

that wants to go out and have a good time. They don't ever think of the box office; you get the power to do these parts partly from box office; a director may want you but he still has to sell you to the studio."

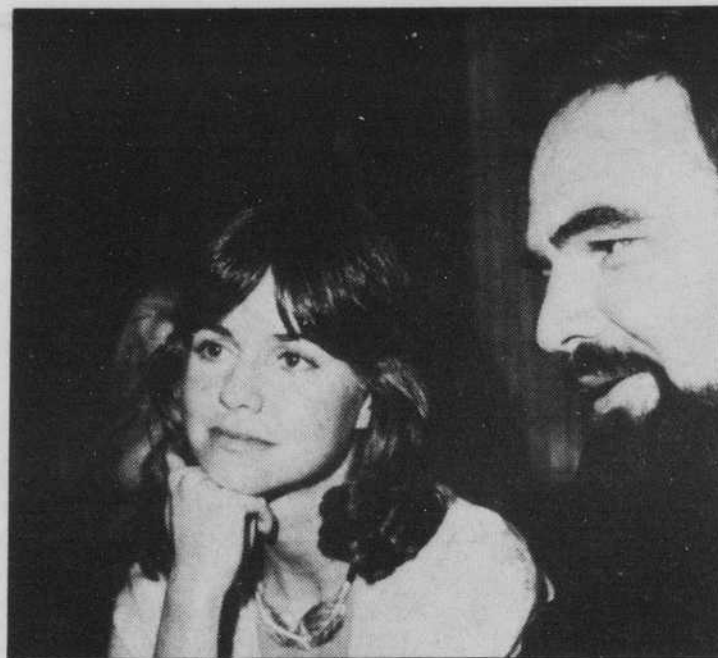
She explains herself as if she had thought out the answer long before the question was asked. Sally may still look tiny and cute but, during her lunch break from the filming of *Hooper* at Burbank studios, she's all business — with not time for small talk or anything frivolous. No wrinkling of the nose or Gidgetish giggling.

"You have to be versatile. That's one of the keys to being a working actress forever, not just three years, or five years, but until I'm 89. I did *Smokey* because I wanted to follow *Sybil* with being a romantic, grown-up woman, sitting across from Burt Reynolds and have Burt Reynolds be attracted to her. When you do something as heavy as *Sybil*, people will say, 'Yeah, she's a good actress, but she's ugly . . . or she's weird, has no sense of humor, she can't play comedy.'

"It's just as hard, believe it or not, to do *Smokey and the Bandit* as anything else. I don't want to put *Sybil* down because I'm very proud of it, but it was like glitter, fancy footwork. I'm not saying it wasn't hard, but it looks flashy so everyone goes 'wow.' Subtle comedy is the hardest thing."

Her ploy to establish herself as a box office power seems to be working. Three movies have followed *Smokey* (*Heroes*, with Henry Winkler, and two soon-to-be released films with Burt Reynolds, *The End* and *Hooper*) and now she's filming her first dramatic movie lead — *Norma Rae*, the story of an early woman union organizer in the South. *Variety* puts Sally in the company of Diane Keaton, Genevieve Bujold and Jill Clayburgh as four actresses currently getting \$200,000 to \$250,000 per film but who, because of their growing box office draw, will be getting \$400,000 per outing in their next contracts. (Barbra Streisand, Diana Ross, Faye Dunaway and Jane Fonda are the only movie actresses currently better paid.)

But *Smokey* did more than give Sally contractual clout; it also intertwined her romantically with Burt Reynolds. Their low-key romance has not been hot gossip column copy, but Reynolds cast her in *The End*, which he directed and starred in, and took her along to *Hooper*. According to friends on the set of *Hooper*, the two have much in common — both came up from television and both are cool and calculating profes-



Sally & Burt: a rare public outing

sionals, totally devoid of temperament. While other stars see themselves as tormented artists, either boozing themselves into a stupor or locking themselves in the dressing room trailer for an afternoon of sulking, Reynolds and Field simply grind out the work, never allowing personal quirks — or their relationship — to interfere.

Watching Sally watch Burt on the set, it all seems to fit. She sits detachedly doing needlepoint while Burt shoots a scene with co-stars Jan Michael-Vincent and Brian Keith. All three could have been strangers for the interest Sally showed.

"They're never lovey-dovey on the set," claims one stage hand. "They're very private." Sally, in fact, is so private that she's a non-entity in the show business social whirl; she didn't even bother to attend the Emmys the night she won. "I didn't have anything to wear," she shrugs. Burt, on the other hand, maintains a higher profile and lately has been dragging reluctant Sally along with him.

Sally's no-nonsense approach to her work was most evi-

dent in *Heroes*, which, according to Sally and others in the cast, was plagued with a large problem — the director, Jeremy Paul Kagan. "All of a sudden you realized that this man doesn't even know the dialogue, he doesn't know where to put the camera, doesn't know how to talk to actors and is just a rotten person. You find yourself not only working around him, but directing him as well. That's not true with a good director. You don't tell Marty Ritt where to put the camera." Sally's co-star, Henry Winkler, has said that Sally took the helm from Kagan and directed entire scenes. "I don't ever want to have to do that again," she says.

Heroes was supposed to have been the same breakthrough picture for Henry that *Stay Hungry* was for Sally. But it didn't work that way; despite *Heroes* and another role in *The One and Only*, Henry is still very much the Fonz. Television seems to close more doors than it opens.

"I don't think you can judge like that," maintains Sally. "There were times that I was stuck in it that I thought I should have gone another way. But at the same time I was being handicapped by being the girl next door, the adorable saccharin whatever, I was getting an enormous education, an education that you couldn't get elsewhere. It freed me as an actor to be able to use that machine (the camera). It doesn't use me, I can use it."

"When I think back on it now, I say 'Sally, how did you ever do it? How did you not just die of fear? You have your own TV series and you don't even have an agent or know what a two-shot is.' I had a protective device — and I know it was a protective device because I look back at the film and say 'Good god almighty, you were bad' — but I thought in my heart at the time that I was the world's greatest actress. It didn't make me feel superior to people, I just felt I had it inside and that I just needed information and growth for it to come out. If I hadn't had this kind of protective device, I would have been a quivering mass of insecurities. I still have protective devices working today."

Sally Field may still have protective devices working today, but one thing is certain — she has less need for them.

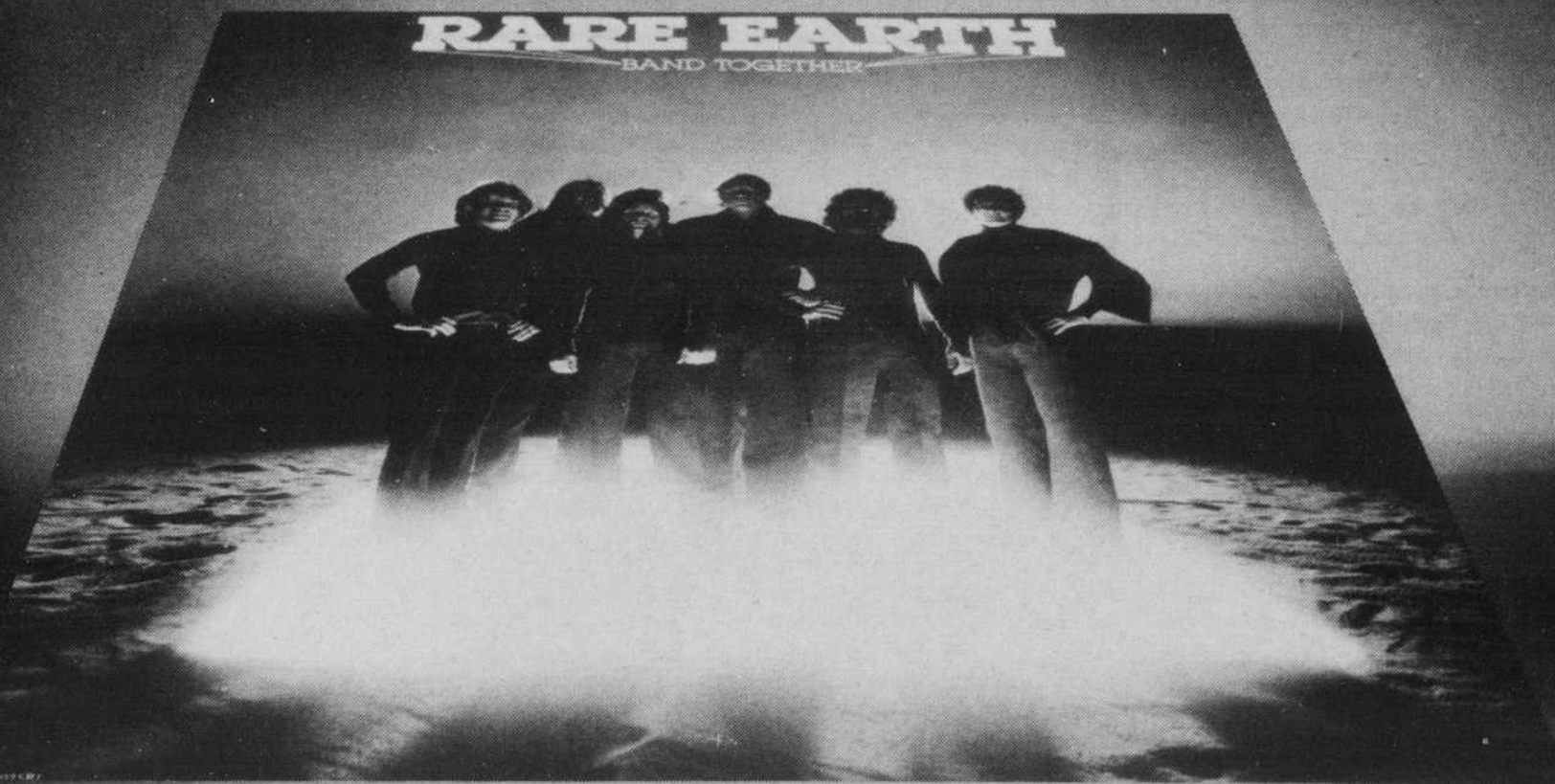
Stephen Randall, currently an associate editor for Los Angeles magazine, has tracked down news for the Los Angeles Free Press and chased skirts (so to speak) for Women's Wear Daily; he is known far and wide (by at least three people) for his wit and charm.

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