

# Film Extra Girl Supplements Poor Pay With Hope, Ambition

By BOB THOMAS  
AP Newsfeatures Writer

HOLLYWOOD — Promptly at 4 p. m., the lovely brunette slipped into a telephone booth, deposited a dime and dialed Hollywood 19711, as she had thousands of times before.

"Central casting," answered a crisp, metallic voice.

"Mary Ellen Batten," said the girl.

"Try later."

Mary Ellen hung up the phone. Forty-five minutes and several dimes later, she got the answer she was hoping for: "Paramount, 8 a. m. summer clothes, hat or coat. Technicolor makeup. Wear nothing bright or shiny. Director: Mann." She had a job for the following day.

Mary Ellen Batten is an extra, a unique and storied breed in Hollywood. Fame begins and ends in the extra ranks. Stars like Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, Marilyn Monroe and Lucille Ball started as atmosphere players in films.

And other stars, whose fame and fortune filtered through their fingers, now work as extras in movies starring current favorites.

You've never noticed Mary Ellen, although she has appeared in scores of films. She's the girl whose back you might see in a night club scene. She might be a barem girl one day, a pioneer woman the next. Always she supplies a needed anonymity — a live but unidentified figure to fill out the empty space on a movie set.

"Oh, I get a line now and then in pictures," she told me. "I had one with Jane Russell recently. But it ended on the cutting room floor, like most of my big scenes."

**Good Experience**

"Still, I don't mind the work. It's not the most inspiring job in the world, but it's good experience. You get to learn exactly how pictures are made by being on the set. If my break ever does come, I'd know what to do."

Mary Ellen is 23, with the build of a statuesque Ziegfeld showgirl. She's 5 ft. 9 in. has a straight delicate nose, a cover complexion and pleasant, musical voice.

Born in St. Catharines, Ont., she attended the Toronto Conservatory of Music for three years. Five years ago, a local MGM official heard her voice and recommended her to the studio.

She and her mother (her father died when she was young) packed up and came to the land of hopes, Hollywood. Mary Ellen was not placed under contract, but for a year the studio treated her to vocal lessons and a drama course.

"But the talent scouts never saw me in the right role in the right play," she sighed. "Or maybe I just wasn't ready."

Her mother footed the bills out of savings in their first year here. When MGM dropped her, Mary Ellen decided she would have to be the breadwinner.

She got jobs in light operas and night clubs. But that wasn't enough to meet expenses. Two years ago, she decided to become an extra.

"I went to the screen extras guild and they tried to discourage me," she recalled. "They said it was harder to get a break when you're an extra. Agents and producers look down their noses at extras, thinking they have no ambition. But I had to eat."

She joined the SEG and the Screen Actors Guild, which deals with players about the status of extra. She also has joined Actors Equity (stage), AFTRA (radio-tv), AGVA (variety-night clubs) and AGMA (concerts). Initiation to each ranged from \$50 to \$150 and annual dues come to around \$100 for all.

"At first the work was slow," she said. "But the calls began coming in more often once I had worked around at the studios."

She added that she got the jobs on her ability alone. She shunned the wolves who advised they could get her in the movies. "I suppose there are girls who try to get ahead that way," she said, "but I don't think it's a good idea."

Like most extras, Mary Ellen has a hard time living on her movie pay. As a plain extra, she draws \$19.43 for a day's work. On calls termed "weather permitting," the studio can dismiss her when she reports for work—if the weather is bad. She gets half way for that.

She also works as a "dress extra." That's for night club, theater or party scenes, and she gets \$26.25 for the day. She supplies her own evening gowns. She has seven, which she has designed and her mother has made. Some-

times wears a fur, borrowed from her aunt.

**Hazardous Work**

Occasionally she gets a "stunt check." That is special pay for hazardous or physical work. One day she earned \$92 for being one of the ornaments in a human chandelier for Marilyn Monroe's "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" number in "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes."

Sometimes she works as a stand-in for \$17.85. She stands still while the hot lights are focussed on her. When all is ready, the star takes her place and does the scene. Mary Ellen doesn't like the tedium of standing in, but does it because she gets a closer view of the camera work.

The monotony and uncertainty makes the life of an extra hard. To an extra, glamour is something you read about. The average secretary probably earns more than Mary Ellen does. She is cagey about her weekly movie earnings, but if she averages \$50 weekly she's doing good.

Most of the jobs are for a day or two at a time. But sometimes she'll fall into a good assignment, like playing an Arabian beauty in "Adventures of Hajji Baba." It provided two weeks' work on location at Lone Pine, Calif. "It was wonderful," she enthused. "I got to eat steak every night."

The procedure for getting extra jobs has been the same for years. Mary Ellen calls central casting, a hiring agency maintained by all the studios. The switchboard starts taking calls at four in the afternoon.

Mary Ellen gives her name, one of the 3,500 registered with central casting. If the answer is "no work" it means there are as yet no calls from the studios for extra talent for the next day. Mary Ellen keeps calling back at 15-minute intervals until the switchboard closes at 6:30 p. m.

If the reply is "try later," it means there are studio calls in the office, but they haven't been processed. So Mary Ellen keeps calling back every five minutes until she gets a job. Then she is told the name of the studio, the picture's director, when to report and what clothes and makeup to wear.

Mary Ellen's ambition has long been to star in musical films. But she realizes she probably won't make the grade as an extra.

"The studios don't seem to bring stars up from the extra ranks any more," she observed. "I guess I will have to establish my name in some other field. I hope to work up my own act for night clubs. Then maybe someone will notice me."

Meanwhile she is filling out the scenery in films like "Strategic Air Command," where I saw her. While James Stewart and June Allyson played a scene in the foreground, she was one of the diners at the crowded cafe.

"Sometimes I get very downhearted," Mary Ellen sighed. "It just seems as though I get all treated up and then do nothing. I wouldn't like the extra's life at all if I thought it would be the end."

"But I'm past being disappointed, after five years in Hollywood. Maybe I haven't been ready to become a star. I'll make it some day, you watch and see."

**Teacher Hurt In Hit and Run Car Accident**

PASCO — A 55-year-old Montana school teacher was in serious condition here Saturday night following what State Police described as a hit-and-run accident near Eltopia, a small town 15 miles north of here.

The injured man, LaVern F. Roubinek of Havre, Mont., suffered a basal skull fracture, a fractured collarbone and severe lacerations. State Police said Roubinek was about 2 miles north of Eltopia, traveling toward Pasco when another car apparently forced him off the road.

Officers said the car being sought in connection with the accident is a blue Ford convertible with Montana license plates, numbers unknown.

The Kennebec detachment of the State Patrol said all law enforcement bodies in Southeastern Washington had been alerted for the car.

**NON-IRISH DUBLIN**

DUBLIN, Mich. — There hasn't been an Irishman living in Dublin for 12 years. And there's only one girl among the town's 13 adults and 13 children who can even come close to passing for Irish. She's of English extraction. Everyone else is either Swede, German or Bohemian.



DETROIT, Mich.—Joey Pientrandrea, 3, holds his head and exhibits two beautiful "shiners" and a bandaged head in Receiving Hospital, Detroit, Mich., that he might have gotten by colliding with a truck. But police said he was the victim of a beating by his 20-year-old mother, Mrs. Rosemary Pientrandrea, ass because Joey spilled a glass of milk. The lad's father filed a complaint against Mrs. Pientrandrea. (AP Wirephoto.)

## Ocean Trips Whet Appetite

NEW YORK (INS) — Steamship passengers eat about nine times more chicken per capita than landlubbers and about six times as much red meat, according to a gastronomic survey by the United States Lines.

During a recent nine-day round trip of the superliner United States, a total of 64,654 pounds of prime fresh meats and 20,512 pounds of poultry were devoured by the 1,536 passengers and 1,000 officers and crew members.

This breaks down to about two and four-fifths pounds of meat daily, or six times more than the national per capita consumption of just under half a pound. Chicken-fanciers in sea air put away about 14 ounces of poultry daily during the same voyage, or nine times the national average of one and one-half ounces a day.

## Nothing to Fear But Fear

ST. LOUIS (AP)—A mysterious stranger in pursuit, James Medley Jr. sped through six stop signs at 65 miles an hour. Finally he barricaded himself inside a drug store.

The pursuer, off duty and out of uniform, displayed his pistol and badge through a glass door. "Thank the Lord, you're a police officer!" Medley gasped.

Police Officer Robert G. Dowd, agreeing Medley had some cause for fright (but not for flight at 65 miles an hour), fined him \$60 for passing up the stop signs but paroled him on a \$50 speeding fine.

## Haile Selassie Passes Through Salem on Train

Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, now on a nation-wide tour of the United States, stopped in Salem for a few minutes early this morning enroute to San Francisco.

His train, the Klamath, arrived in Salem shortly after midnight and remained for about 15 minutes. J. R. Glover, Southern Pacific ticket clerk, reported. The emperor, reportedly traveling with a party of 16 persons, did not leave the train here, Glover said.

The 61-year-old monarch canceled his schedule for Saturday at Seattle to permit him to rest from the strain of almost continuous social events and official inspections which started when he reached this country last month, the Associated Press reported.

## Doggy Robbery

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (AP)—Mabel Whittitt's hat shop was spic and span and ready for the first customer. When the door was opened a big Dalmation dog slipped inside, snatched a stuffed poodle from the show window and then made his getaway.

Startled clerks followed him for half a block but quit the chase when the Dalmation had placed the poodle gently beside a tree and turned to defend his fuzzy friend against any attackers.

## MAN HOSPITALIZED

Walter Harris Edmonds, 502 S. 19th St., was taken to Salem Memorial Hospital by Willamette Ambulance Service early Saturday morning after he lapsed into unconsciousness at his home, city first aidmen reported. He was released Saturday evening following treatment. The attending physician said cause of his illness had not been determined.

# End of Geneva Meet Sought By Knowland

By JACK BELL

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Knowland (R-Calif.) called Saturday for an end to the Geneva conference and invited the associated states of Indochina to declare their independence if France sets up a "peace at any price" government.

Knowland, the Senate Republican leader and a member of its Foreign Relations Committee, declared in an interview that Geneva negotiations "have gone on long enough to demonstrate clearly that neither the Soviet Union nor Communist China is prepared to negotiate anything but the abject surrender of the French in Indochina."

With Premier Joseph Laniel having offered his resignation after losing a vote of confidence in the French Assembly, Knowland said he fears a "surrender" government may be formed.

"It is my very strong belief," he said, "that Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos are not going to sit placidly by and exchange a position of not being completely independent in the French Union for one of completely domination by the Communists."

Knowland said states may issue a declaration of independence, just as we did in 1776, and appeal to the United Nations and the free nations of the world for help if the French are prepared to agree to a settlement which would destroy Indochina's hope of independence and sovereignty.

"I don't believe they are going to sit back and have their freedom bartered away by a French government that may be established on a 'peace at any price' basis," Knowland said he thinks the three states might be willing to accept help from the republic of Korea, aid that the French previously had turned down.

He said he is convinced that the anti-Communists in Indochina are willing to fight "if they can get the arms and equipment to do it."

**Delinquent Started Fire Killing Seven**

CHICAGO (AP) — Chief of Detectives John T. O'Malley said Saturday that a whisky-drinking, cigarette-smoking 11-year-old boy told him he started a tenement building fire which killed seven persons and injured nine.

O'Malley said the boy, Marion Gregory, told him the fire started Friday night when he "flipped" a cigarette butt into some rubbish in a stair well.

A father and his small son and daughter, a mother and daughter and a brother and sister were trapped in their fourth floor apartments by the fast-spreading flames and perished.

Young Gregory previously told investigators that the fire apparently was started by two men in baseball caps.

Supervising Capt. Robert Ryan said he learned that the boy smokes and drinks whisky on occasion and often flipped away glowing cigarette butts.

The lad lived in an apartment with his father, Lewis.

## Pittsburgh Bus Walkout Ends

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A 35-day strike by AFL bus and trolley operators on the city's main public transportation system ended Saturday with the workers agreeing to a new basic hourly wage of \$2.01, a nine-cent increase.

The new rate is the highest in the country, equalled only by Boston's.

Some 1,282 drivers, members of Division 85, AFL Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railways and Motor Coach Employees, voted to accept the offer. There were 172 negative votes. In all, the Pittsburgh Railways Co., operator of the lines, employs 2,700 drivers.

## Jury Decides Man Innocent of Murder

KLAMATH FALLS (AP) — A circuit court jury Saturday found Arthur F. Pigg innocent in the gunshot death April 25 of Roy Durham, 48.

Pigg, a 74-year-old night club photographer, was charged with second degree murder in the shooting. He testified he had fired the gun in self defense.

## LIQUOR CHARGE FILED

Marion County sheriff's deputies Saturday night arrested Darrell E. Pruitt, 19, of Clovis Air Force Base, N. M., on a charge of illegal possession of intoxicating liquor. He was released on \$50 bail.

Geysers get their name from Iceland's Great Geysir, so named by the Vikings, 1,000 years ago.

# To Replace Bing



HOLLYWOOD — A 20-year-old Stanford University student, Gary Crosby, demonstrates his singing style for reporters as he arrived in Hollywood, Calif., to take over his more famous father's radio show for the summer. Gary said he wants to make a career of show business, and hopes some day to be as good a singer as Bing. The series, similar in format to the elder Crosby's program, will be Gary's first regular entertainment work, although he has made record and radio guest appearances with Bing. (AP Wirephoto)

## Milwaukee Press Club Wall Has History Written in Chalk

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (INS)—A mischievous youngster with an eraser could have a field day in the quarters of the Milwaukee Press Club.

For there, mounted on the walls, are chalk-written signatures of some of the outstanding personalities of the past 50 years. Presidents, prize fighters, entertainers, diplomats, explorers—all are included in the famous collection. And behind every signature is a story.

Enrico Caruso, for instance, visited the club in 1919, and was very agreeable to everything except one inevitable request—to sing. When asked to sing, he grinned and told members the name of the theater where he was appearing and where they could hear him—for the price of admission.

**Twain Corrects**

Mark Twain spent a riotous evening in the club in 1909, and a Milwaukee newspaper reporting on the affair said it got out of hand because of "a jug which someone carried in."

Twain, who was a reporter of sorts himself, objected to an inaccuracy in the newspaper account. He wrote an indignant letter to the club saying:

"It is a most unfortunate error. I did not say it was 'due to a jug which someone carried in.' I carried it in myself."

William Jennings Bryan, Sarah Bernhardt, Otis Skinner, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gypsy Rose Lee, Dizzy Dean, Charles Lindbergh, Charles Evans Hughes, Woodrow Wilson, Jack Dempsey, Theodore Roosevelt, Bob Hope, and Admiral Robert E. Peary—they are some of the others whose names adorn the press club's walls.

Even "One-Eye" Connelly, the most famous gate-crasher of all, scrawled his name with chalk on one of the blackboards.

All but one of the array of famous names was signed within the walls of the press club. The single exception is the second signature of the late President Roosevelt.

He had been a guest in 1920 when he was assistant secretary of the Navy. He returned to Milwaukee during the presidential campaign of 1932, but had been crippled by polio in the intervening years.

He had been invited to provide a second signature, this time as a presidential aspirant, but the elevator to the club rooms would not accommodate his wheel chair and he could not walk.

**Waives Rule**

So members waived their long-time rule that signatures be accepted only from clubroom visitors—and his second signature, with the inscription "Delighted Again!" was posted on Sept. 30, 1932.

Another presidential aspirant, former Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, pointed up a strange combination of signatures that made the person who arranged them blush.

Stevenson, who visited the club during the 1952 presidential campaign, showed great interest in all of the signatures, but he couldn't get his eyes off two of them.

"There's a strange combination," he observed good-naturedly.

And for the first time, it was noticed that the signature of James Cardinal Gibbons, a prince of the Roman Catholic Church, was framed side-by-side with the signature of Robert G. Ingersoll, the militant atheist.

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# Arizona Man Wins Light Plane Race

PALM DESERT, Calif. (AP) — A Philadelphia - to - Palm Desert race for light planes, the second annual transcontinental handicap air cruise, was won by Walter C. Butler, Phoenix, Ariz., it was announced Saturday night.

He received trophies from a race committee and his plane's man manufacturer and \$300 for covering the distance in 16 hours 59 minutes in a Beechcraft Bonanza.

The race is sponsored jointly by the Philadelphia Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Desert Air Hotel at this resort 10 miles south of Palm Springs. Its purpose is to prove the safety and usefulness of the modern light plane.

Of the 67 planes that started the race last Saturday, 55 finished it, 10 of them Saturday.

Winners included:

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