



Jim Garner with his wife, Lois, and stepdaughter.



Jim hit stardom as "Maverick."

Nice Guy, This Jim Garner

by Fear J. Oppenheimer

WHEN JAMES GARNER asked the late John Hodiak for advice on dramatic schools, Hodiak replied, "Jim, 99 out of 100 people who meet you like you the way you are. Chances are, 99 out of 100 who see you perform will feel the same way. If you attend acting school, you'll become stylized. It would ruin you."

Jim accepted the advice—and it paid off. His easygoing, natural charm and masculinity have made him a favorite with movie and TV audiences of both sexes and all age groups.

Although Garner had appeared in a few movies and TV shows before "Sayonara," it was his role as Marlon Brando's pal, Captain Bailey, which attracted so much attention that Warner Brothers cast him as Bret Maverick in ABC's Sunday night TV Western. Within a few weeks, he pulled the rug out from under Ed Sullivan and Steve Allen, and was rewarded with more movies—the title role in "Darby's Rangers," and the lead in the soon-to-be-released "Up Periscope."

Curiously enough, very little is known about Garner—and that is strictly his own doing.

There are two major outlets for publicizing newcomers: gossip columns and fan magazines. Jim's opinion of columnists is unprintable, and his attitude toward fan magazines is made clear by his refusal to sit still for their interviews or picture layouts. For that matter, he's opposed to having his family photographed under any conditions, much to the distress of his studio.

If he hadn't worked as a gas-station attendant on Hollywood Boulevard, and made the acquaintance of producer Paul Gregory, chances are Jim would never have turned to acting. When he looked up Gregory after his discharge from the Army in 1952, Gregory not only urged Jim to give it a try but helped him get started by hiring him at \$40 a week to cue Lloyd Nolan in his stage production of "The Caine Mutiny Court Martial."

When they went on the road, Jim's pay was raised to \$150 a week for playing one of the judges—who never spoke a line. "The hardest part of the deal," he says, "was to stay awake at 512 performances!"

Garner is the only member of his family to become an actor. His father, Weldon Bumgarner,

was in the upholstery and carpentry business in Oklahoma when Jim was born. His mother died when he was five. He has two older brothers, Charles, a schoolteacher in Norman, and Jack, who used to play professional baseball and now works at a golf course in Leesburg, Fla.

Jim's education was interrupted at 16, when he joined the merchant marine as an able-bodied seaman. If he hadn't been on leave late in 1944, he would have drowned with the rest of the crew when their tug sank during a hurricane!

Jim attended Hollywood High briefly, moved back to Norman to complete his high-school education, then returned to Hollywood to join his father in the carpet-laying business. As a legal resident of Oklahoma, however, he became the first draftee from his state to be called for service in Korea.

He served 14 months in Korea with the 24th Division, and got the Purple Heart. After his discharge, and one semester at the University of Oklahoma, Jim returned to Los Angeles—where Paul Gregory gave him a start in show business.

In August, 1956, Jim became a husband and

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