

Meddling, Lovable Housemaid Hazel Lives Quiet Life As Shirley Booth

By VERNON SCOTT

UPI Hollywood Correspondent HOLLYWOOD (UPI)—For the past two years every televisioner in the United States has had a housemaid. Her name is Hazel. She is noisy, meddling, of uneven disposition and, thanks to her lovable, off-screen personality, she has become the person of Shirley Booth, all of Hazel's qualities disappear, save the warm, lovable traits.

At 53, Miss Booth leads a quiet, unexciting life which is far more interesting, though less hectic, than Hazel's.

To begin with, she has three homes. She leaves a four-room apartment in Hollywood's very expensive Chateau Marmont and a five-room apartment on New York's West 57th Street. But her favorite home is a summer cottage in Chatham, Mass., on Cape Cod.

Miss Booth manages to live in all three places during the year. Three months are spent at Cape Cod where she works furiously in an enormous garden babying flowers, shrubs and trees.

She is such a nut on flowers and plants that both her apartments are filled with growing things.

"When I leave my Hollywood apartment I distribute my plants among my friends—like other people do with pets," she says. "They're reluctant to take them for fear the plants will die and that I will never forgive them."

Has Never Remarried
Widowed in 1951 when her investment broker husband, W. H. Baker, died, Miss Booth has never remarried. She was married once previously to Ed Gardner of "Duffy's Tavern" fame.

A native New Yorker, Miss Booth fills the long hours in Hollywood knitting, putting around her plants and by going for long drives in the Southern California countryside. "I try to find places where there's a lot of green grass and trees," she explained.

Shopkeepers thrill at the sight of Miss Booth. She feels she is being rude if she leaves a store without buying something.

Thus, on infrequent shopping trips the actress buys wildly. But that's fine too, because she can afford it. Savings and investments have made her financially independent for life. She need never work again, although retirement might be her undoing.

In her clear New York accent she says: "I work because it makes me feel better and more interested in things. Maybe I'm not aggressive enough to find activities to fill out my day. When I work things are all laid out for me like in the army, or when you're a child."

Despite her constant traveling from the Cape to New York to Hollywood, Miss Booth, a merry, open soul, packs only one suitcase.

She keeps her summer clothes in Chatham, her casual wardrobe in California and her smart, sophisticated duds in New York.

Has Many Homes
"Each place is 'home' to me, and I keep them all in perfect order so that when I drop in after weeks or months of absence they appear as if I'd been living in them every day," she said.

Miss Booth says she is not interested in remarriage nor romance. She has scores of close friends, most of whom are in show business. Among them are Ann Sothern, John Forsythe, Ralph Bellamy and Max Showalter. She is a frequent guest in their homes but she rarely entertains.

Of marriage she says: "It's more than a 50-50 proposition. It should be a 100-100 proposition, and I've become a little too selfish to give that much of myself to anyone else."

Television fans often find the diminutive star (5 foot 3, 130 pounds) poking about picture galleries or sitting beside them in

theaters. She is an avid moviegoer.

When she first accepted the Hazel role in the NBC-TV series her friends were shocked, feeling she was selling out her reputation. And it was not totally without reason. One of the foremost performers on stage and in movies, Miss Booth has won every important award an actress can win—28 in all, including an Oscar for "Come Back, Little Sheba."

Loves Television Series
But she loves her television series and looks forward to next year's segments. She enjoys a close, relaxed relationship with her co-stars, Don DeFore, Whitney Blake and Bobby Buntrock.

"We have a genuine affection for one another," she says, "and I've had as much fun with this series as I did with any show on

Broadway or in any movie I've made."

Miss Booth's life is not a lonely one. The pressure of a weekly video show keeps her busy memorizing lines, leaving her little time for housework or kitchen chores. A cook comes in to handle the meals in Hollywood.

Back east a full-time secretary takes care of her fan mail and correspondence, in addition to seeing that the plants and flowers are watered.

Oh, yes, there's one more thing. The actress who plays Hazel, the maid, has a maid herself. Her name is June Smith and she has been with Hazel . . . er, Miss Booth for more than 20 years.

"She takes care of me when I'm in New York," Miss Booth says, "and when I go to the Cape, June Smith goes right along with me."



GRIFITH SHOW ACTOR — Jim Nabors, a young actor-singer, is shown in his hick gasoline station attendant attire playing the role in the "Andy Griffith Show" television series.

Short, Bald Carl Ponti Husband Of Film Beauty

ROME (UPI)—Short, balding Carl Ponti is the man Sophia Loren describes as "my husband, my ex-husband, my fiancée . . . or whatever one should call him."

The romance between the glamorous star and the Italian producer almost twice her age has landed them in the headlines and also into Roman courts on charges of bigamy.

It also has left a large part of the Italian male population envious and somewhat puzzled. Ponti just does not look like the type to get one of the world's most attractive women.

The only person who is not at all puzzled by the romance is Sophia Loren.

"Who wants a pretty man?" she asks with an eloquent shrug.

Ponti is a shrewd and successful international film producer who recently announced the screen version of Boris Pasternak's novel "Dr. Zhivago" as one of his forthcoming projects.

He was one of the bright men from Milan who came south to Rome to try their luck in the post-war film industry. When he and Sophia Loren met some 10 years ago, she was an unknown starlet struggling to overcome the poverty of a Neapolitan childhood. He was already an established producer.

From then on their personal and professional lives have been firmly linked.

In 1957 Ponti divorced Giuliana Fiaschi in Mexico and married Sophia Loren by proxy in the same country.

Since Italian law did not recognize the Mexican divorce, the marriage, which later was annulled, brought the couple into a series of court cases that are still dragging slowly through Rome's Palace of Justice.

Legal tangles have marred their personal lives but both their careers have boomed.

Though both object to attributing a Sengali role to Ponti, his guiding hand has helped Sophia on the road from pin-up roles in flesh extravaganzas to the Oscar for her part in "Two Women."

Friends and colleagues describe Ponti as a man of great charm and equal shrewdness who manages to get exactly what he wants and make friends at the same time.

One of his interests outside the cinema world is antiques. The Ponti apartment in a patrician palace in the heart of Rome is furnished carefully but comfortably with antique furniture.

Movie Skies Brightened By Dancing Discovery

NEW YORK (UPI)—The discovery of a winsome lass who can sing and dance as well as smile and look pretty—is the sort of thing that makes Hollywood producers ecstatic.

Just such a discovery was made last year when Ann-Margret was plucked from the sea of unknown faces parading up and down Sunset Boulevard. And so the word went out across the land that a bright new star was born.

Unfortunately, the hallyho boys were a little premature.

Her first two performances, in "Pocketful of Miracles" and "State Fair," failed to light up the sky and the producers who like helpless children, depend upon the approval of others, began to develop nervous twitches.

Well, now they can sit back and relax: their 21-year-old protegee has blossomed into a glittering talent, judging from her performance in "Bye Bye Birdie."

Musical Undergoes Changes
"Bye Bye Birdie," the Broadway musical inspired by Elvis Presley's metamorphosis into the Army private, has undergone some drastic changes in the transition from stage to screen.

The most drastic involves the role of Kim, the gushing teen-ager whose crush on Birdie (the Presley caricature) is a key element in what might charitably be called the plot. A minor role in the Broadway version, it has been inflated in all directions to take full advantage of Ann-Margret's many talents.

An adroit move. The young lady sings, dances, flirts, laughs and rumps across the screen with that . . . she laughed.

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