

10-Year-Old Wiser Than the Playboys

Red-Haired Child Actor Socks Film Salary Into Properties

BY HEDDA HOPPER

A Hollywood bachelor who invests his money wisely has the jump on playboys who go in for wacky cars, weird blondes and the Watusi. I know an actor who's worked four years, owns a 35-car trailer park in Oxnard, has his own boat, two riding horses and is



Billy Mumy

in blue prints for his first apartment—all on movie salary.

Billy Mumy is 10 now; he's the red-haired freckle-faced genius of "Dear Brigitte" (formerly called "Erasmus With Freckles.") and gets costar billing with Jimmy Stewart. As Erasmus, an 8-year-old, with a crush on Bardot he has an ideal showcase for the talents that made him rich. He's done more than 40 TV shows and a half dozen films. could be

working 365 days a year if his parents allowed it. He's signed to play Frank Sinatra's son in "Community Property," has an Ozzie and Harriet, and a Freedom of the Press lined up for the coming season, and turned down half a dozen offers while making the film. Billy had begun his vacation when he was paged for a Dr. Kildare segment. His mother turned it down, said: "Billy must have his vacation and I'm moving into a new house; you'd have to give him triple salary and wait three weeks from next Wednesday to get him." They said: "Okay, it's a deal!"

Wise Parents Helped Him

As a free lance Billy doesn't come under the Jackie Coogan law which applies only to kids under studio contract, so his earnings aren't controlled in court. But he's fortunate: his parents are well off, do not need any part of his earnings which are all invested for him. His father Charles Mumy owns a cattle ranch at Bishop, Calif. His mother, the former Muriel Guild, was a secretary at 20th for eleven years, never planned to be a movie mother. But when Billy was three he decided to become an actor. "I was hurt in a fall and had to stay in bed for a while, and used to watch a TV show with nothing but kids. I wanted to be in it, and they said if I did everything the doctor told me to do. I could. But I couldn't get into the show then because all the players had to be over four. I went back right after my fourth birthday and got a job."

He's slim, lightning quick and very intense. He attracted Gloria Stewart's attention when he refused to be promoted out of her Sunday School class for three years and finally said he'd quit if they didn't let him stay. She suggested him for Erasmus, the kid genius with a brain for figures faster than a computer. When Jimmy Stewart and Henry Koster saw him they recognized him as the boy in Disney's "Wonderful World of Color." He had a location trip to Paris where he made scenes with Brigitte Bardot. "She's real nice, real neat," was his verdict, "but Shirley Jones is still my favorite."

Comedies Are More Fun

Billy has had a fan club for two years; its president is 16-year-old Joanne Schweisberg in Laurelton, N.Y. At 20th he studied Spanish with Fabian and fell in love with Frances Klamt who's taught all the studio kids from Shirley Temple on up. He hated to see the picture end: "When I grow up I'll never do anything but comedy. They think I'm good in drama because I can cry, but comedies are more fun." He memorizes at one reading, can recall dialogue he did a month earlier. His stand-in, George Spotts, is a 42-year-old midget who's worked with him in three pictures. Billy learned to play cello for the film, is an expert swimmer and rider, and handles his own speed boat, circling around the 25 foot family cruiser.

In private life Billy Mumy is treasurer of the Canfield Elementary School and a Cub Scout. He has a basketball and tetherball court at his new home, but no pool: "Too many kids get drowned when nobody's at home." He adores the Beatles and Elvis Presley, has no use for girl singers. Has his own combo: "I'm on the skins, David Kalmick is on clarinet and Gary Marshank guitar. We all sing gory songs," he said and gave out with a sample: "Marinated monkey meat and French-fried parakeet all wrapped up in fuzzy, wuzzy beetle brains floating in eyeball soup." When I shuddered, he said: "The kids love 'em. Mr. Stewart said it's the greatest, copied it for his twins."