

The Woman Behind HAYLEY MILLS

Mrs. Mary Mills is a no-nonsense mother who lets her actress-daughter's figure blossom—but keeps a tight rein on everything else

By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER

AT 17, HAYLEY MILLS is the world's highest paid teen-age actress, yet she still has both feet firmly on the ground. The credit belongs primarily to her mother.

Actress, authoress, and playwright Mary Hayley Bell Mills is the power behind the throne, the one-woman fire brigade who makes sure that every member of the famous Mills family is properly looked after.

Her down-to-earth attitude toward her brood can be both shocking and revealing. In speaking of her older daughter Juliet, who also is an actress, Mary said, "She's married to an American song writer. She thinks the world of him and is very happy." But then she added with startling frankness, "In two years he has sold one song, and I arranged that."

Her son Jonathan is in boarding school. Mary visits him frequently "to make sure he doesn't feel left out."

Understandably, however, Hayley has demanded the lion's share of her attention. Because Hayley has turned out to be the most prominent member of the family (even eclipsing her actor-father John Mills), she also has become the most vulnerable. Success could easily go to her head—and that's one thing Mary won't stand for. She has a no-nonsense attitude about Hayley that includes every phase of her upbringing, including cooking.

"Hayley is terrible at cooking, but I feel she ought to know enough to get by," Mary told me over luncheon at the family's farm south of Lon-



don a few days after her daughter finished her starring part in "The Chalk Garden" for Universal-International.

"So what happens," Hayley burst out. "The first time I offered to cook dinner for the family—everybody insisted on cold cuts!"

Mary turned to Hayley good-naturedly. "I said I wanted you to be able to cook. That doesn't mean we have to eat what you prepare."

Hayley's allowance amounts to roughly \$15 a week in American money. For a girl who earns a quarter of a million dollars a year that isn't very much. Moreover, from this she has to buy her own stockings and eye make-up, ("I make

up my eyelids because they look as pink and bare as a pig's stomach," Hayley elaborated), pay for visits to the cinema, and take care of other incidentals. "But now I've got it licked," she told me happily. "Two weeks ago Mummy let me have my first checkbook."

"And all the checks have to be countersigned by me," Mrs. Mills added.

Mary's biggest problem is to keep a sound family relationship in the face of Hayley's growing popularity. Father and daughter have made only two pictures together, five years apart. The first was "Tiger Bay," in which John Mills starred and Hayley got her start. Now, in "The Chalk Garden," Hayley's name precedes that of her famous father in the credits.

IT SEEMED TO ME that this kind of flip-flop could easily result in Hayley losing respect for her father or John becoming uneasy about his daughter's success. But Hayley told me, "Daddy's thrilled by it all, and he's terribly generous. There's no feeling of competition between us. Going to work with him is as if we were partners in business, and I adore him for it. There's so much he has taught me already."

During the filming of "The Chalk Garden," her father's help took place each morning while driving to work with his daughter, in the dressing room they shared on the set, and at night while returning home. They carefully analyzed each scene and discussed the motivations for their performances.

Still, one incident proved that Hayley was more concerned about her father's feelings than she admitted. When the reviews of "Tiger Bay" raved about Hayley while hardly mentioning her father, Hayley hid the papers because "I couldn't bear to have him read such nonsense."

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Hayley Mills joins her actor-father John in a family song fest with playwright-mother Mary.