

My Dad, the Jokester

AT THREE O'CLOCK one morning, my parents and I were awakened by a piercing racket and a man banging on the door of our London home.

"Delivery for Mr. Alfred Hitchcock," the man yelled. Sleepily, Daddy opened the door—and as we stared in disbelief, 300 singing canaries were deposited in our living room. A note attached to one cage read, "From Peter Lorre."

"Peter's leaving for Hollywood," Daddy explained weakly as a grin flickered across his usually placid expression. It was possible, he admitted, that we were sitting among a mass of canaries because he'd sent a tremendous old dray horse to Lorre's hotel room as a farewell present.

My father belongs to that hardy group that plays practical jokes as a rough and spirited game. His most prolific joke period came during the early days of his career. He installed immense articles of furniture as Christmas gifts in small flats of modest colleagues; kidnapped friends for an evening; gave 400 smoked herring for a birthday present; threw parties invaded by actors hired to impersonate strange guests; and sent anonymous love notes, with fancy gifts, to married women to infuriate their husbands.

A colleague at a studio in England was one of the first to discover how hard it is to play a joke back on Daddy. The man brewed a filthy-tasting concoction, had it bottled as a fine old brandy, and presented it to my father. Weeks passed without a comment. Daddy's colleague couldn't stand the suspense and asked if it had been sampled.

"I didn't want to mention it," Daddy answered, "but my mother's doctor prescribed brandy and we gave her yours." Horror-stricken, the man immediately sent Grandma flowers, with a note of

warning and an apology. Grandma, a healthy old lady at the time, thought him balmy.

Daddy has a great talent for conversation games in elevators. A few years ago, we stepped into a crowded elevator, and he turned to me and said, "You know, she married four times, and it just so happened that she had a child by each one. Well, all four husbands happened to meet one day, and do you know what they said?"

This last word was timed precisely to coincide with our arrival on the ground floor, where Daddy broke off the conversation—and left his fellow passengers agonizingly frustrated.

Another time, in the St. Regis Hotel elevator in New York, Daddy said to Joseph Cotten: "Rot-ten luck . . . Didn't know the gun was loaded."

Cotten, in the spirit of the game, asked, "Do you suppose . . . she's dead?"

Daddy nodded sadly. "Yes. Steady, old man."

People in the elevator began to stare at them in horror as Daddy added some gory details. "Frightful mess, spilling over the rug the way it did," he said as he slowly mopped his brow. "Made my shoes stick to the floor coming down the hall, you know."

At this moment, one lady tapped the elevator operator on the shoulder and almost screamed: "I'll get off at the next floor, PLEASE!"

Daddy also is famous for his practical-joke parties. Once, he invited dozens of guests to a party in London and told all of them—except one—to dress formally. That person was Sir Gerald du Maurier (father of Daphne du Maurier, who wrote the story, *The Birds*, on which Daddy's latest movie is based). He was told it was a costume ball. As a result, amidst a roomful of titled English ladies and gentlemen in long gowns and black ties, Sir Gerald appeared—wearing kilts.

Alfred Hitchcock is as waggish off screen as on, says an expert on the subject—his daughter



Alfred Hitchcock's antics as a gourmet amuse his daughter Pat.

By PAT HITCHCOCK
as told to Marya Saunders



Last summer, Daddy threw a lawn party, arranging 40 tables in a large circle, each complete with place cards. But all the cards bore fictitious names. When it came time to eat, the guests couldn't find their places. As some began to worry that they had not been invited, Daddy explained the gag, and everyone sat down and enjoyed himself.

"If the joke is a proper one," Daddy explains, "the victim should remain on friendly terms with the perpetrator."

Daddy's strong belief that a joke should have no other purpose than humor might have come from a painful childhood experience. He had done something naughty and his father, who was something of a practical joker himself, sent him to the police station with a note. The constable read the note, laughed, and locked him up. "That's what we do to naughty boys," he said.

Daddy was so badly frightened that he still is afraid of policemen. When he first came to America in 1939, he drove his car around for hours, fearful of breaking a parking law by mistake and meeting a policeman. Today, he avoids the issue by leaving the driving to Mother or me.

In recent years, Daddy's practical joking has tapered off. "It's just too expensive," he confessed to me. "The frantic pace of working in tv and movies leaves no time for games. Instead, I save the jokes for my shows and films."

Not long ago, on one of his programs, Daddy turned to the tv camera and said, "Most television commercials are deadly. They are perfect for my type of show." The sponsor must have stared at his tv screen in horror as Daddy added, "The television set now is like the toaster in American homes. You press a button, and the same thing pops up almost every time."

COVER:

One of the newest summer diversions is "walking on water" with unsinkable pon-toons made of plastic. Dennis Hallinan photographed this happy family at play.

Family Weekly

July 21, 1963

LEONARD S. DAV'OW President and Publisher

WALTER C. DREYFUS Vice President

PATRICK E. O'ROURKE Advertising Director

MORTON FRANK Director of Publisher Relations

Send all advertising communications to Family Weekly, 133 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

Address all communications about editorial features to Family Weekly, 60 E. 56th St., New York 22, N. Y.

© 1963, PROCESSING AND BOOKS, INC., 133 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill. All rights reserved.

Board of Editors

ERNEST V. HEYN Editor-in-Chief

BEN KARTMAN Executive Editor

ROBERT FITZGIBBON Managing Editor

PHILLIP DYKSTRA Art Director

MELANIE DE PROFT Food Editor

Rosalyn Abrevaya, Arden Eidell, Hal London, Jack Ryan, Peer J. Oppenheimer, Hollywood