



Antics during Dodger career delighted baseball fans.

Burt called to the director: "When are you going to test Connors?"

"Right away," the reply came.

"Well, he won't be ready for a while. Test the others first," Lancaster suggested.

For the next three hours Burt patiently worked me through the scene until I had it perfect. I got the part and it paid \$750 a week.

This brought me a total of over \$11,000 for my movie work during the off-season, and it didn't take a genius to figure out that this was a little better than the \$6,200 I was getting from the Angels for playing first base for six-and-a-half months. I quit baseball in 1952 to become a full-time actor.

Working full-time as an actor, however, is not an easy trick—especially when you measure 6 feet, 5½ inches and make most of Hollywood's big stars look like pygmies. On top of that, I had much to learn about acting.

When the "big break" came, again it was my baseball background that did the trick. More than 40 actors had been tested unsuccessfully for the Lucas McCain leading role in "The Rifleman" TV series. McCain, to fully support the title, had to be able to handle a rifle with the ease and skill of a baton twirler. To test each candidate's potential along this line, the producers came up with a unique device. As each actor walked through the door to be tested, a rifle was thrown directly at him. Most of them dropped it. Some were clunked in the head.

When the rifle came at me, my good baseball reflexes came to the rescue. It was like the bat boy tossing me a bat. I snatched the rifle in mid-air, rather casually. The producers were properly impressed and the part was mine.

After appearing as "The Rifleman" on the ABC-TV network for the past two years, my mail is heavy with requests from aspiring television actors. With tongue in cheek, I tell them all the same thing: "Buy a first-baseman's glove and work on your sense of humor."

That's how I got to first base in TV.

Informal Connors line to load dishwasher. From left, Mike, 8, Steve, 6, Jeff, 7, Elizabeth with Kevin, 2, and Chuck himself.



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