



much for the most famous Boone since Daniel (Pat's great-great-great-great-grandfather, incidentally).

"Being a teen-age hero," he said recently, "is something like being elected to public office. You have an obligation to act for the public welfare, and you can handle the job like a statesman or like a cheap politician."

The parallel is strikingly apt. A statesman (or politician) is effective when he gets the backing of diverse groups and neutralizes the potential opposition. This political coup Pat has already accomplished, with little more than a pleasantly lazy smile, a gentle way with a tune, and good manners. In the words of Randy Wood, his discoverer and manager: "Pat's the first teen-age idol Grandma can dig, too."

When Pat croons and bobby-soxers shriek, parents don't squirm. Sometimes they even buy his record, perhaps because Pat dilutes his gentle rock 'n' roll offerings with cannily chosen ballads from the good old days: "Bernadine," penned long ago by Johnny Mercer; "Love Letters in the Sand," first sung by Rudy Vallee in 1931; "There's a Gold Mine in the Sky," made famous by Bing Crosby when Grandma herself was young enough to swoon.

But if Pat has made a hit with Mom and Dad, not to mention Grandma, it's not so much by the songs he sings as the way he sings them.

"The human body," he has said, "consists of about 200 separate bones and I don't think it's necessary to call them all into play. I belong to the finger-snapping school myself. That, and a little tapping of the feet, is enough to satisfy my soul."

But there's danger in the picture of Pat as the All-American, home-loving, church-going, non-smoking, non-drinking, hard-working college-boy type. The too-good publicity troubles him. "I'm afraid it makes me look thin and saccharine."

It also caused one hardened oldster in show business to remark: "I didn't believe it until recently when I had to work with him. But this guy's for real!"

A QUIET, subterranean cold war seems to exist between Pat and the publicists around him. They keep erecting an antiseptic statue that Pat keeps dismantling.

"Why, look," the Hollywood praise agents say, "he's such a big success in Hollywood, yet he hasn't gone Hollywood. He's just plain Pat."

Not long ago Pat was asked how come he hasn't "gone Hollywood." He shrugged and said:

"When you get off the train with three babies on your arm and your wife's bringing up a fourth that's not quite born yet, the chances are you're going to keep on doing the same little things you've been doing."

He disarmed the press corps even more when the news broke that he had supposedly refused to kiss his leading lady, Shirley Jones, in his second movie, "April Love."

After the noisy "ohs" and "ahs" died down, Pat was asked about this, too. "I didn't refuse," he said. "The script didn't call

for my kissing her. The producer suggested that in one scene I might. So we talked about it, then decided against it. If the question comes up in another picture, I'll decide then what to do."

Pat relishes his popularity, as what youth wouldn't? But he's profoundly modest. When someone calls him a movie star, he blushes. He moves and talks slowly, confidently; yet he is driven.

"When I was 9 or 10," he recalls, "I never looked forward to birthdays. I knew time was passing that I'd never have again. At 12, I got into every chorus, sport, and school organization I could join. I dread wasting time. I have even studied while driving on those straight Texas roads, with a history book on the steering wheel. I don't recommend it, but I didn't want to waste time."

All his life he has felt an urge, almost a calling, to teach, to crusade for spiritual values; yet from the beginning he's been enticed by show business.

"When I was a kid in Tennessee, I used to dream of being a great doctor, a great professor, a great businessman, or even a great preacher."

He muses about this a moment, then comes up with the other side: "I remember sitting in the barn milking our cow Rosemarie and singing as I milked. I'd sing and I'd dream and I'd really believe I was Bing Crosby or Perry Como. What wonderful dreams I had!"

Wonderful as they were, and contradictory as they seem now that they're coming true, they're not so contradictory after all. "I feel that the Lord wants to use me as a singer for Him," he has said, "and that He has given me influence with young people so that I can do good."

Once, after 12 exhausting hours at the recording studio, he had to attend a movie premiere. He'd have given anything to go as he was—in slacks, lumberjack shirt, white buckskin shoes.

"Go ahead," a friend urged. "After all, you're a star. You can get away with it."

"That's just the point," Pat sighed. Then he went home to change into a tux.

Pat has only one more semester to go at Columbia University. When TV entered his life, it looked as if he'd have to postpone the schooling. "But too many teen-agers want to quit school," he argues. "I can't set a bad example. Rehearsals for my TV show will have to fit in between classes."

While Pat sees himself as an example, he's not a prude. He doesn't swap gossip, smoke, swear, or drink. But neither does he criticize others for doing these things. "That's their way, and I have mine." Since his spiritual beliefs prevent him from dancing, he's sometimes asked why he makes records which are supposed to be danced to.

"If other people want to dance," he replies, "that's all right." He's not trying to convert them to his ways and doesn't feel obliged to be converted to theirs.

ASK PAT how he got that way, and he'll answer right off:

"Mack Craig." That's the name of the principal of David Lipscomb High School in Nashville, where Pat studied; preacher in the Church of Christ, where Pat worships; young husband and father, whom Pat emulates.

"He was not much older than most of the students, but he was so busy. He came to all the games and social affairs. How he managed it, I'll never know. If it were not for his influence, I might be somebody else today. Mr. Craig is the kind of fellow I'd like to be."

In high school, despite the social handicap of a phenomenally high IQ of 150 and near-perfect grades, Pat was elected president of his class, then president of the entire student body. He was a four-letter athlete and captain of the baseball team, a newspaper cartoonist, and star of the school's stage productions. To top it, he was voted "most popular boy."

But while he was popular, he was never the gay blade.

"Before I was 15," Pat recalls, "I went out with three girls, one at a time. I realized they weren't for me. Each time I broke up, I felt guilty."

Then he met Shirley Foley and no matter how he looked at it, she was for him. Her father is the famed Red Foley, idol of the country-music world. One day Shirley learned that Foley (Pat has always called him "Mr Red") had signed for a new

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