

# Dumb-belling Her Way to Fame



Miss Ridgway's figure was her passport into the movies. She got a job when a dance director saw her in a bathing suit.

(Chicago Tribune Press Service.)

Hollywood, Cal.

**T**HE stage character named Dulcy, whose charm was the unconscious humor of her stupidity and ignorance, invented by Franklin P. Adams, New York columnist, and acted by Lynn Fontanne in 1921, has come to life in the Paramount studios and is the latest laugh of the Hollywood merry-go-round. Her name is Suzanne Ridgway; she is a neophyte dancing girl, little better than an "extra"; and the motion picture producers and press agents are talking about her as if she were a star. She has dumb-belled her way into a seven year contract with an option clause providing for extension or cancellation every six months, on a salary of \$50, or maybe \$65, a week.

She has been rehearsing in the dancing choruses of productions to be called "Artists and Models" and "This Way, Please," under the handicap of not being able to remember which is her left foot. Her artless prattle, in the meantime, has achieved celebrity.

Visitors are taken to see and converse with Suzanne. She is a character at whom tourists marvel. She never fails to send them away in stitches. Experts in movie behaviorism and worldly wisdom have studied her in an effort to discover whether her malapropisms are genuine or feigned, and have been unable to diagnose the case. Suzanne has "a line" without doubt, but whether it is native cleverness or congenital "dumbness" is an unsolved problem.

Miss Ridgway is a black haired, happy-go-lucky young person, exceedingly shapely. Her figure was her passport into the Paramount organization; she applied for a job, a dance director told her to put on a bathing suit, and she was immediately engaged as a recruit for a ballet. This, of course, was routine stuff; many thousands of girls have been through the same experience. Presently, however, the dance director, Leroy Prinz, began to wonder if Suzanne Ridgway was just an other girl who pretended that she could dance, or Gracie Allen doing an endless skit of radio program nonsense.

When she filled out the usual biography card for the studio's



She couldn't make any sense out of a dictionary because it wasn't written in complete sentences.

way's mental capacity. For example, she was handed a dictionary and asked if she knew how to use it. She said:

"The book I've got at home makes sense, but this one isn't even written in complete sentences."

She informed Director Prinz that she wanted to be an actress instead of a dancer "because actresses get to sit down oftener."

...

Suzanne lives with her mother and two brothers at 7965 West Fourth street, Los Angeles. "It's a studio duplex," she explained to an interviewer. "Do you know what a duplex is? It has an upstairs and a downstairs and you live in both of them, but there is a next-door."

She was graduated from Santa Monica High school in 1934 and is 19 years old. As a minor, she has to go before a Superior court justice in Los Angeles for the legalization of her contract with Paramount.

"I think it is silly," said Suzanne, "that a girl has to go to court when she really hasn't done anything."

The publicity that has been given to her faculty for making people laugh pleases but puzzles her. "It is fun getting things written about me," she says, "although I can't see where the writers get such an impression of me."

"But I don't puzzle myself trying to figure things out. I just smile and try to be agreeable, and it's less trouble saying what I really think than it is for me to try to be clever like some of the girls at the studio."

The sayings of Suzanne, merry, ingenuous and abounding in whimsical error, have become the talk of the studio. Experts in movie behaviorism and worldly wisdom haven't been able to determine whether her malapropisms are genuine or feigned. She has "a line," but whether it is native cleverness or congenital "dumbness" is an unsolved problem.



## Movie Veteran at 19 Years of Age

By GEORGE SHAFFER

Hollywood, Cal.

**A**LTHOUGH but 19, Mary Beich, former Bloomington, Ill., girl, is already a Hollywood "trouser." Her screen career began on a daring chance when, three years ago, the high school sophomore long distanced Bob Palmer, RKO-Radio studios' casting director, asking him for a film rôle.

It was the report that the studio was about to make "Anne of Green Gables" that prompted her to call Palmer, for the book was one of Mary's favorites and she had a youngster's desire to play the part of Alice Wainwright, the saucy little heavy of Lucy Maud Montgomery's immortal book. She got the rôle, acting in the picture with Anne Shirley and Tom Brown.

...

In three years she has appeared in about twenty pictures, including "Grand Old Girl," "Show Boat," "Fighting Youth," and "Old Liddle." Although Beich is a well known name in downstate Illinois, and Mary Beich is a granddaughter of the founder of the Paul F. Beich Candy company at Bloomington, the actress found her name being mangled by those unfamiliar with its pronunciation. It should be pronounced like "bike," but it was a hard job to educate movie folk; so Mary Beich a short time ago became Mary Bovard, using the maiden name of her mother, who was a member of one branch of the

Bovard family, founders of the University of Southern California here.

The actress's mother, Mrs. Hulda Beich, and her brother, Albert, 18, now make their home with Mary in Hollywood. Her father resides in Chicago. The mother and brother moved from their Bloomington home when Mary came west to take up her movie career. Albert, who is a freshman year, finished up his preparatory work at Lawlor Professional school and is now a sophomore at Cumnock Junior college in Los Angeles.

Mary finished her education at the studio school. A sister



Miss Bovard (born Beich) began her movie career when she was 16. While a sophomore in high school she called up Hollywood on the telephone to ask for a part in "Anne of Green Gables" and her audacity won her a rôle. She has been in many pictures since.



Mary is blonde, blue-eyed, 5 feet 2 inches in height, and weighs 110 pounds.

Elizabeth Beich, is married Dr. Raymond White, a Chicago physician.

The Bloomington girl recently signed a new contract with RKO. She gets \$75 per week to start, with option bracket ranging up to \$750 a week. Her new contract received court approval the other day. It might seem peculiar that an experienced film actress would have to obtain court approval of her contract, but she's still a minor in the eyes of the law. She is blonde, blue-eyed, 5 feet 2 inches in height, and weighs 110 pounds. She is currently playing a noisy blonde in "Stage Door" with Ginger Rogers and Katharine Hepburn and says she's crazy about the rôle.

## Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Mae: This may not reach the Graphic, but I hope it does, for I want the whole Tribune reading public to know how swell I think you and your columns are! You are the best critic in the business and have yet to grow stale or go wrong. Each review is amusing, unbiased and interesting and is very revealing when it comes to the flaws or virtues of the plays, and say what you will, no other columnist is so.



MYRNA LOY  
Lauded by fan for her swell acting.

Please also, let me hand an orchid or two to my favorite stars.

- [1]. Miriam Hopkins—for the grand star and captivating actress she is!
- [2]. Bette Davis—who is unafraid to divorce Bette Davis from the rôle at hand.
- [3]. Myrna Loy for her swell acting, comedy and delightful sophistication.
- [4]. Loretta Young—just because. Kay Francis, Barbara Read and Rochelle Hudson—favorable mention, and the juvenile stars.

[1]. A dozen orchids to Deanna Durbin three times a day. The only singer who can really act.

- [2]. Bonita Granville, Chicago girl makes good as brat and adorable—
- [3]. Jane Withers—why not?

And as for the men:

- [1]. Bill Powell—the envy of all, the perfect gentleman.
- [2]. Lionel Barrymore—always the same and always perfect.
- [3]. Charles Winninger—the real thing in comedy.
- [4]. Tyrone Power—any lover is better than Taylor.

So few stars act for the sake of acting and are willing to forget themselves while on the set, that those who do, or who are as clever off the set as on, should be lauded to the skies—I hope you agree.

The only thing I wonder is how La Temple can always be so sickeningly sweet and never, never is off the beaten path. Most kids at her age are in hot water once in a while and are trying to duck papa's slipper, but not her. She should change places with Bonita Granville and do a rôle such as Mary Tilford in "These Three." The change would be most refreshing—what say?

This is my first attempt at gaining the Tribune columns and hope I may come again.

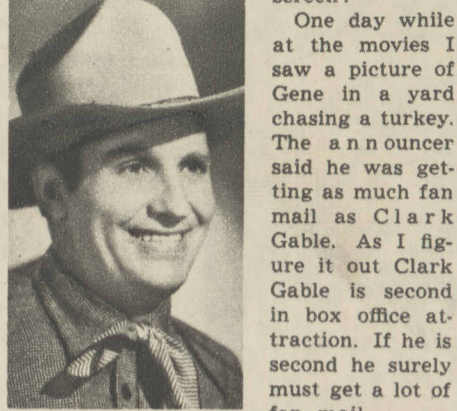
Best wishes and loads of luck.

Your 17 year old fan,

JACK MILLER.

Editor's Note: Thank you—say we all! Here's printing your pleasant praise as foil for some of our "knocks." Do come again.

Dear Miss Tinée: Why don't they ever have any picture of Gene Autry outside of those on the screen?



GENE AUTRY  
A smiling photograph to please admirer.

Gable why aren't there more pictures printed of him?

Please do not think I'm rude, I'm just another

FAN FOR GENE AUTRY.

Editor's Note: Here's a nice smiling photograph of Mr. Autry. I hope you like it.

Dear Miss Tinée: Innumerable braves for Robert Montgomery's "Danny" in "Night Must Fall." My surprise was surpassed by real, thorough enjoyment of what I thought the most unusual rôle of Montgomery's career. The rôle of

"Danny" gave him the much awaited opportunity to show his many admirers that he could be as convincing a murderer as he is a playboy.

A generous bouquet for Rosalind Russell—the kind of girl every one would like to know. And last but not least, Dame May Whitty for her priceless hysterics; she's a natural.

All in all, "Night Must Fall" was a grand surprise.

Thanks, Mae.

GEORGE J. WISSING.

Editor's Note: Here's printing all your nice "bouquets" for the stars of "Night Must Fall." I hope they see them. Thanks.

Dear Miss Tinée: Will you please answer this in your "Voice of the Movie Fan" column? Who played the part of Maria in "The Last Train from Madrid"?

L. L.

Editor's Note: Olympe Bradna played the rôle of Maria Ronda in the film.

Dear Miss Tinée: How many pictures did Anna Sten act in? Was Fredric March in any with her? Who was her male lead in "Nana"?

Thank you. HARRY SLUTHIN.

Editor's Note: Before going to Hollywood Anna Sten made three pictures in Moscow and four in Berlin. In the United States she has appeared in "Nana," "We Live Again," and "The Wedding Night." Fredric March appeared opposite Miss Sten in "We Live Again," and her leading man in "Nana" was Philip Holmes. You're welcome!