

Martha Hyer: Girl on the Go

by Peer J. Oppenheimer

MARTHA HYER's meteoric rise qualifies her for the coveted title "Hollywood star." Only one question remains. Is there such a thing as a Hollywood star anymore?

Any actor or actress worth an autograph hunter's assault spends little time in Hollywood. France, Spain, Japan, Kenya—these are the spots you will find glamour these days.

Martha Hyer, for example, has made films on five continents and traveled by boat, mule, train, helicopter, and rickshaw. Her languages include French, Spanish, a little Japanese, and enough Swahili to complain about the heat.

As for Hollywood, well, that's a good spot for an actress to make plane connections. Connections of all sorts, come to think of it.

"For all my traveling," says the star of "My Man Godfrey," "I've yet to make a trip that compares with two I remember as a child. Once I

went from my home in Fort Worth, Tex., to my grandmother's in South Carolina. Dad gave me \$10 and advice worthy of the lawyer and former senator he is. 'Spend this wisely, and it will last for the trip. Spend it unwisely, and—well, you will learn.'"

Martha's impish grin flashes. "So I learned. I spent most of the money on candy. That left me virtually broke for the rest of the trip. Not that I minded, with that stomach-ache! Anyway, it was a good lesson for a traveler. And for an actress, too."

The other memorable trip for Martha was to her other grandmother's in Los Angeles. Martha attended a premiere and was bitten by the acting bug. "I loved Hollywood," she says, "the climate, the color, the glamorous people. I wanted to become part of it."

Martha's pout is as pretty as her smile. "So I accomplished what I set out to do, and what happens? Hollywood is everywhere but in California!"

Martha, however, loves the life of a film star—and particularly the traveling it involves. A few years ago, a producer on location in Tokyo suddenly needed an actress. He long-distanced Martha.

"How soon can you get here?" he asked.

"When's the next plane?"

"In five hours."

Martha was on it.

Traveling has become part of the personality of the Pasadena Playhouse and Northwestern University alumna. During the filming of United Artists' "Paris Holiday," she was asked if she were spending the week end in Paris.

"No. In the country," she replied offhandedly.

Only later did the cast learn what she meant by "the country"—Spain!

There are drawbacks, however. In Kenya, Martha was called on to fondle a snake. It was trained, of course, but unfortunately on the day of shooting it shed its skin. An untrained, poisonous reptile was substituted, its mouth thoughtfully sealed with transparent tape.

"That fear in my eyes," Martha says coldly, "was not acting." But the familiar grin is quick to return. "And to think I used to dream of being a star, besieged by handsome actors and rich playboys."

Martha can wink prettily, too. "Of course, with a snake there's always that tape!"

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