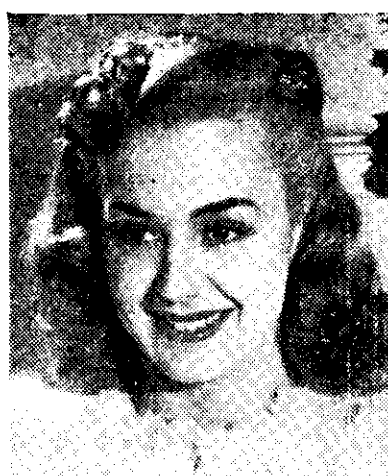




ARLINGTON BRUGH



HARRIETTE LAKE



DAWN EVELYN PARIS



PRISCILLA MULLICAN

BY ANY OTHER NAME

FAME is an elusive thing and a funny thing. The ego in us is always the inspiration of our desire to make a big name for ourselves. Even at an early age, we find ourselves "doodling" our names on odd pieces of paper, tree trunks, cliffs, backs of seats and other places.

The urge to spread your name to the far ends of the world is a natural instinct.

I doubt if there is any better way of getting your name known than to become a film star. Which makes it all the more ironical that, in nine cases out of ten, the name you make famous on the screen isn't your own at all.

If you ever become a film star, one of the first things you would do would be to find a new name for yourself—or, if you didn't, the studio would do so for you.

Why is this?

It has always baffled me. Ask a film chief for the reason, and he will tell you that it is perfectly obvious. Real names, he will assure you, rarely possess box-office appeal. "Look at Greta Garbo," he will quote. "Isn't that name much more romantic than Greta Gustafson?"

Taylor is Brugh

And he'll think you're crazy if you say you can't see why, any more than you can see why Mary Pickford is better than Gladys Smith, or that there is a greater advantage in being Betty Stockfield than Betty Stockfield.

After all, you wouldn't call Gladys Swarthout either a romantic or a box-office name, would you? But it seems to serve her all right. And, to be frank about it, Wallace Beery sounds rather like an advertisement—in fact I'm surprised that the American women's clubs haven't objected to it. If names have got to be changed, why should such a commonplace "handle" as Robert Taylor have box-office appeal? Bob's home-town folk still think that Arlington Brugh is good enough for them, and when his films are shown locally, they feature an actor named Arlington Brugh, not Robert Taylor.

Now and then, of course, there are obvious reasons (the classic instance is that of Claire Windsor, who very sensibly dropped her real surname of Cronk!)

Real names are often far too long for cinema lights, or they are too similar to those of existing stars—although as a matter of fact, Anne Nagel doesn't bother about the resemblance to Anna Neagle.

Filmgoer's Choice

But, whether a name is suitable or not, it seems to be a tradition that a new one should be adopted when a player takes up a screen career, and the publicity department always goes to great pains to let you know the real and assumed names.

It is quite interesting to delve into the stories behind these new names. How are they chosen? Who chooses them?

Methods of selection vary, and sometimes the player is responsible, sometimes the studio. In most cases, when a newcomer is signed up and the studio takes an inevitable dislike to the name, a long list of alternative names is produced by the publicity department, and the player can choose any of them.

Joan Crawford, however, was christened by filmgoers. The studio made a publicity stunt of it. She came to Hollywood as Lucille le Sueur. Some apparently said: "Yeah, all right—but sewers stink." So a publicity campaign was organised, and film fans were asked to suggest a new name. The person who coined "Joan Crawford" received a handsome money prize for doing so.

Several stars have taken their names from film characters. Dawn Evelyn Paris began her film career as a child under the name of Dawn O'Day, but when she grew older and played in "Anne of Green Gables," she took the name of her character in this picture. You know her as Anne Shirley.

Harriette's Handicap

Vicki Lester is another. She borrowed this name from the character portrayed by Janet Gaynor in "A Star is Born." She thought it might bring her luck—although, personally, I can't see anything wrong with her real name of Dorothy Day.

One of the most curious methods of getting a film name must be credited to Ann Sothorn, who began her film career as Harriette Lake. She had a contract with Metro, who used her for "leg art" publicity and gave her a few small parts. At length, despairing of making any headway, she accepted an offer to go into a Ziegfeld show.

She managed to make something of a name for herself on Broadway, and the film people were soon after her again. She returned to Hollywood in triumph, feeling that she now had a bit of a name and would, therefore, get better parts than before.

But Columbia, who had signed her up, weren't interested in the reputation she had gained. They didn't care for Harriette Lake.

In the meantime, another girl named Mary Mason had gone to Hollywood and had had her name changed to Ann Sothorn. But she was unlucky. Just as she was about to begin work on her first big picture, she fell ill.

Someone at Columbia apparently heard that she was going to drop the Ann Sothorn name. It didn't seem to have brought her any luck.

Permission was therefore obtained for the name to be used for someone else—and Harriette Lake assumed the mantle. She has been Ann Sothorn ever since. She is now with RKO Radio.

She is not the only person to have won a reputation under one name and then to have had it changed.

Equally as strange was the experience of Douglass Montgomery — whose real name, incidentally, is

Real names are often too long for cinema lights—so the stars change them. And there are other reasons, too. This article by Anne Hastings from the "British Film Weekly" will serve to remind listeners of the series "What's in a Name?" now being broadcast from 2YA on Sunday afternoons.

Robert Montgomery! He made a big name for himself on the New York stage, and was signed up by Hollywood.

But the film people said "Douglass Montgomery" sounded too much like "Robert Montgomery."

Douglass protested that he was known under this name, but the studio insisted on a change being made. He thus became known as Kent Douglass.

He had his own way in the end, however, and succeeded in reverting to his stage name of Douglass Montgomery. And Douglass Montgomery he is to-day.

June Lang is another of the several stars to have had a halfway-through-career change. At the beginning she was known by her real name of June Vasek. The studios changed it for her. They couldn't pronounce Vasek themselves!

One Name Alone

Honours must go to Annabella for getting away with a single name. Even Garbo and Dietrich have got first names, although they are not often used.

It was sheer inspiration on Annabella's part to use one name only. Her real name was Anne Charpentier. She took Annabella from Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabelle Lee," and merely changed the last letter.

Many stars have taken their names from favourite plays or poems; others seek the advice of numerologists; others again simply shorten their real names (such as Paul Lukas, who was originally Paul Lukacs).

Mullican Sisters

Deanna Durbin's unusual first name of Deanna started as Diana, and in pronouncing it, it suddenly occurred to Mrs. Durbin that Deanna would be a far more original way of spelling it.

Now and then, players even change their names two or three times, and there is a newcomer who may, perhaps, settle down to one name soon. H. began as Stanley Morner when he was with M-G-M, went over to Paramount and became Richard Stanley; and has now gone to Warners as Dennis Morgan.

And when Dorothy Mullican changed her name to Lola Lane, all her sisters—including Priscilla and Rosemary—followed suit and became Lanes as well. They are now all with Warner Bros. And the mother now calls herself Mrs. Lane, just to save complications.

But what's in a name, after all? It's acting that counts in the end!