

THE YOUNG COUPLE that moved into a New England-style home in Tarzana, Calif., earlier this year posted a simple sign outside: "MacArthur."

The stocky, square-jawed husband spent days pushing a heavy polisher over the hardwood floors while his three-year-old son, Charley, tried to ride atop it. The wife of the household abandoned improvising comedy routines, a talent her husband deeply envies, to shove around the few pieces of antique furniture they had managed to accumulate up to then.

The young MacArthurs had put down their roots. Any doubts about themselves or about what they were doing seemed to have been outgrown.

Head of the house is James MacArthur, starring now in Warner Bros.' "Spencer's Mountain." He is one of those "children of famous people," a rather shy, easygoing 25-year-old who tried to be a dutiful son, didn't succeed entirely, but ended up making everyone happy.

Mrs. MacArthur—Joyce Collins Bulifant—comes from a wealthy Philadelphia society family. Her comedienne's talents might have been submerged in postdebutante life if she hadn't met Jaimie at an ultraexclusive school at 14, started "going steady" at 15, and married at 20.

MacArthur is the son of the First Lady of the Theater, Helen Hayes. His father was the late newspaperman-playwright, Charles MacArthur. They strongly desired that he would have a "normal childhood." Jaimie would not be a "professional child," would finish college (Harvard), then decide on a career, and next marry.

"MY FATHER used to say, 'Never be an actor.' He was a great kidder, of course, but I didn't realize it when I was young. My mother didn't try to influence me. She wanted me to make up my own mind after college. At home it was almost all theater, and she felt I could evaluate things better after an education."

A friend of the MacArthur family recalls young Jaimie as a "good boy, obedient, and very anxious to please." Jaimie entered Solesbury School in New Hope, Pa., where he played football, basketball, and baseball. "The school was so small," he says, grinning, "that if you could get out on the field, you were on the team."

But acting? Very little. "My mother let me appear with her in 'The Corn is Green' when I was only eight, then she retired me for about seven years," he says. "Friends would offer her roles for me, but she'd say: 'What? Have him up until midnight and going to professional children's schools? Oh, no!' Later on, I was a messenger that nobody could hear in 'Macbeth,' and



Real ham in theatrical family, says James MacArthur, is his son Charley.

JAMES MacARTHUR: He Couldn't Help Being a Star

By JACK RYAN

He had promised his mother, Helen Hayes, that he'd get an education before deciding on a career; but the best plans often go awry—to everyone's benefit

MOVIES

another time I was the page nobody could see who wheeled my mother on stage as Queen Victoria, but that was about it."

MacArthur says he didn't have any great urge to counter his parents' wishes, but their theatrical fame was overwhelming, and his older sister, Mary, had made an outstanding stage debut, only to die of polio at the age of 19. As a timid youngster, Jaimie appeared to lack the driving self-confidence to challenge this awesome family tradition. "He looked everywhere for a career but the stage," a friend says. "Business particularly fascinated him, and I think he would have had a good head for it."

When producer Martin Manulis asked Jaimie to star in a television drama in 1955, he got his mother's permission to accept, pointing out he was on summer vacation anyway. His first rehearsal was so bad that he went home almost in tears. His unsteady confidence was shaken further by reports that an official of the network had hired a stand-by actor in case MacArthur failed. "The kid must have got the job through connections," the official was quoted as saying.

But the critics praised his acting, and Jaimie simply packed fame with his books and finished high school. When next summer came, Hollywood was ready to do a film version of "The Young Strangers"—if MacArthur would star. Acclaim for his role topped even the tv reviews. But Jaimie entered Harvard, as had long been planned, and considered a career in the publishing business.

BY NOW, despite timidity, MacArthur had made his acting debut and brought it off in the best theater tradition. There were no self-doubts now: he wanted to be an actor. But what about his promise to finish school? He thought up all sorts of arguments—"Mother, you never went beyond high school, and you've got 11 honorary degrees."

But when the showdown came, all he could say was: "I'm not getting much out of school."

And Miss Hayes replied: "Then there's not much point being there."

Jaimie promised that he would take only a "leave of absence" from Harvard. A wise mother, Miss Hayes ignored the promise. Jaimie was an actor now. He went on to six movies and several tv shows, mostly boyish adventure roles. But in "Spencer's Mountain," he plays man-sized love scenes with Mimsy Farmer.

Plans for Jaimie may not have worked out according to parental expectations; they rarely do. But when Grandmother Hayes visits that stone house in Tarzana, she happily visits a very normal couple who have found what they've always wanted.

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