you see on the photograph of these two.

Note, the photos are of the opening night of Judy Garland's "Flowers Incorporated." The first customer, as you can see, is George Sidney, not smoking his pipe, Judy giving me a complimentary rose, on the lapel of my raincoat. I suppose the rain that night was kind of prophetic for a career that had lots of sunshine and lots of rain, and lots of talent had been rained on this individual, who managed to turn it into sunshine, love and entertainment for the world - the withering and dying of "Flowers Incorporated" was kind of

prophetic, of this young life that left us too soon.

We see some other children who were actors and actresses. June Allyson, Elizabeth Taylor, Janet Leigh, Margaret O'Brian along with Mary Astor in "Little Women". We see Mickey Rooney...

The studio publicity department were always scouting for locations to photograph their young hopefuls. There was a new girl from England they wanted to give her an English background in Beverly Hills. They asked me if they might use my home, I agreed. You can see a shot of a very demure Greer Garson posed upon my gate. They also made bathing suit pictures in my swimming pool, however these were never used. This was before "Mrs. Miniver." It was soon after that it wasn't necessary for this English star, (who I believe was Welsh by birth), to have to borrow someone's home or someone's swimming pool, she went on the be a great, great star and a great lady of the film capital.

Sinatra - "FRIEND."

For years, there was a small glamorous night spot on the Sunset Strip called "MOCAMBO." It was owned and run by a man named Charlie Morrison. Charlie died leaving the Mocambo and numerous obligations to his widow. The Morrisons were friends of Sinatra, who immediately organized the greatest assembly of jazz musicians, took over the place for a two week gig. Needless to say it was a huge success, and pulled the widow out of the red - and chased the wolf from the door.

If FRANK is your friend, you don't need another.

Note: The Mocambo had on one side glass wall windows that looked over the city. It gave a very nice view of

twinkling lights at night. This was basically the same view that one got from the Trocadero which is just a few doors away. On the other wall, to do something completely different, someone got the idea to build bird cages and have an entire wall of glass in front of the birds as the "birds" on the floor danced around, the birds in the cages would also dance around. Of course they air conditioned the cages so you didn't have that problem. However, they would fly against the glass and make the damndest noise. However, when the "LEADER" sang the birds were all silent, I do not know how this was accomplished, maybe Jilly was around or maybe they just turned down the lights, but somehow "our Leader's" singing was not disturbed.

It has been said as the story goes, a director friend sent Frank Sinatra thirty live girls for a birthday present, tagged "For the Man who has everything." This has appeared in many stories and I'm here to confess that it is all true??, because I was the generous director.

We see Frank and girls and we also see the photograph that appeared on the Album of "Pal Joey," which was one of the most successful albums Capitol Recording Company ever had. It shows Rita, Frank and Kim. However if you look closely the girl looks like Kim but, looking at her face you'll see it is someone else. The reason was, Kim was someplace else, so we used a double for Kim and later on, took a picture of Kim and put the face on the other girl. So any time you see the threesome you're getting two complete ones and someone else's body, but you get the face of Kim - as Sidney Skolsky

would say, but don't get me wrong, I love Hollywood.

Show business, and, or, my life seems to have a way of intertwining.

END OF TAPE 9.

Dear Mr. Editor:

More to come! - fifty more years - day and night -'twill make a hundred - that's "30" for tonight - over - out...