

Will success spoil Bruce?

"Please report to CBS Studio 43 Tuesday morning at 10:15 for a taping of SEARCH FOR TOMORROW. It is a restaurant scene, so please wear sport coat and tie."

It was my first big break. Well, okay, so maybe it was my little break. But it was a break—I had to admit that. It was something. This small town child from Dallas, Pennsylvania, was going to be on nationwide cross-country afternoon television. It would be seen by millions of American housewives as they partook of the adventures of one JoAnn Tate on (organ music in) the "Search For Tomorrow."

Of all the daytime soap operas, "Search For Tomorrow" is perhaps the hand-wringingest. I remember JoAnn Tate when I was in elementary school and the soap opera was only 15 minutes long. Poor JoAnn was wringing her hands even then. Do you realize what that poor woman has been through during these past God-knows-how-many years of laundry detergents. It's a wonder her hands aren't raw from wringing. And now I, little Bruce Paul Hopkins, who used to weep and wring right along with JoAnn, was going to be on the program. Boy, was I excited!

"Boy, am I excited," I said to the people at Publishers' Weekly magazine, where I work to avoid starving as I pursue fame and fortune in the theatre world.

"Well, now what are you going to do on the show? What kind of role do you have?" inquired my boss.

"I'm going to sit in a restaurant," I announced smiling.

"And?"

"That's all," I explained.

"There's this restaurant scene and I'm going to be a person in the restaurant." I was going to be what is referred to in the television world as "atmosphere." In order for a restaurant to look like a restaurant there had to be people sitting around eating. I was a person. I could eat. Granted, it was not going to take an extensive amount of acting on my part, but it was a start. Everybody has to start somewhere.

Walking into the lobby of the CBS Studio was like entering a hospital. It seemed so antiseptic and quiet. A uniformed officer sat at a desk next to a sign that demanded "Please Show Your CBS Identification Pass." I didn't have a CBS identification pass. I did have my Bloomsburg State College I.D. Card, but I rather doubted they'd accept that. So I played it straight. I asked the uniformed man where I'd find Studio 43, and he instructed me to take the elevator to the second floor. On the second floor there was a uniformed man standing next to a sign that read "Please Show Your CBS Identification Pass." Boy, for all they knew I could be a spy from NBC. I followed his directions to the end of the hall.

"Studio 43: No Admittance." I did the sign on the door. I decided I was a star and didn't have to pay attention to these silly signs, and I brazenly pushed open the door and entered. I found myself in a narrow hallway that led directly to another door bearing a sign warning: "Studio 43, No Admittance." This was getting a bit ridiculous. I am only capable of being brazen a certain number of times a morning, and this

was about it. I chewed my lower lip trying to decide what to do. Suppose I brazenly opened the door and found myself in the middle of JoAnn Tate's living room during the taping of a terribly emotional scene. Let's face it, how fast can you write a person into a script? Having inhaled bravely and gathered together all of my courage, I reached forward to pull open the door. It flew open and I was almost run over by Anthony George. I gasped.

Now for those of you who aren't up on your soap operas, Anthony George just happens to be the soap opera idol of millions of American women. You cannot imagine the number of women who in their daily fantasies have been unfaithful to their husbands with Anthony George. And there he was about to step on my left shoe. Anthony George assured me I could go right on in.

I went right on in. There I was on the set. It was quiet on the set (heh, heh). It was a large room, about the size of a big square gymnasium. In the center of the floor were several movable cameras, a boom microphone, and other equipment. Surrounding these were the various sets: a kitchen, a foyer, a living room, the restaurant setting, and a doctor's office. Overhead, hanging from an amazing framework of pipes, were lights and microphones. It was fascinating.

Having joined the other extras, I sat in the restaurant scene to watch the rehearsal until our scene. Suddenly, she appeared: JoAnn Tate. Oh wow! Little did I know when I was a skinny little kid in grade school that one day years later I would be a skinny little adult appearing on a television show with the very JoAnn Tate I watched during those days of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. She had always been so brave, so staunch, so pure. She had undoubtedly effected my psychological makeup. And now I was in the very same room with her. I wanted to run up and say, "Miss Tate I used to watch you years and years ago when I was a mere child, and I think you've effected my psychological makeup." But then I decided that might be kind of a backward compliment, so I didn't do anything. I just watched, waiting for the moment when she would quiver her lower lip.

We rehearsed the half-hour program, with commercials, four times before the final taping. Timing was noted, and bits of business were added to fill in extra seconds here and there. We were given Ritz crackers to eat in what was supposedly an Italian restaurant. I think that says something about the American image of Italian eating. We were also given drinks which supposedly contained drinkable tea. That was a lie: it was undrinkable tea. Oh well, every actor has to suffer.

In the scene immediately preceding ours, there was a baby of some six or eight months who was on camera for maybe 30 seconds. Could have been a whole minute. Somebody came over to our table and remarked that the baby was getting \$200

for its performance. I found that a bit depressing. There was this child, who had probably never had an acting lesson in its life, being paid all that money. And here I was with a Bachelor's degree in theatre arts being paid a good deal less. Now, how fair is that?

The show was taped on a Tuesday and was to be viewed the following Friday, Feb. 5. Word was sent out to the parents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and neighbors. All gathered around their televisions Friday, ready to catch a glimpse of Bruce Hopkins. The entire staff of Publishers' Weekly magazine went to lunch together Friday. They went to a little bar and restaurant in New York, and demanded that the bartender put on "Search For Tomorrow." That brought a lot of stares from the men at the bar. However, the bartender complied by tuning in CBS, and the entire staff of Publishers' Weekly magazine stood there watching the men walk on the moon. I had been pre-empted by Alan Shepard and his golf ball.

That meant I had to wait until Monday. And Monday, standing in the television department of Korvette's Fifth Avenue Department Store, a large portion of the P.W. staff watch JoAnn Tate's lower lip quiver. The clerk at Korvette's thought we wanted to mutually purchase a color TV and was doing his best to show us the merits of the particular model that we were watching. He assured us we could watch it for awhile. My scene was midpoint in the program and it seemed to be taking forever to get there. Just as the scene was about to begin, the clerk returned to show us how nicely the other channels were received. He was pounced upon by four P.W. staffers.

Then I appeared through the miracle of video tape. I was in full view for a good portion of the restaurant scene: I chewed and chatted just like any old boy you might see in a restaurant. The P.W. Staff agreed that it was a distinguished performance. Maybe not award-winning, but distinguished all the same. I had been a hit at atmosphere.

The reports came in from all over. I received a telegram from a former student of my teaching days. It said, "Congratulations superstar: you chew divinely." My sister received dozens of calls in Smethport, Pa., where the people thought that with my hair so long I looked just like her. Relatives in Endicott and Cazenovia and Huntingdon Valley were suddenly a bit more important since my television debut.

As for me, I haven't changed much. I've tried to remain the

same down-to-earth, calm, warm-hearted individual that I have always been. Success has not spoiled Bruce Hopkins. I still remember my friends, and refer to them by name when I see them. When people stop me on the street and ask if I am the person who was in the background of the restaurant scene in the Feb. 8 episode of "Search For Tomorrow" I always smile and chat with them a bit. Sometimes I autograph their gum wrappers and things. I try to be a real guy. That makes the fans happy, you know.

Having become a star, I immediately contracted a combination of mononucleosis and viral pneumonia. However, now that I have pretty much recuperated, I am about to return to the city to continue my career. Today—"Search For Tomorrow"; tomorrow—"AS The World Turns." Who knows where it could lead? Someday I might even do a commercial. Now, that's when you know you've made it.

(NOTE: For information about the Bruce Hopkins Fan Club, write: Mrs. Fay Hopkins, Dallas, Pa.)

Larry Ide is recovering at home

Larry Ide, a senior at Dallas Senior High School, is recuperating at his home following a month-long bout with mononucleosis.

According to his mother, Mrs. Lawrence Ide, Larry will be at home for several more weeks. The infectious stage of the disease has passed, she reports, and friends may come to visit Larry at the Ide home, 114 Rice St., Trucksville.



The Dallas Post (J. KOZEMCHAK SR.)

Expert handling was necessary to clear "hot" power wires from the area after the Saturday night accident on Dug Road in Kingston Township. A UGI pole fell across the road, landing on the vehicle involved.

Red Cross workers will receive awards

The Wyoming Valley Chapter, American Red Cross, will observe Volunteer Recognition Week with its 54th annual awards meeting scheduled April 1 at 7:30 p.m. Mrs. Aston Davis, chairman of volunteers, made the announcement last week.

At the meeting, which begins at 7:30 p.m. at the American Legion Home, 45 N. River St., Wilkes-Barre, 106 volunteers will be presented pins covering from five to 45 years of service to the community through Red Cross. The awards meeting will be informal, with time for volunteers to renew old acquaintances or make new ones, Mrs. Davis said.

Dallas Women to sponsor hunt

Two hundred and fifty winning Easter Eggs will be included in the assortment of Easter eggs to be chosen by Back Mountain youngsters in the fifth annual Easter egg hunt Saturday, April 3. The hunt will be held in the Dallas Senior High School gymnasium from 1 to 3 p.m.

Conducted under the auspices of the Dallas Jr. Woman's Club, the Easter egg hunt this year is being planned by Mrs. Thomas Benton.

Children up to and including 8 years of age are asked to bring \$.25 and an Easter basket to the gymnasium. No registration for the hunt is necessary.

Lehman Boy Scouts near paper drive end

Lehman Boy Scout Troop 241 will wind up its paper and magazine drive April 3. Although the scouts have had good response, they are anxious to collect more paper to assure the success of their drive.

Persons who have newspapers or magazines may drop them off at any time Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday at the Lehman United Methodist Church basement, or take them to the scouts, April 3, the last day of the drive, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at Willard Carey's barn on the Lehman-Huntsville Road, near Lehman Center.

It is possible that there might be some arrangements made to help with extremely large loads.

Information concerning the drive is available by contacting James Hopple, 675-3166, or any member of the troop.

Lake taxpayers to meet Tuesday

Harveys Lake Borough Taxpayers Association will meet March 30 at Daniel C. Roberts Fire Hall at 8 p.m. The subject for discussion will be the "million dollar school." Robert Belles, supervising principal at Lake-Lehman High School, will speak on the need and planning of the school. All taxpayers are urged to attend.

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