

From Near And Far

By Ben Dor



From "Small Parts" to Hollywood

THIS is the story of a local boy who made good—and he did it with a will. He was always interested in the theatre and in acting, and there was never a play he missed. Sometimes, when he was lucky, they gave him a small part to act. Now, at 18, he is en route to the most fascinating city in the world, Hollywood, the mecca

"Katz" consists of the two Hebrew initials "K" and "TZ" which stand for "Kohen Tsedek" (a true priest). Every Katz is a direct descendant of Aaron, the brother of Moses, whom the great law-giver installed as the first Jewish priest. For 120 generations of priests, whose life was constantly under public scrutiny and had to be kept pure and undefiled, the name was handed down from father to son. There is no possibility that a man named Katz might not be descended from Aaron. The birth records of the Kohanim was most scrupulously kept. Not a shadow of doubt was permitted to assail the legitimacy of a Kohen.

Katz is also a Jewish word meaning "a cat." Needless to say that the family name has not the slightest connection with the name of the animal.

"Katz" is only one of the many varieties of the name Kohen. The descendants of Aaron delight in nearly 200 variations of this most distinguished family name. There is Kahn and Kaen and Kahane and Kagan. There is Cone and Cagan and Cane and Cuhn and Cahen. The Russian "Agranat" is merely another version of Cohen. It is really a Russianised version of "Ahronide" (descendant of Aaron). The name "Cook" is, surprisingly enough, another version of Katz. "Cook" or "Kook" stands for the two initials "K.K." (Kohen Kodesh), "a sacred priest."

The name "Kaplan" or "Caplin" is another synonym of "Katz" or "Cohen." It is a Slavonic translation of the word "Priest."

The descendants of Aaron constitute roughly 2 per cent. of the Jewish race. In whatever manner the name is fashioned, it should be respected as the most ancient and aristocratic appellation on earth.

of every aspiring actor's dream, and he is to be paid £50,000 for each film he makes.

His name is "Larry" M. Skikne, and he is the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. B. Skikne, of Bertrams, Johannesburg. They are very proud of the outstanding achievement of their son, but still slightly confused and incredulous of it all. A second son, Nachum, was very prominent in the South African Hashomer Hatzair and helped to build the movement up. At present he is a Chaltutz on a Kibbutz in Eretz Israel.

Larry, who in truth boasts the good Jewish name of Hirsh-Maish, was born in the small town of Janeshik in Lithuania. The family migrated to South Africa soon after his birth and it was in Johannesburg that Larry received his education and his burning love for the theatre.

This love dominated everything else he did—and made him restless. He stayed away from home most of the time and one sunny day in 1943 he did not return at all. Some time later his parents, fraught with worry, heard again from their son—a letter to tell them that he was well and liking his new life in the Navy very much. He was then 15.

They brought him back from the Navy as suddenly as he had entered it, and Larry found himself once more harnessed to the old schoolbags and the geometry problems. But when he successfully completed the matric examination soon after, he nagged his parents into submission and found himself once more in the employ of the Government—a soldier in an entertainment unit of the U.D.F.

It was here that his undeniable acting talent was first recognised. The Army gave him the opportunity to act many parts and the experience he received will no doubt stand him in good stead when he faces the glaring lights of the Hollywood cameramen and the ever-caustic look of its producers.

Larry's big chance came when late last year he received an ex-serviceman's grant to enable him to study drama in London. He reached England in October and immediately enrolled as a student with the Royal Academy of Art in London. Here his success was more phenomenal than Larry himself—the most hopeful of optimists—could ever have anticipated.

After having been at the Academy for hardly two months he was given the chance that other actors get usually only after many weary years—a film test from which he qualified with top honours.

He has now been given an attractive contract by Warner Brothers for radio, television and stage work, and his salary, starting at a modest £1,500 a year, will be increased by that figure as every 12 months go by. Of course, he gets no less than £50,000 for every film in which he stars during that period.

For the next few months Larry will continue his studies at the

Academy, but in June he is taking the trip of which he never stopped dreaming in the days when he haunted the little alley leading to the Standard Theatre in Johannesburg—a trip to Hollywood—there to take up his contract with Warner Brothers.

His ambitions are legion: acting, scenario-writing, directing and producing. That's a very high ladder to climb, but judging by the breakneck speed with which he has scaled the first few steps, he should reach the top before long.

We in South Africa will be seeing him soon—on the screen.

Culture Contributors

THE parallel contribution of the Jew and the Afrikaner to the culture of South Africa is the subject of an interesting article by Joyce Waring, well-known woman journalist, in the current issue of "Arthur Barlow's Weekly."

Stressing the affinity that has always existed between these two sections of the community as regards the promotion of the less material aspects of life, the writer asserts that the Afrikaner who "goes in for culture in a big way" finds himself more than blood brother to the Jew, whom he sometimes pretends to despise.

Developing this theme, Miss Waring goes on to say: "It is the Jew who buys the tickets for Afrikaans concerts, art displays and theatres. It is the Jew who puts up the money for cultural activities, and it is the Jew who rallies round and supports them. . . . I have noticed the fact again and again, that when there is a concert, an art exhibition, grand opera, plays, a charitable concert—anything, in fact, connected with the arts—the artists' names are those of Jews and Afrikaners. . . ." (Miss Sarah Goldblatt, of Cape Town, was singularly honoured by the great Afrikaans poet, Langenhoven, when he appointed her executrix of his literary estate. Miss Olga Kirsch, of Johannesburg, has written a book of Afrikaans poems entitled "Soeklig," and at present is the editor of a well-known Afrikaans weekly magazine.—Editor, "Z.R.")

Despite the mutual services of Jew and Afrikaner to the culture of this country, the writer points out, they are divided as a result of petty political differences brought on by propaganda and misrepresentation. And in this respect Miss Waring reminds both Jew and Afrikaner that the "work" of the artist is greater than the man who does it.

She concludes: "The Jew has the love of beauty, the 'need' for music and art that makes the true man of culture. And so has the Afrikaner. Together they can revolutionise the country—wake it up to the delights of culture. Divided, they are splitting the nation, and out of a split nation comes neither great art nor great wealth—only discord and unhappiness. The "work" should come first. Leave the quarrels to the politicians and let us get on with making South Africans cultured."

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