



Ricky (Continued)

"We met at the Pan Pacific Auditorium," Ricky says. "Afterward Elvis invited me to a party at his hotel. Gee, he's a great guy. He talked to me all evening long!"

A short while later, as a gag, Ricky walked onto the TV stage with a guitar, artificial sideburns, and an old cowboy outfit he had borrowed from the wardrobe department. "Everybody laughed at it except Dad," he recalls. "At first I couldn't understand it because he usually has a great sense of humor. Then I discovered he wasn't really angry, just thinking. 'Hey, that's great,' he suddenly shouted. 'I'll write it into a scene!'"

THAT WAS the beginning. The end is not yet in sight. Where Elvis has "Colonel" Tom Parker to lean on for advice, Ricky has a manager in his corner who is every bit as capable: his father Ozzie.

Ozzie has spent most of his life in show business. With music always his first concern, it was almost inevitable that Ozzie would form his own band a few months after graduating from law school and that he would marry his vocalist, Harriet Hilliard, a couple of years after she joined the group. Later they starred together in the long-run comedy series, "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," on radio.

In 1949, Ozzie replaced the boy actors on the family show with David and Ricky. They were then 12 and 8, respectively. The real Nelsons were readily accepted by Ozzie and Harriet fans, first on radio and then later on television.

While Colonel Parker followed a pattern of "any publicity is good publicity" for his ward, Ozzie carefully suggested and supervised stories and pictures on his boys. For years no one was allowed to see Ricky without first talking to Ozzie's publicist.

To what extent Ozzie will go in supervising Rick's publicity was evident when his son was supposedly under the jurisdiction of Warner Brothers during the filming of "Rio Bravo." When Ozzie learned that a radio network planned to send a man to Tucson to interview the stars, he promptly dispatched his own publicist to silence Rick for fear of what the boy might inadvertently say if left on his own.

Ricky Nelson with his favorite fans, brother David, 22, mother Harriet Hilliard, and father Ozzie Nelson of the popular TV show, "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet."

Because of such close supervision, Rick lacks self-confidence to make personal decisions. For instance, in spite of reported earnings of nearly \$250,000 a year, he called his father for permission to buy a quarter horse named "Tinker Toy" for \$600. Even after Ozzie gave his blessing, Rick questioned dozens of other people on whether it was a good buy.

Ricky has never even had an allowance because Ozzie thinks it wiser if the boy asks permission each time he wants to spend money. However, Ozzie is a generous father who gives in to almost all of Rick's requests because "they are always reasonable."

How does Rick's success affect his family?

No one could be more pleased than Harriet. Brother David, the more determined and knowledgeable of the two, accepts it without jealousy, although once in a while there is an indication that the adjustment was not an easy one.

With Ozzie, a change seems to have taken place in recent months. As one acquaintance puts it, "He's so awed by Ricky's success that in his eyes the kid can do no wrong anymore!"

And so Rick has won a victory which, in a way, means more to him than all the money and admiration he's earned—he has impressed his successful, not-too-easily-impressed father.

It's difficult to say what the future will hold for Rick. He's too young to think of marriage, which is a happy situation since his current taste in girls is more quantitative than qualitative. While his parents don't volunteer comments on his dates, they appear to be in a constant state of shock at his choices. He's happy living at home, and since fewer and fewer restrictions are being imposed on him, he will probably stay there for the time being.

He doesn't think he'll have to worry about the Army until he's 22, then prefers to go in and finish off his service time rather than join a National Guard outfit.

Professionally, he's bound to ride the crest of success for some time, maybe for a very long time. And if he doesn't—and Rick isn't ambitious enough to care one way or another—he already has enough money put away to live comfortably the rest of his life.



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