

ON HOW TO WRITE MOVIE PUBLICITY

Some Tips From The Stars of
"Too Many Husbands"



IN CASE YOU DON'T KNOW: Left, Melvyn Douglas. Right, Fred MacMurray. In between, Jean Arthur

JEAN ARTHUR, married, American, five foot four, 110 pounds, grey-green eyes, blonde hair; Melvyn Douglas, married, father of two; Fred MacMurray, "a cinch when he's got over being shy"—these players had never worked together before Claude Binyon's adaptation of the Somerset Maugham play, "Too Many Husbands," brought them together on the Columbia set. Douglas told Binyon he'd never worked with Jean Arthur or MacMurray and asked how were they? Binyon said MacMurray was a cinch, etc., but he didn't know Jean Arthur. Douglas said she sure had a bright face and he'd always wanted to work with her. Later they found she'd always wanted to work with him and MacMurray said he had always wanted to work with her and she'd always wanted to work with MacMurray, and Douglas and MacMurray decided they'd never thought whether they wanted to work with each other or not.

And that's what happened when the author of the script got to work on publicity for the stars in the film.

"Tough Proposition"

He had a particular look at Melvyn Douglas on behalf of "Photoplay," and admitted in that magazine that inter-

viewing actors was a tough proposition, especially when they are friends. This creates a new picture of actors and actresses as dark, secretive, uncommunicative, publicity-hating males and females, but script writers always have to produce something new, so perhaps for Binyon this statement was just habit.

Binyon said he'd met Douglas first on the set for "I Met Him in Paris," and at the end of three months knew a few things about him; that he was taller than he looked on or off the screen, that his sandy hair (thin in front) photographed darker than it really was, that he had a nervous habit of picking his thumb nails, that he was nuts about his family, and that he thought Binyon was nuts.

Which all goes to show what a great actor Douglas is.

Family Matters

When they met on the set of "Too Many Husbands," being husbands, and with all the other husbands around, except Jean Arthur's, who is a builder by name of Frank J. Ross, Jr., and was possibly away building, Douglas and Binyon got to talking about family matters. Douglas said he liked the part Binyon had written, thanks, and how old was Binyon's kid now? Binyon said he

was nine and how old was Douglas's? Douglas said six-and-a-half and Binyon said you got over that half business when they reached nine and Douglas admitted having another — name of Mary Helen.

Then there was a lull and a few days later they started the picture.

Tea Without Tea

In between shots Jean Arthur drank her four o'clock tea with cream and sugar and water but no tea, which was very peculiar, but not as peculiar as Douglas's reaction to Binyon's statement that he was going to write about him for a magazine. "You mean you're going to ask me if I object to my wife shaving her legs?" asked Melvyn. "Does she?" asked Claude, and Douglas said he didn't know, so they got down to more mundane matters and discovered that Melvyn had been born in Georgia in a poor family, and went into the army where he pinched a superior's girl friend and lost his stripes and after the war read gas meters and sold hats. Wages from selling hats brought him a course in a dramatic school, and he was made when a recitation was well received at a church social. After that he toured places and got yanked off Broadway into Hollywood. He had been playing a part with Helen Gallagher in a hot show called "Tonight or Never," so he married Helen and it is history that an elderly lady said it was the only decent thing to do. After that Hollywood, and now "Too Many Husbands."

About Jean Arthur

There is also a lot we could say about Jean Arthur, apart from the details mentioned in the introduction to this story. She was born in New York City on October 17. The year is left to the imagination in our file, but Mrs. Ross (née Arthur) shows up well in the stills filed with her biography and might from all appearances be only now knocking at seventeen. She started as a fashion model, hit Hollywood, got dissatisfied with two-reel comedy parts, hit Broadway, rebounded into Hollywood, bounced back on Broadway, and recovered from this oscillation in time to get a contract with Columbia which included a provision that she could play on the legitimate stage if she wanted to. Just which bounce bumped out "Too Many Husbands" we can't say, but they haven't bumped out Frank J. Ross, who married her on June 1, 1932, at Forest Hills, Long Island, where the tennis players come from, and has stayed married to her ever since.

All of which shows why you simply must go to see "Too Many Husbands," and why we've never yet been offered a job as publicity manager for a distributing company.

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