

stars who, like themselves, have more or less just learned the art of shaving or daubing on lipstick.”

Rather than being a moonfaced actor, Jennings advised O’Flaherty, “Probably the most versatile member of the group [of new actors] with the most promising future is Sal Mineo, a lad with a delicate, almost girlish face, wild black hair he deliberately musses up for effect, eyelashes half an inch long, full, sensuous lips and enormous brown eyes.”

But the “prettiness is deceptive,” Jennings warned, pointing out that Sal had been trained in “the street-gang warfare” of the Bronx. “Now, at the age of twenty, when some of his former pals are either putting the bite on dad for the family car or working up to the penitentiary, Mineo has a formidable record [of movies] that rolled up huge grosses.”

Regarding the Krupa film, in which Columbia Pictures had invested more than a million dollars, producer Philip Waxman said, “We’re not losing any sleep. Sal will draw them in.”

Waxman was not guessing.

“The teenage movie-goer is ubiquitous,” Jennings noted in the article, “far more impulsive and vocal than most adults, and easily influenced.”

Regarding Sal Mineo, no better proof of that was needed than a recent joke in a monologue by Bob Hope on his TV show. “No school tomorrow, kids,” he said. “It’s Sal Mineo’s birthday. All those in the Bronx can stay home.”

It wasn’t Sal’s birthday, but the next day the absentee rate in Bronx schools shot way up.

A photo accompanying the article showed Sal arm in arm with Josephine outside the house he had bought for the family in Mamaronek. “From here,” said the caption, “Mrs. Mineo energetically directs Sal’s fan-club campaign.” There were nearly half a million fans alone in the midwestern branch headed by Edward Gould from his home in Detroit.

One of Sal’s fans, though not a member of a club, was David Cassidy, the son of actor Jack Cassidy and stepson of Shirley Jones. A friend of Sal’s, Jack brought Sal home one evening for dinner. It was an event that four decades later still had David recalling it with amazement. “All I could do was talk with him about the Krupa

movie. He told me that Gene Krupa gave him a set of his drums. I said, 'Ah, a set of drums!' *Nobody* had a set of drums. The next day, there in a huge box was the drum set with a bow on it and a note from Sal to me, saying, 'David, here's the drum set that Gene gave me. Enjoy them.' "

So interested were Sal's admirers in everything about him that the fan magazines found themselves hard-pressed to come up with ideas for stories. Perhaps the most ingenious fresh angle was that of *Screen Stories* in its pages devoted to the first film in which Sal had played the drums (*Rock Pretty Baby*). The magazine decided to engage the editor of *Horoscope Magazine*, Edward A. Wagner, to cast an astrological chart for an unnamed person who'd been born on January 10, 1939, in New York City. Accompanying a synopsis of *Rock Pretty Baby*, results of Wagner's work were headlined, "Sal Mineo: His Stars Tell a Success Story."

The astrologer found in Sal's chart "an ambitious and energetic individual . . . intent upon achieving success and riches." While describing his subject as possessing a degree of sympathy and imagination where other people are concerned, particularly in lower walks of life, with whom he may feel a bond of understanding, he warned against "foolish or extravagant" expenditures, particularly in pursuit of social gains, heart's desires, or attention from others based upon ostentatious outlay. "When disappointments or frustrations come into his life, he will be inclined to periods of depression and self-doubt. However, he will show a strong capacity for snapping out of setbacks and going into action with the purpose of building anew."

The forecast concluded with a prediction: "The period around his 28th and 29th years will be crucial and events then may mark an important turning point in his life."

Legitimate questions concerning the validity of horoscopes aside, all of this would prove true.

an open lid. He wanted no one looking at him dead. "Bury me," he said, "and then have a big party."

His funeral was not exactly the party he'd hoped for. It was more in the style of send-offs that had been given to previous movie stars. There was a mixture of family and friends, and a throng of fans and the morbidly curious. Among the friends were David Cassidy, Desi Arnaz, Jr., Michael Greer, and Nick Ray. Honorary pallbearers were Courtney Burr, Elliott, Mintz, and Michael Mason.

The first night of the wake, there was an unpleasant exchange between Mason and Victor, to whom Mason was a reminder of a part of Sal's life the family had difficulty in accepting. It was as if the family blamed Mason and others for Sal's becoming known as a homosexual and for the estrangement that resulted. When Victor asked about Sal's money, Michael replied angrily, "It's too bad you didn't know him [Sal] well enough to find these answers yourself. But I see why he didn't like you or have anything to do with you in recent years. He had no money. He had nothing. Some clothes, a table, some books, and that's it."

Later, Mason had a bitter conversation with Josephine. Since the collapse of Sal's career that resulted in the loss of the Mamaronek "mansion" and Sal's financial support of the family, she worked in a health-food store, the Mamaronek Nutrition Center on the town's main street. When Mason called on her at the store to express his condolences and to talk about Sal, Josephine told him, "You didn't know him. You didn't work with him. You didn't go places with him. You weren't with him. Blood is thicker than water. My son Michael, he suffers. My daughter, Sarina, she suffers. Her brother Victor, he suffers. I work here six days a week. I have to. There are some things better if you don't think about them. I can't talk about it at all."

Rather than a party celebrating Sal's life, his funeral marked the beginning of a struggle for how Sal would be remembered.

For the Mineos he was the "Junior" they carried in their minds and hearts.

For Mason, Elliott Mintz, Courtney Burr III, Joe Bonelli, and others who had populated the world of movies, television, and the stage, he was the Sal Mineo whose name went above the title on