

DEANNA DURBIN HERSELF

HOLLYWOOD acknowledges Deanna Durbin as the most perfectly poised, most refreshing and charming person it possesses.

That is the miracle of Deanna. It is no accident, I discovered after I had been with her two minutes.

I wanted to learn her secret. If she had one, I said, there were millions of young people all over the world who would be eager to learn it. Frankly, I had small hopes of her ability to analyze herself at 16.

Deanna looked me straight in the eye. Her eyes were variable—sometimes they are a bright blue, sometimes grey, sometimes actually hazel. But they are always clear, frank and at attention.

"I think I know what you mean," she said at once, "and I think the answer is *Be your age*. If you try to hold on to your younger years when you're really out of them, you look foolish. If you try to be too very mature before you're really grown, you're just as silly. But if you can manage to look and act just what you

are, there's nothing at all to worry about. It's mostly a matter of common sense," Deanna said.

"And it's funny," she went on, "your mentioning that subject. In one picture I was supposed to be infatuated with Melvyn Douglas. So, to impress him, I dressed up in my mother's evening gown, put on her jewelry, painted my face, did up my hair and paraded across the room."

"He laughed, of course," I suggested.

"That's why they put it in the picture," she replied. "You see, when you're pretending to be something you're not, you're really just giving a comic performance."

Deanna avoids the comic performances that go with either the young or the old side. She does it by the way she acts, the way she thinks, the way she has her fun, the way she picks her friends, trains her mind, develops her talents and the way she builds her body. She does it by the clothes she wears, even the modest make-up she uses.

And it is all hinged, as Deanna says, on common sense, a commodity as free as the air. Any young person with reasonable attractiveness and intelligence can be just as poised and personable. Deanna is sure of that.

"Of course," she qualified, "being in the movies and working with older and talented people make me especially lucky. My best friends are my directors. But there are older and talented people everywhere, aren't there? If you just make friends with them."

By many young people, I pointed out, are shy and embarrassed around older people. They are self-conscious.

"That's where my singing has helped me," said Deanna.

"It has given you poise?" I asked.

Her answer was not what I expected.

"It has *given me something to talk about*," Deanna said.

"Shyness comes from nothing to say. When you're with older people and you can't talk to them about anything interesting, naturally you're embarrassed. But if you study anything worth while, whether it's music, painting or books — anything — you'll always

have something to say that will interest people."

Deanna has studied singing since she was eleven. She still studies it every day with her teacher, Andres de Seguro. But singing isn't all. She reads everything she can lay her hands on. This past year, in spite of the terrific amount of time her pictures have taken, she took a full third-year high school course. Besides making pictures and going to classes she read "Gone With the Wind" twice, "White Banners," "Northwest Passage" and a dozen other contemporary books.

Recently she entertained with a party, inviting a crowd of her age to her home. They were her old high school classmates and a number of other young people—all her age—who have worked in her pictures—Helen Parrish, Jackie Moran—and her particular girl friend, Adelaide Craig.

Deanna had them all come in formal clothes, and they began to dance to waltz music. Then they got down to real fun. They peeled the Big Apple to Deanna's collection of swing records.

Deanna has three "formals." None is made of clinging satins or colored prints. She sticks to white

—piques and crisp with organza— with square plain necks and as few frills as possible. In all her clothes, Deanna has conscientiously studied how to avoid common mistakes—too many frills or lines too severe.

She has always had a basic taste for tailored, simple clothes. Her favorite knockabout costumes now are slacks and culottes. But when she first came to Universal there were a good many departments of dress wherein she could stand improvement. When they were pointed out to her, she never forgot them.

For instance, awkward points are likely to be a girl's feet, a waist too short and a waistline too big.

Deanna found that wearing two-toned shoes softened her foot lines made their size indeterminate. The short waist and thick midriff vanished via optical illusion when she adopted the rule to always wear a small belt or some trick waistline gadget to gather her in. If you will remember Deanna in *Three Smart Girls Grow Up* or notice her in her next picture, you'll see that little jackets or flag hanging jerkins are usually a part of an outfit in which she

looks particularly nice. These are deliberate camouflages of a growing girl's weak points.

It is amazing to look at portraits of Deanna Durbin taken only a year or so ago and then face her today, as I did. The contrast suggests one of those "before-and-after" advertisements. The old pictures we looked at made Deanna smile. Her make-up was too heavy. Half of the striking beauty of Deanna's bright personality-brimming face was lost.

I glanced at her as she sat across the table. Her bob is now long and dusts her shoulders. It is curled back discreetly from her face and falls in long waves, curled up at the end. It is soft, natural and pleasing.

Deanna explained: "They found I had a little natural wave in my hair. It came out best in a long bob. All the curling that's in it now is to encourage the wave along its natural lines. I think the lesson is—take advantage of your natural good points and develop them."

Deanna does that. Because her skin is flawless and glowing, she uses the lightest application of lipstick and powder. "I like shiny noses," she smiled.

Her jewelry box holds only her wristwatch, two charm bracelets, and a small gold locket. She wore her first French heels to a party given just recently for a studio executive.

Courage, direct action and common sense are what enabled Deanna Durbin to face without flinching her first important audience on

talent night at the Trocadero Club. Courage took her before an intimidating microphone on Eddie Cantor's radio show. It brought her face to face with her first camera lens in *Three Smart Girls*. It enables her to look out on a new life with fearless, eager eyes.—*Jennifer Wright, condensed from Photoplay Magazine.*

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TODAY'S PICTURE

THE atrophy of European culture was not brought about by the war, but only made swifter and more striking. Not war alone flung up the huge wave of unreasoning barbarism and the primitive, country-fair crudity of mass democracy. Modern man is at once the product and the prey of wild, distracting impressions which assault him, intoxicate his senses and stimulate his nerves. The amazing development of technology, with its triumphs and disasters, the noisy sensationalism of sports records, the fantastic adulation and overpayment of popular stars, the boxing bouts before hordes of people for million-dollar stakes—these things and more like them make up the picture of our time, together with the decline and obsolescence of civilizing, disciplinary conceptions such as culture, mind, art, ideals.

For those are conceptions from the bourgeois age, idealistic trumpery out of the nineteenth century. And in fact the nineteenth century was above all an idealistic epoch—only today, and with some emotion, does one realize how idealistic it was. It believed not only in the blessings of a liberal democracy, but also in socialism—that is, in a kind of socialism which would raise and instruct the masses and bring them science, art, education, the good things of culture. Today we have convinced ourselves that it is both easier and more important to dominate the masses, developing to greater and greater perfection the clumsy art of playing on their emotions—in other words, of substituting propaganda for education.—*Thomas Mann, Noted Author and Nobel Prize Winner.*