

THE MANY WORLDS OF BILL HOLDEN

By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER

the Holdens have a do-it-yourself mint.

Not that it's easy for Ardis to keep moving from place to place like a vagabond, although both she and Bill have traveling down to a science. Bill told me, "I travel with little more than six shirts, which I carry in one suitcase." He can get away with this because he keeps duplicate wardrobes in Switzerland, in his new apartment in Hong Kong, and in his hotel near Nairobi, Kenya.

"Actually, the cost of this is low," says thrifty Bill. "I had my original wardrobe triplicated in Hong Kong at \$35 a suit. I don't think I have more than \$1,000 invested in all my clothes, which isn't extravagant for an actor."

Incidentally, according to Bill's Hong Kong tailor, he's one of the easiest men to fit and one of the most pleasant to do business with. "He knows what he wants, makes selections of material one-two-three," says the tailor.

AHECTIC life hasn't prevented Ardis from doing a wonderful job of raising their children, even with Bill away so much. Virginia, her daughter by her first marriage, is 22 now and lives in Los Angeles, where she is studying to be an interior decorator. Their boys, Peter Westfield, 16, and Scott Porter, 13, are in school near Lausanne, a five-minute walk from the new Holden home.

"The World of Suzie Wong" took Holden and costar Nancy Kwan to London and Hong Kong.



Bill himself has been described alternately as a father who doesn't care, who spoils his children, and who is too strict.

The first accusation—probably the result of their long business separations—is wholly untrue. Nor does he spoil them. He is somewhat strict, though, based on his own upbringing.

"My father always told me I had to earn what I got, whether it was my weekly allowance or the motorcycle I wanted when I was 15. He had the right idea. I appreciated everything that much more. And I treat my children accordingly."

He has become more lenient now that the boys are in a Swiss boarding school, which is far stricter than anything they experienced back home. "Although they live just a few minutes from our house, they can come home only every other weekend," Bill told me. "And then only if their grades are up to par. This may sound cruel, but actually it's much better for the boys."

There are a lot of misconceptions about Bill, not the least of which is his supposed wealth. He is one of the highest-paid actors in the world, and his widely publicized business ventures include radio stations in Texas and Hong Kong, an electronics factory in Tokyo, and an interest in the Mount Kenya Safari Club near Nairobi, which he owns jointly with two close pals, Swiss industrialist Carl Hirschmann and U. S. oil millionaire Ray Ryan.

BUT WHILE Bill likes to think of himself as a businessman, none of his commercial ventures has paid off. His only big "killing" was his much-publicized percentage deal in "The Bridge on the River Kwai" and that, too, has turned into a booby trap.

Bill's share, to date, amounts to \$2,800,000. Through a contract not entirely of his own choosing, he is being paid off at \$50,000 a year. Columbia, which produced "Kwai," makes a good profit by investing the \$2 million-plus it owes Holden; even at a conservative 4 percent interest, this could bring Columbia \$70,000 annually—after paying Bill his \$50,000!

Bill has had more than his share of financial problems since he was signed by Paramount in 1938 at \$50 a week. Although his salary kept increasing with every option, the most he made until his first outside picture was \$80,000. He got himself deep in debt after marrying, and by the time he got out of the Army he owed the

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