How vanity screen tests work: an "actress" debuts

Last winter, Maclean's editorial assistant Shirley Mair wrote a couple of dozen poems as fast as she could type and sent them to a "vanity publisher" who told her she was a genius and offered to print them if she'd invest the necessary $1,440. Now there's another kind of "vanity" business—this one designed for aspiring actors. At least 50 people this year in Toronto have paid $45 each to have a screen test of themselves. Each has signed a contract that says the man who made the tests will "endeavor" to show the film to a producer within six months. We asked Miss Mair to see how her dramatic talents stood up. Her report:

An advertisement that has been appearing in the three Toronto daily newspapers says HOLLYWOOD NEEDS NEW FACES. I called the number listed in this ad and said I had a lot of ambition but no experience. I was given an appointment. The address was a suite in the Regency Towers Hotel. It had a sign on the door saying International Cinegraphic Arts. A girl I later heard called Miss LeRoy answered the door and motioned me into a chair while she went into the other room. In a few minutes she asked me to come in and I was introduced to Mr. Hans D. Schuch, a middle-aged and handsome man, with hornrimmed glasses and what might be called artistic hands. Mr. Schuch and I sat across the room from each other and Miss LeRoy sat at a desk between us and began to peck desultorily at a typewriter.

Mr. Schuch asked why I was there. I said I'd thought about trying for a Hollywood career for some time.

"Who are your favorite actresses?"

I said it might date me but I liked

Audrey Hepburn, Mary Martin and, best of all, June Allyson.

"Tell me about yourself," he said.

I said I didn't want to say where I worked, because I didn't want anyone at the office to know I was doing this.

He asked me about my hobbies and I told him I liked tennis and swimming. He perked up at this. "You like sports?" he said. "Yes," I said.

We chatted for a while about the acting business and he told me it was very tough. He said if he placed me "out there" (meaning Hollywood) that I'd have to work very hard and might start as low as $75 a week—or maybe $100, or $125, but no more. He said there were very few people who made it.

I said I didn't want to waste his time.

"I can't promise you you'll make good," he said, "but I certainly don't think you're wasting my time." He said the main thing was to get my picture in the files of a studio.

All through the interview Mr. Schuch stared at me, watching my every move. He had me intimidated. I was dying for a cigarette—he was smoking—but I felt sure that if I lit one I'd set fire to my nose or something.

I said I had determination.

"I can see you'd work hard," he said. Then he explained the role of an agent and said he would draw up a contract under which "you'd be our property, so to speak, for six months. Actually, we try to place you for a full year, but the law says we can only hold you for six months." He'd take 10% of my salary.

"I can't promise you stardom," he said, "but I'm willing to represent you." Then, speaking very quickly, he told me I would have to present him with a film of myself, about 50 feet, showing me in different poses, registering different emotions.

I asked where I could get that done. "Anyone will do it for you," he said. "Look in the yellow pages. It will cost from $400 to $600."

I said I couldn't afford that. He said *he* could give me a screen test for $45. His were cheaper because he did three or four at a time.

Miss LeRoy asked if next Wednesday at eight o'clock would be all right. "You have an unusual face," said Mr. Schuch. "You have a good profile. You have big eyes, big blue eyes. How old are you?"

"Twenty-eight," I said.

"You don't look twenty-eight. More like twenty-six."

I said Wednesday would be fine, but I didn't go for my test. Mr. Schuch might think I looked 26, but I was feeling older.

The Avro men who wouldn't quit

A strange little aircraft that looks something like a three-wheeled powerboat with a prop on top is buzzing about the skies of Georgetown, Ont., these days. With it go the hopes of 20 people, 17 of whom were almost out of hope 28 months ago, when the federal government decided not to build the Arrow at the A. V. Roe plant in nearby Malton (or anywhere else). The aircraft is the Avian 2/180, latest prototype of something that's been called a gyroplane and a "car-plane" and is in fact a small and easy-to-handle helicopter. The 2/180 will carry a load of 600 pounds and cruise at 130 mph. It takes off vertically, but will cost much less than a helicopter, probably as little as $10,000.

The 20 people are the employees of Avian Aircraft Ltd., all but three of whom were among the 13,600 laid off by Avro when the Arrow contract was dropped.

Before the layoffs, a few of them—mostly designers—had talked about building a gyroplane. But, as George Sampson, Avian's 31-year-old vice-president who was in the project office at Avro, says, "We'd probably never have done anything about it. It was just an exercise."

Then, after what the Avian men still refer to as Black Friday, they realized their "exercise" was perhaps their only alternative to emigration, a path that hundreds of other Avro engineers chose. They talked a group of Georgetown businessmen, headed by F. S. Walter, president of the Thermo-Electric companies of both the U.S. and Canada, into backing them. Walter is president of Avian, but is largely silent. The working executive is made up of former Avro employees—almost all of whom are in their thirties.

The 2/180 is still undergoing tests (an earlier model crashed) and won't be ready for commercial production for some time, but a survey of possible buyers convinced the Avian executives that they can sell more than 1,000 once it's perfected. In the meantime, all the engineers and designers from the small plant in Georgetown have been asked back to Avro, but no one's gone yet.

FOOTNOTES

About the primitive Indian: Thirteen young Stony Indians from southern Alberta recently completed a course in how to guide white men through their wild, native country. Their instructor was Claude Brewster, a millionaire caterer to tourists, who is white. Brewster learned the art of guiding from his father, who learned it at the turn of the century from a Stony Indian chief.

About overhead: It will cost the newly amalgamated Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce roughly a million dollars to put up new signs on its 1,200 branches.

About migraine headaches: Now they're supposed to be a clue to character. If you get migraine, says a U.S. neurologist, you're probably one or more of these things: bright, frustrated, orderly and conscientious.

About money. Think *yours* doesn't last? The Bank of Canada this year will burn nearly a billion dollars in lucre that's too filthy to use any more. Life expectancy of a dollar bill is only 11 months; of a two, 10 months; of a ten, 18 months; of a twenty, more than two years. Coins last as long as 40 years.

About sexual deviation: Two recent studies at the forensic clinic of the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital have cast some new light on some old theories about deviates' early lives. Researchers found (most of their conclusions are tentative, they emphasize) that: 1) a boy's attitude toward his father is more likely to influence him in the direction of deviation than his attitude toward his mother; 2) it's true that homosexuals tend to be above average in intelligence and to be fond of books, music and art; 3) it's false that exhibitionists cluster in downtown areas—courts have referred more patients to the clinic from suburbs than from the city; 4) youth groups like the Boy Scouts or Sunday schools attract some pedophiles (child molesters) as leaders, but the pedophiles' offenses are seldom committed with children they meet there.

News from the labor front: the internes are restless

The toughest block on the road to becoming a doctor is the year and sometimes more a student must spend as a hospital interne. In Ontario and the west and at McGill he gets his MD first, then goes into a hospital; at Dalhousie and the French-language universities of Quebec, the MD is held back until he's been an interne for a year. But everywhere, the interne's lot is not a happy one. He works a minimum of eighty hours a week (and is often on duty for another thirty) and he works hard. Last year a Toronto newspaper sent a reporter to spend a day with an interne. By midnight, while the interne worked on, the reporter had collapsed. Pay ranges from $40 a month (plus room and board in the hospital) in the Maritimes to $200 in Saskatchewan. The national average is under 50 cents an hour—less than half the minimum wage in most provinces for unskilled labor. Yet 60% of Canada's internes (who are mostly from 24 to 30 years old) are married, and 60% of *them* are parents.

Now, at least some of the internes are fighting back.

For more than three decades, a loose organization called the Canadian Association of Medical Students and Internes has concentrated on such side issues as group insurance. By and large, it has left working conditions and wages alone. But the current trend is to smaller local organizations that may use some of the techniques of organized labor.

Perhaps the most militant is the Association des Internes de Montréal, a group of more than 400 of the 450 students at the twelve major French teaching hospitals in Montreal. Last September, the Quebec government announced plans for hospital insurance, which would mean that hospital budgets, including internes' salaries, would be affected by government policy. Almost immediately AIM put forward a suggested scale of "minimum living wages," ranging from $125 a month for a junior interne to $350 for a resident, and asked for a $40 living allowance for married internes.

Most hospital authorities commended them for their reasonable demands. In March the government's schedule was announced; it was higher than existing rates, but well below what the internes were asking. Incensed, the internes demanded a hearing with the hospital plan's director and began to talk of ways of striking. Two weeks later, the scale was increased — to almost as much as the internes had asked for.

There's activity elsewhere too. In Ontario, internes have sent representatives before separate hospital boards and before the Ontario Hospital Services Commission asking for better pay, shorter hours and generally better treatment—"we're rated at the hospital just below ward aides," one Ontario interne told Maclean's.

None of the internes want to change the system or abolish it. The experience, far wider than they'd get by going right into general practice, is too valuable. After so many years of school, they say, one more year with little pay doesn't hurt much.