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I WAS A BIT apprehensive as I walked up to the Birdcage, the big house high above Beverly Hills where Katharine Hepburn lives.

For all practical purposes, she had not talked to an interviewer about her personal life since she won an Academy Award for "Morning Glory" 30 years ago.

Since then, Miss Hepburn has been nominated for Oscars eight times (including this year for "Long Day's Journey into Night"), yet she has remained the mystery woman of Hollywood, granting few interviews—and even then volunteering little more than professional opinions about her work.

But for some inexplicable reason, the afternoon I saw her she was in a mellow and talkative mood, willing to discuss anything.

When interviewed 30 years ago, Miss Hepburn struck back at what she considered an invasion of her privacy by telling the reporter that she had been married 3 times and had 10 children.

This time, however, she discussed her one unsuccessful marriage with little hesitation: "It happened in 1928 and lasted six years. Unfortunately, we had no children." Her husband was Ludlow Smith, an industrial engineer. Since then, she never has been even close to matrimony.

KATHARINE is a mystery not only to the public but to her co-workers as well. Only a handful of people are close to her—among them George Cukor, who directed some of her most successful pictures, and Spencer Tracy, with whom she co-starred in eight films. Her other friends are not in the entertainment industry.

In all Katharine's years in Hollywood, she never has been to a night club, and she admits, "I can count on the fingers of one hand the times I've been to a restaurant." What's more, she has ignored the folkways of filmland by never attending a movie premiere. Her reason: "I don't want to go. I just wasn't brought up that way. My family never went out; we always had a very good time at home. When I go out, I get excited and it gives me indigestion."

Yet when you meet Katie, you find there is nothing of the dour recluse about her. She is a vigorous, exciting, and hospitable woman, who refers to her California home and her town houses in

Katharine Hepburn:



Hollywood's Mystery Woman

No star has been more adroit at dodging personal questions, but here the curtain surrounding her private life lifts a little—as she gives her first really revealing interview in 30 years **By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER**



In "Long Day's Journey into Night," Miss Hepburn plays the tormented mother.