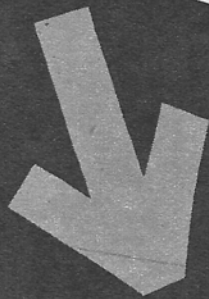
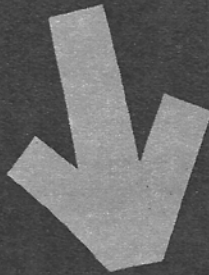


Rod Taylor



***He-man from
"down under"***



An expert archer, Rod shows his date, France, some tricks of the trade. He hunts small game nearby.



Bachelor Rod claims he's married to his TV show, "Hong Kong", for the time being.



One advantage of playing opposite a new heroine each week is meeting girls like France.



Rod likes girls with whom he can communicate ideas as, for example, lovely chess partner France Nuyen.

The Aussie star of TV's "Hong Kong" is convinced that American women are spoiled and their men lacking in the good old-fashioned caveman technique

By BILL TUSHER

"A MERICAN WOMEN," Rod Taylor is quoted as saying—or misquoted, as he heatedly insists—in an Australian Sunday supplement, "are unbelievably spoiled, spoiled to a point that makes them ridiculous and completely destroyed as women . . . America ought to strangle 90 per cent of them and start over again."

The strapping, bristling embodiment of Down Under manhood starring in ABC-TV's "Hong Kong" series is credited with committing these searing sentiments to posterity during a recent sentimental stopover in his native Australia. In the course of the brave proclamation attributed to him, American men do not go completely without blame, either.

"What's happened to them?" Rod is reported wondering. "They're not men anymore. They're dice that women rattle in a box and throw around."

All of which, according to the Australian dispatch, allegedly led Taylor to the comforting observation that the balance between the sexes was in much better repair in his native land.

"Australia," the article has Rod saying, "is probably the only country left in the world where men still live up to the standards and requirements of their sex. It's the only country where they run the show, where they're not flabby and led by the nose and pushed around by women."

There is only one trouble with these fearless declamations. Rod Taylor fearlessly disowns them. In fact, he repudiates them with such unflinching vigor that no one within earshot would dare suspect he might be trying to chicken out of an embarrassing spot. *(continued on page 40)*

Rod Taylor *continued*



"Caveman" Rod Taylor has tables turned on him as France douses him with water from garden hose.

Rod fairly thundered his denials when I repaired with him to his dressing room after he finished his day's labors in a "Hong Kong" sequence at 20th Century-Fox. The short journey gave brief but compelling insight on his powers of concentration. It required him first to extricate himself from the toils of a wardrobe man who was fitting him for a new suit in a trailer dressing room immediately outside the sound stage—and not to be confused with his permanent dressing room, which really is a suite of rooms—as befits a star. And it further required him to extricate himself from the fond attentions of his feminine foil in "Hong Kong", slimmed down France Nuyen, whom he sometimes dates, and who, at the moment, affectionately coiled her arm around his waist while he returned the compliment by draping his arm nonchalantly around her shoulders.

Rod blew his shaggy mane when I inquired whether the Australian magazine had offered an accurate representation of his views on boy-meets-girl in America.

"That's a lot of fertilizer," he snorted. "This guy," he went on in white fury, alluding to the Aussie writer, "is a vicious so-and-so. He wants sensationalism. He wanted me to give him all sorts of filth and intrigue. He absolutely misquoted me. I just glossed over the subject. What I said wasn't nearly as vicious as that."

It seemed, under the circumstances, only fair to give Rod an opportunity to set the record straight, an entitlement he seized upon with commendable alacrity.

"I believe American women are *slightly* spoiled," he obliged with a toned down—if it could be characterized that way—official helping of Taylor doctrine. "And I don't think American men take the upper hand enough as far as women are concerned. But I don't feel about it as strongly as he painted it."

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Watered down or not, Rod Taylor's more considered reflections on the subject are not noticeably wanting either for candor or for boldness.

"It just seems to me," he deposes with bland disregard for such distaff wrath as such frankness can bestir, "that American women don't seem to appreciate the American man enough. It seems they hold the power of sex over the male much too strongly. It doesn't seem to be a mutual thing. It seems as if the American man is lucky to take the American girl in his arms. It seems to be an attitude that she's doing him a favor."

Nor does Rod permit the American male to wiggle off the hook without squirming self-confrontation. The difference between his acknowledged beliefs and those put to his name in the Australian supplement is that Rod regards American men more with compassion than with scorn.

"Maybe," he shrugs, not intolerantly, "it's the mother image that everybody talks about, the apple pie and mother. Maybe they go to school too long and live at home too long, or something. I can only make a contrast. I love this country and I begin to forget Australia completely. It's as if I'd lived here all my life. I've no interest in going back to Australia, because my home's here now. But I notice when making the comparison that an Australian guy—and I don't know whether statistics bear me out—seems to leave home earlier. He leaves the nest earlier, and stands on his own two feet. Australian men don't seem to go to school as long, and yet their education is just as high. I think this may have something to do with it."

Rod is not so harsh, however, that he fails to soften the scolding with a hearty concession.

"Gee," he says with a ready salute, "an American male is all male. It's just that the mother thing is there a little too long. There's more authority, more assurance in the average Australian guy.

But I think," he interjects in the interests of objectivity if not discretion, "that maybe the Australian man goes to the other extreme and becomes a little vulgar and domineering himself. It's the he-doesn't-give-a-damn kind of thing, which I think is also very bad."

Rod Taylor's views on American women—even revised and updated—afford an exciting sampling of the lively personality and mentality of the rough hewn, good-looking 30-year-old Australian buck whose impact as the star of "Hong Kong" has Hollywood hopefully eyeing him as an emerging male sex symbol combining the late Clark Gable's animal virility and the late Humphrey Bogart's lusty disdain for pretense and sanctimony.

But Taylor, it should be noted with sufficient swiftness to outrun his own outraged correction, regards himself neither as another Gable nor a second Bogart—but as the first Rod Taylor. It would appear that his credentials well may permit him to pass under his own colors.

Individuality—within a prepossessing framework of charming but not berserk eccentricity—would seem to be the dominant characteristic of the winningly confident and often disarmingly gentle Aussie whose blue eyes twinkle with the latent mischief of a full-fledged ladies' man, and whose 175 pounds fill out his five feet 11 inches in a manner to induce feminine palpitation.

Rod's evaluation of the native masculinity of the Australian male is almost unwittingly autobiographical. Rod himself didn't stay too long in school—having moved from Parramatta High School in his native Sydney to the Sydney Technical and Fine Arts College, from which he withdrew precipitately to act on an urge to act.

The only son of William Sturt Taylor, a steel construction contractor, and Myrna Stewart Taylor, a well-known Aus-

HE-MAN FROM "DOWN UNDER"

continued

at any time. It's a wonderful way to get rid of insecurities—to be honest."

Anyone who thinks he has picked up the spoor of a narcissistic actor because of these declarations will quickly find himself up a blind psychological alley. Rod is under no illusion that he is the hottest thing since flapjacks.

"I don't consider myself that secure that I can be honest because I'm terribly attractive anyway," he insists on pointing out with a great deal of feeling. "Hell no! Absolutely not. There are areas about myself which I don't like—absolutely. I'm rather suspicious. I keep my left up too much—maybe because of having been bitten in one or two areas in the past. You know, I've been taken advantage of, so this I don't like about myself. I don't like being suspicious."

Rod is quick to perceive other flaws when the mirror casts up his reflection.

"There are many, many areas in which I'm not pleased," he goes on. "Many! You know, I'm not understanding of people. Because I grasp something quickly I'm impatient that others don't grasp it. I don't like this in myself. I'd like to be more mature and accepting of people."

While Rod insists on seeing himself true, he doesn't sell himself short, either.

"I'm working on all these things," he says resolutely. "I want not only to become a good actor, but a better human being. This is why you're here, you know—to make the most and the best of what you have. I think it's important. I'm not religious to the point of going to church every Sunday, but I feel we all have our little church inside ourselves. It's given to you to make the most of, and I think that's a pretty good activity in life—to make yourself a better and better and more acceptable human being."

SO HE approaches life unashamed to accept its joys and bounty—and entirely willing to face up to the consequences of searching self-evaluation. However, he is not therefore martyred any more about his private life than he is about his round-the-clock grind in professional life. He loves being the kingpin of a top-rated television series, and he loves—and richly indulges—the vaunted pleasures of a committed bachelorhood.

A short-lived first marriage in Australia that foundered on the rocks of jealousy—plus a frank recognition of his own undiminished post-marital enthusiasm for playing the field—has made him wary of further wedded entanglement at this stage in his life.

"I enjoy the fact that I have a very attractive lady every week," he laughs infectiously. "It's a wonderful way of meeting someone. You see, you spend seven days with each one. This in itself is immensely interesting. And my being a bachelor is not completely selfish. I feel I have a lot of problems to work out. I



Rod is wary of serious entanglements but admits he likes company of France Nuyen.

have a lot of work to do. I give all my time to this show. I figure that this is a marriage in itself if you're going to do this darned thing every seven days. There's your duty right there. The fact that I do love it is selfish. I'm tied up in it. And to impose these problems on a wife sitting at home waiting to be flattered on her new hat or something is not part of my existence right now."

Girls, off stage as well as on, are a part of his existence—notwithstanding the possessiveness of his television series. While there is no hint of the adolescent in Rod Taylor there is much of the romanticist in him. If there are two things this young Australian eschews they are prosaic women and prosaic dates.

"I love to sail," he sighs in balmy contemplation of his social life. "There's nothing better than for a couple to sail, barbecue a steak on the fantail and look at the stars and have your martini. Here the only place you can sail is to Catalina. I had a boat with another guy, a little yawl which we'd use. Then I had a little racing satellite that I just used to take out to the surf. A little sloop."

Rod's tastes do not seem frivolous, but appear to impel him to seek out with feminine companions a rapport in depth.

"I like any kind of activity you can share," he grins appreciatively, "anything—whether it's physical or otherwise. Play chess, swim. I like girls who are fairly active and fairly thinking. When I'm with a girl I need communication on more than one level. I need to be able to talk to somebody who at least is interested in thinking about life, in living and learning, and seeking. It's of no interest to me to go out with a good-looking broad with an enormous bosom, and not talk and swap ideas and have some kind of a mental relationship. What really matters is swapping ideas and getting to know people, thinking and talking. You know, this is making love in a way—delving into people's ideas."

Rod drives a white jeep, a gift from his sponsor, and a 1957 Cadillac which

he is on the verge of trading in for a 1961, and he lives—quietly but well—in a bachelor hideout on a rustic hilltop off Coldwater Canyon.

"It's a man's house," he reflects approvingly, "early Americansy, stone, wood, two bedrooms, a nice big living room, fireplace, a big kitchen, a dining area, and a big den with all my toys—bows and arrows, and guns, and things like that."

Rod is an expert archer who actually hunts game in the wooded area around famed Mulholland Drive, where traditional prey is biped and distaff. He claims he's bagged—and feasted on—wild boar, wild goat and rabbit, "not just to kill for the sake of killing."

He looks upon his archery excursions as therapy.

"I like to play at being Robin Hood and go out and bag a pig and cook it," he laughs. "When they talk about marriage, you grab the bow and arrow and go. I often get bogged down with work, even though I love my work. Maybe the script can be improved, or maybe I get a little bugged about working conditions. Then it's a good thing to tramp around the hills and breathe some clean air."

Rod is a boy who likes to play, but that doesn't make him a playboy. He has a serious streak—even a dedicated one—a yard wide, and to divorce that from his personality would be to overlook the governing characteristic of his being. A mark of his seriousness is his attitude toward acting.

"I learned my craft the right way," Rod declares with deep-felt satisfaction. "Nobody picked me up in a gas station and said you should be a movie star—or an actor. I played hookey from art school and went to a place like Actors' Studio and worked at my craft. Then I went into the theatre and started from the bottom and worked at that. I gradually got bigger and better roles. But I learned and worked damn hard. Therefore I have definite principles about my craft. I won't do anything that I consider junk."

HE makes this point as early and as often as conversation makes such a declaration germane. When he invaded Hollywood there were no agents on the shores of Malibu awaiting him with outstretched contracts. Five years elapsed between his unceremonious arrival and his big break as head man in "Hong Kong". Yet he does not hallow those hollow years with a tear-wringing odyssey of menial jobs along the way. This, however, is not to say there were no shades of Horatio Alger in his upward climb back home in Australia.

"When I said I no longer would be a painter, that I wanted to be an actor, the first thing that I did was get a stinking job in an insurance building," he recalls as if the smells are still in his nostrils. "There were two floors of a workers' compensation hospital. I used to go from 9:30 at night until 3:30 in the morning,

swabbing up the blood swabs and cleaning up this blankety-blank hospital just so I could walk around during the day and be a legitimate actor ready for work."

There was a long, muscle-building and soul-trying procession of odd jobs before Rod was able to earn his keep in Australia as an actor.

"I chopped wood," he grins affably. "I did all sorts of things. And I could always fall back on my art. I even made my art pottery for a while. I had decorated and baked the clay and molded the shapes and painted it, and glazed it and sold it. There was an artsy-craftsy market for this."

On the shores of Malibu—forced by his own determination and abetted by the lack of an alien's work permit—Rod spurned non-acting jobs, led a spartan and often discouraged existence in a modest place by the ocean, and wrote optimistically to the folks back home.

"I had immense periods of doubt, believe me," he nods soberly. "I'd send letters back to Australia saying stardom was just around the corner, and I'd be bawling my eyes out in the bedroom, you know—like a big girl. In the beginning I had a real work problem. Every time I had a job I had to convince the immigration authorities I was the only man for that job and get a special work permit until I went under contract to MGM. I couldn't just go out and get a job be-

cause I had no social security card."

But stubborn faith prevailed over despair—Rod's faith in himself and his agent's faith in him. Thus he subsisted by eating the fish and lobsters he caught in the ocean, and the money—the advances—he was able to entice from his agents. The acting awards he had won in Australia, he learned quickly, counted for naught in Hollywood.

"My seat was so thin I was sitting on bones," he recalls now with a relieved smile. "But to a large degree those early lean days were self-imposed. I would only do the good things. I wouldn't do anything I didn't consider prestige. I'd much rather turn down a starring role in a bad picture and do a small role in a very good picture."

This might have the ring of bravado except that the record supports the claim. Rod developed a string of credits with small but quality parts in pictures like "The Virgin Queen", "The Darkest Hour", "Separate Tables", "Step Down To Terror", "Top Gun" and "Giant", in which he portrayed Liz Taylor's fiance. Before climbing the stratosphere in the Hollywood firmament as well as science fiction in MGM's "Time Machine", Rod impressed memorably as the disarming wolf in pursuit of Shirley MacLaine in "Ask Any Girl".

He also added to his gathering stature with television performances in "Play-

house 90", "Studio One", "Suspicion" and other top-drawer offerings.

It was entirely in character, therefore, that he declined 19 scripts for television series before he said yes to "Hong Kong". Whether such aloofness represents audacity or faith—or both—may be begging the question. The point is that Rod Taylor has arrived—and largely on his own terms. Rod himself is aware only of one significant change.

"I guess I have more security from a financial point of view," he acknowledges. "I noticed before that when I didn't have any money I always used to carry money. I notice now that I do have money strangely enough I never seem to carry any with me. Possibly it's because I'm not frightened of people not accepting my check. Little things like that."

On the big things—on high plateaus like life's values—Rod seems in imminent danger of losing his perspective.

"This isn't the be-all and end-all of my career," he says of "Hong Kong", his current success. "I want to go on and on until I'm 90. Acting is something I love. The fact that I'm going to be unsuccessful at times is pretty well balanced by the fact that I'm going to be successful at others. It doesn't frighten me. I'm not doing my work for constant success. I'm doing it because I love it. When people think it's successful I'm grateful. When they don't—okay, I'll try again." **END**