



Movie-goers remember France Nuyen from "South Pacific" (left), but she also won fame as a sultry temptress in Broadway's "The World of Suzie Wong." Her career took a dip not long ago, but France is on the rise again, playing the title role in the new film, "A Girl Named Tamiko" (right).

THE GIRL who leaned against the pump at a gas station on the island of Oahu looked exhausted and unkempt. She wore shorts, a shirt that looked slept in, and sneakers. She was munching a papaya she had picked from a tree earlier that morning.

An old car, packed with a family of Hawaiian sugarcane workers, pulled alongside her. As they waited for the attendant to fill the tank, they glanced curiously at the forlorn girl.

Shyly, one of the children waved to her, and the girl waved back. The wife took pity and walked over.

"Do you have any money?" she asked.

"Less than a dollar," the girl answered.

"Had any breakfast yet?"

The girl shook her head. "No."

"Would you like to come along to our house for a bite?"

Gratefully, the girl accepted and squeezed into the back of the car with the children.

A few minutes later they arrived at a weather-beaten shack, where the girl gobbled down the breakfast the Hawaiian family shared with her.

When she said good-bye, they gave her a big straw hat to protect her from the sun. "Take care," the young wife called after her.

There were tears in the girl's eyes as she left. "I will," she promised.

It would have come as a shock to the family had they known that the girl they assisted was really France Nuyen, one of Hollywood's most promising young actresses, who had just completed starring parts in two important pictures, "A Girl Named Tamiko," opposite Laurence Harvey, and "Diamond Head," opposite Charlton Heston.

FRANCE LATER told me about her trek around the eastern tip of Oahu.

"I walked for six and a half days, 180 miles in all, with only \$1 in my pocket. The only possessions I carried were a blanket and the clothes I wore. Thanks to people along the way, I never went hungry, and three nights out of six I was invited into homes to spend the night. The rest of the time I slept on the beach. No one ever asked me for an explanation; no one tried to take advantage of me."

Asked why she attempted this strange journey in the first place, France insisted: "I wanted to find out whether peo-

ple would like me if I were just another girl. I found out they did. This gave me a peace of mind and a feeling of security that I had never known before."

In the past, France had been obsessed with two ideas: people were nice to her only because she was a movie star, and almost everyone wanted to take advantage of her.

Her state of mind sprang from her childhood. She was born in Marseilles 23 years ago of a Chinese father she seldom saw and a French mother who taught her to be distrustful of everyone.

When she was barely 17, she came to America with her mother. Having been a model in France, she decided to enroll at the Conover School in New York City. She never got a job out of it because she was always too small, but one of the pictures Mrs. Conover sent to 20th Century-Fox attracted director Joshua Logan and led to the part of Liat in "South Pacific."

France's suspiciousness increased with fame. By the time she played the title role in "The World of Suzie Wong" on Broadway, she had earned the reputation of being the season's most antisocial actress in the theater.

"SHYNESS and fear on my part were taken for snobbishness," France explains. "It wasn't until people got to know me better that they felt differently about me."

Yet her own misgivings, particularly in her personal life, proved a constant stumbling block to lasting relationships. When she was working as a photographer's model in France, she was engaged to a boy in her home town. She returned to him as soon as she had finished "South Pacific," eager for a reunion and marriage. Instead, she ended up breaking their engagement.

"Because I had made one picture, he expected me to act, talk, dress, and make up like a star. I wanted to be myself, just as I was before. I wore pedal pushers, no make-up, no frills. He didn't appreciate that. Obviously he wanted to marry a movie star. So he wasn't the right man for me."

But France now believes that she has at last overcome her apprehensions—and she has a man to prove it.

A few weeks ago, a girl friend arranged a blind date for her with a handsome, 30-year-old New York jewelry manufacturer, Ralph Destino. When he picked her up for their second date, he proposed even before saying "hello." France accepted, and they plan to marry this spring.

It seems that France's six-and-a-half-day trek around the island of Oahu has convinced her that she could be liked—and loved—for herself alone.

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Alone and almost penniless, this lovely star trekked 180 miles on foot—to find out if her dark suspicions about human nature were true **By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER**