

HOT-LINE FROM HOLLYWOOD!

SHIRLEY CALLING

I can't help feeling that Shirley must occasionally get depressed just like everyone else. But, if she does, she certainly manages to keep it a very good secret! Whenever I talk to her on the 'phone, she always sounds so bright and happy that I can almost hear the sunshine coming out of her voice!

ME: *It's wonderful to hear from you, Shirley! What's the news?*

SHIRLEY: Well, nothing very much from me personally — but there's certainly plenty happening around the set! We're all working like jumping crackers, and very often we're doing extra-long days. So I guess there's very little time for exciting things to happen outside of working hours!

I can tell you, I was glad when the kids went back to school . . . Because, till then, I was getting more than my fair share of 'excitement' after working hours too!

ME: *But now you can just go back and put your feet up, right?*

SHIRLEY: Well, some nights, yes. But I have started going to dance classes a couple of times a week. That sure stops me getting too much into a lazy, feet-putting-up rut!

ME: *Do I take it from that that there is another song-and-dance musical coming up, then, Shirley?*

SHIRLEY: Oh, goodness, no! I just thought it would be kinda fun. And an awful lot of folks in show business attend these classes for a regular limber. You see, I suddenly realised that, although my work is pretty tiring, I don't really get any proper exercise. You know how it is . . . I'd love to walk more, but time is so precious that I find myself going everywhere by car. I used to play a lot of sports, but I dropped all those to look after the family. So these dance classes seemed the answer.

ME: *And are you enjoying them?*

SHIRLEY: Enjoying them? You bet! And what's more, I really am feeling a deal fitter already! So what do you know? In fact, I've gotten so enthusiastic recently, that Susan's thinking of coming along and joining me!

ME: *Talking of Susan, give her my love, won't you . . . Not forgetting the cats, of course!*

SHIRLEY: Or the dog?

ME: *Since when has Susan had a dog?*

SHIRLEY: Since about a couple of months back, I guess . . . But she's not been sure whether it would stay for good till pretty recently.

ME: *Shirley, I may be being especially dim today, but I'm afraid this all sounds slightly mad to me! Please explain . . .*

SHIRLEY: (Laughing) Well, this dog kind of found Susan and shackled up with her. But Susan still doesn't know where it comes from or who it belongs to. She only knows that she'd never seen it around locally before. So she adopted it. That's just like her.

ME: *What's its name?*

SHIRLEY: Right now, she just calls it 'Dog', 'cos she's still trying to work out its real name. You see, she figured that it must have had a given name with its first owners. And she reckoned that, if she suddenly started calling it something else, it would get to be awful confusing for the dog! So, every so often, she tries all the 'doggy' names she can think of, in the hope that it'll show signs of recognition when she hits on the right one! But, so far, no luck! We've all been racking our brains for likely names, but meanwhile Susan insists that 'Dog' is the simplest solution!

ME: *Well, all I can say is: Good luck! I feel I should come up with some helpful suggestions, but I'd probably only repeat the ideas you've already had!*

SHIRLEY: Yes! We've thought of so many that I can't help wondering whether we've maybe gotten a dog with amnesia on our hands here. Still, it sure has given the kids something to think about on set. And anything that keeps them sitting still and quiet is nothing short of a miracle!

ME: *How is little Ricky settling in?*

SHIRLEY: Oh, he's doing very well and enjoying every minute of it. Of course, he doesn't have to do any schoolwork on set, 'cos he's too young yet. So he has plenty of time to get up to mischief!

ME: *And does he?*

SHIRLEY: Oh, he's as naughty as you'd expect a four year old to be! But we all like him the better for it! I know I've always had a weakness for naughty kids — which was lucky 'cos my own kids certainly put that to the test!

I guess that, compared with them, Ricky's pretty good really. When Danny and Brian are free they play baseball and softball with him, and, although he's so young, he's a smart checkers player, too!

ME: *We're all longing to see him on the screen, you know. We've heard so much about him.*

SHIRLEY: Actually, he's right here by me now. I've just got time to say goodbye to you.