

This Hollywood veteran still

looks as if he has straw

behind the ears; but it probably

comes from unpacking a

case of imported delicacies.

Coop appears at a black-tie affair with his glamorous, socially prominent wife.



The Secret Side of Gary Cooper

by Peer J. Oppenheimer

Picture yourself sitting at a fashionable Paris restaurant overlooking the Seine. Opposite you is a long-time movie star. He picks up a menu the size of a billboard and says, "If you'd like, I'll order for you. I know the cuisine here."

Without hesitation, he outlines the complete dinner to the waiter, stressing precisely how each dish should be served. Then he leans back, adjusts a silk tie, and discourses on art.

Who is he? Jean Pierre Aumont? José Ferrer? Rossano Brazzi?

Nope, folks, just plain old Gary Cooper! And if you're disenchanted about this unfamiliar aspect of a favorite cowpoke figure, you have nothing on me. Yet that's how he was when I met him recently under just those circumstances.

Cooper was in Paris to film Allied

Artists' "Love in the Afternoon," a comedy costarring Audrey Hepburn and Maurice Chevalier. He was as much at home promenading the Champs Elysees as he is strolling down that long dusty street for a showdown with a Western gunman.

"Why shouldn't I be?" he asked. "I was born in Montana but hardly under pioneer conditions." Actually he comes from a wealthy family who provided him a cosmopolitan education that began at nine with his enrollment in an English prep school. His father was a wealthy lawyer and Montana supreme court justice who instilled in the lanky youth a love for fine living and comfort.

Coop's ambition was to be a cartoonist, and he studied art at Grinnell College in Iowa before joining a newspaper in Helena, Mont. The only reason he went to Los Angeles was to join his

parents, who had retired there. But Coop was quick to realize his big opportunity was in the movie capital—as a salesman.

"Shy" Gary Cooper became a door-to-door salesman of portrait coupons, and in a few months was the top money-maker in the field. He's been a top money-maker ever since.

Selling was still Coop's big goal when a family friend got him his first film job in 1924 as a stunt man. By 1925 he had his first leading role, and when Samuel Goldwyn cast him in "The Winning of Barbara Worth" with Ronald Colman, sales ambitions lost out to a movie career.

While he's best known for "aw-shucks" roles, Gary Cooper's polished background often has shown through that rough-and-ready exterior. He has achieved success, for example, in such

sophisticated comedies as Noel Coward's "Design for Living" with Miriam Hopkins and Fredric March and "Desire" with Marlene Dietrich. It's been a long time, though, since Coop traded his buckskin vest for white tie and tails, and he's happy with the change of pace in "Love in the Afternoon." It'll give him a chance to remind fans that his vocabulary is considerably larger than "yep" and that his acting talents go beyond looking bashful.

While movie-goers may be startled by Cooper's suavity, Hollywood will take it in stride. They know Coop and his wife, the former socialite Veronica Balfe, as two of the town's leading party-givers. A young star in filmville doesn't really feel he "belongs" until he has received an invitation to a soiree at the Coopers'.

If you're getting the idea that the Coopers are simply Beverly Hills snobs, a recent joke Coop tells on himself will set you straight. He was at France's famed race track, Longchamps, when a spectator tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Monsieur Cooper, there's one show where zee horses are zee stars—not you!"

Coop cites this as one reason he loves Paris. Its people are impressed only by the things Cooper himself admires—good horses, good food, good living.

But don't be deceived into believing that Coop is the perfect cosmopolitan. As he will proudly admit, the rough edges of Montana are still with him.

Like the time he was driving to the French Riviera for a holiday and stopped to ask directions. He listened to a spiel of French, nodded understandingly, and took off with the assurance of a man who knows his way about the world. Unfortunately, he ended up in the French Alps, 150 miles from his destination.

But in this case Coop's real personality matched the one he shows on the screen—he simply shrugged off the mistake good-naturedly and sat back to take things easy.



The rangy star takes to animals, and it seems they reciprocate. Here a mule mooches from Gary in "Along Came Jones." Gary was a rugged hero in "For Whom the Bell Tolls," with Ingrid Bergman.

He has spent most of his screen life in monosyllabic he-man roles like that of "The Plainsman." Shown is James Ellison.