

B I O G R A P H Y

of

BETTY GRABLE

Betty Grable is a Hollywood success because she planned it that way. She began planning almost as soon as she could toddle and she hasn't stopped for a moment since.

A look at the record shows how well and wisely she planned and to what excellent effect. It proves that beauty and brains are not mutually exclusive, as some would have you believe.

She was born on December 18 at St. Louis, Mo., the daughter of Conn and Lillian Grable. Mr. Grable was a wealthy stock broker and the future film star, if she didn't come into the world with the proverbial golden spoon in her mouth, at least had something pretty well approximating it.

At the age of 4, Betty already was hoofing it with the best of them in dancing school and manhandling a saxophone when she wasn't busy plucking discords on the ukulele. In short, she was an infant prodigy and already was prattling of things theatrical and entertaining.

Talent such as Betty showed in those tender years doesn't go unrecognized for long. At the age of 7, Betty made her professional debut by public demand, in spite of the objections of her parents, who felt that she was much too young. She went on the air and she appeared with such notables in the entertainment world as Frank Fay, Ed Lowry, Jack Haley and several others on their visits to St. Louis.

In between times, she was attending the Mary Institute, an exclusive school for girls at St. Louis, where she absorbed education in liberal dosages.

It had been the habit of the Grable family to take an extended vacation every summer far from home. They had been in Maine and in Florida, in Minnesota and in Canada. In 1929, they decided that Southern California might be well worth visiting. Out they came that summer and the die, as far as Betty was concerned, was cast.

Betty, it seemed had a good deal to do with their decision to come to Los Angeles and Hollywood. As usual, she was planning.

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Once here, Betty prevailed on her mother to remain. Her father, with his business in St. Louis, naturally had to go home. She enrolled in the Hollywood Professional School to continue her education and in the Albertina Rasch and later the Ernest Belcher dancing school to continue her footwork. She not only was drilled in ballet, tap and eccentric dances but almost all other terpsichorean manifestations known at that time.

By 1930, she had progressed so far that the old Fox company decided she should be in the movies. Betty cheated a little, she confesses, to qualify for a contract. She told studio officials that she was two years older than she really was in order to avoid becoming entangled in child labor law regulations.

Her first film stint was a specialty number in "Let's Go Places," made in 1930. Then she became a member of the old Fox chorus and danced and danced for a solid year. At the end of that time, her contract with the studio was permitted to lapse by mutual consent. Betty felt she was getting nowhere as a film chorine and the studio seemed to be of the opinion it could do without her services. The studio, of course, lived to regret it.

But Betty wasn't particularly downcast.

"That year wasn't altogether wasted," she pointed out. "I had learned a lot about the movies and what made them move. I knew that experience would be mighty helpful. I made up my mind to see to that. The immediate problem, naturally, was how."

The result of Betty's communings was that she marched over to the Samuel Goldwyn studios, with 1500 other beauties, to try out for a dancing part in Eddie Cantor's picture, "Whoopie." She was the first of the 1500 to be chosen and her work in that picture got her a little flattering attention from the movie makers but not quite enough.

Betty thereupon decided to try the oblique approach on the time-tested theory that a prophet is never recognized in his own land. So she obtained a part in the Barbara Stanwyck-Frank Fay stage production, "Tattle Tales." She was in that show for several months but there was nary a nibble from the film producers.

But Ted Fio Rito, at that time at the height of his fame as a band maestro, happened to catch the show and decided that the colorful Miss Grable was just what the doctor ordered for his orchestra. He made her a tempting offer and she accepted. She joined his band in San Francisco and discovered, under his tutelage, that she had another asset that she had permitted to lie dormant. She had a voice ideally suited for the rendition of torch songs. It was low, smoky and mellow. She remained with the Fio Rito organization for eight months.

At the end of that time, Betty had a vogue and a following. The movies beckoned to Betty once again and she responded. She was cast as the feminine lead with Wheeler and Woolsey in "Hold 'Em Jail"

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and then she made a number of shorts.

"But the pictures and the parts," Betty confesses, "were growing steadily less important. I decided to give Hollywood another touch of the absent treatment. So I joined Jay Whidden and his orchestra and sang and danced with them in San Francisco at the Mark Hopkins and in Santa Monica at the Miramar."

Once more Betty's planning bore fruit. The absent treatment worked. She was a personality now, and R.K.O. grabbed the Grable miss and gave her a substantial contract. Her first picture there was in the "Gay Divorcee" in which she did that "K-nock K-nees" number with Edward Everett Horton.

For two years, Miss Grable labored in the R.K.O. studios, growing steadily in importance and popularity. At the end of that time, she was offered even a better contract by Paramount and naturally accepted. Paramount also had her under contract for two years. All was going well, until that studio began building her a college girl in one picture after another. Betty simply didn't care to be the perennial sophomore forever. At the end of another two years she decided she'd had enough.

She went back to her favorite stratagem -- this time a personal appearance tour which began in July, 1939. She was a veritable riot on the road, playing to overflow houses at every appearance. Reports of her sensational personal success naturally trickled back to Hollywood, as Betty had planned. Once more the movies realized that popularity such as Betty was enjoying must be deserved.

Contract offers began to shower about Betty's shapely ears once more. Twentieth Century-Fox made the best offer and Betty accepted. But before she signed, she got the studio to agree to permit her to do the Buddy De Sylva show, "Du Barry Was a Lady" in New York. She had agreed to appear in that musical some time before and the studio, perforce, had to accede to her wishes.

The rest, more or less, is current theatrical history. Betty, supposedly, was a supporting player in "Du Barry Was a Lady" but she managed to steal the thing just the same. She became the toast of Broadway. Critics lauded her and the paying guests came in endless streams.

She would have continued playing in that show but for the fact that Alice Faye, back in Hollywood, was suddenly taken ill and compelled to undergo a major operation. Alice had been preparing to go into the top spot of "Down Argentine Way" at the time, one of costliest musicals undertaken by 20th Century-Fox in some time.

Darryl F. Zanuck, production head at the studio, sent a hurry call for Betty. Could she come immediately to fill the gap left by Miss Faye. Betty responded promptly. She arrived in Hollywood one Monday morning at 8:30 and at 10 o'clock that same morning she was facing the test cameras to qualify for the most important movie role that had ever come to her.

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Betty is a blue-eyed, golden-haired blonde of the peaches and cream variety. She weighs 112 pounds when she isn't working and between 112 and 117 when she is. The harder she works the more weight she gains. At one time, while rehearsing day and night for "Du Barry Was A Lady," her weight jumped to 122.

She never diets and prefers steaks on her menu, although she'll eat anything and everything. Ice cream and rich desserts are favorites with her. She's unquestionably one of the most adept dancers in Hollywood and one of its best horsewomen. She also bowls very well and plays a good game of tennis. At one time she took up ice skating in a serious way and kept at it for a year. She may not be in a class with the peerless Sonja Henie, but Paramount once thought seriously of producing a picture with Betty of the type that Miss Henie does so well.

Betty has been married twice. Her first marriage to Jackie Coogan, the "Kid" of silent film days, ended in the divorce courts in 1940. For some time her name was linked with George Raft and many thought her romance with him would end in marriage. On July 5th, 1943, she married the popular band-leader, Harry James, at Las Vegas, Nevada. On March 3, 1944, a daughter, Victoria Elizabeth, was born to this happy couple.

Betty has one sister, Marjorie Arnold, who is happily married and lives in Kansas City.

She actually likes work and thrives on it. Says it's when she doesn't have it that she gets the mopes.

VITAL STATISTICS

REAL NAME: Betty Grable
BIRTHPLACE: St. Louis, Mo.
BIRTHDATE: December 18

MOTHER: Lillian Grable
FATHER: Conn Grable

HEIGHT: 5 feet, 3½ inches
WEIGHT: 112 pounds
HAIR: golden blonde
EYES: blue

EDUCATION: Mery Institute, St. Louis, Mo.
Hollywood Professional School

MARRIED TO: Jackie Coogan on November 21, 1937
Divorced October 11, 1939
Final decree November 19, 1940

Married Harry James, July 5, 1943
at Las Vegas

CHILDREN: 1st child-
Victoria Elizabeth born 3-3-44
Cedars of Lebanon Hosp., L.A., Cal.
2nd child-
Jessica

PICTURE RECORD1930

LET'S GO PLACES - Fox

1931

WHOOPEE - UA

KIKI - UA

1932HOLD 'EM JAIL - RKO
THE GAY DIVORCEE - RKO1933

WHAT PRICE INNOCENCE - COL.

1934PERSONAL APPEARANCE - Wheeler &
Woolsey1935THE NITWITS - RKO
OLD MAN RHYTHM - RKO
COLLEGIATE - PARA.1936FOLLOW THE FLEET - RKO
DON'T TURN 'EM LOOSE - RKO
PIGSKIN PARADE - TCF1937THIS WAY PLEASE - PARA.
THRILL OF A LIFETIME - PARA.1938COLLEGE SWING - PARA.
GIVE ME A SAILOR - PARA.
CAMPUS CONFESSIONS - PARA.1940N.Y. State - DUBARRY WAS A LADY
DOWN ARGENTINE WAY - TCF
TIN PAN ALLEY - TCF1941MOON OVER MIAMI - TCF
A YANK IN THE R.A.F. - TCF
HOT SPOT - TCF
SONG OF THE ISLANDS - TCF1942FOOTLIGHT SERENADE - TCF
SPRINGTIME IN THE ROCKIES - TCF1943CONEY ISLAND - TCF
SWEET ROSIE O'GRADY - TCF
PIN UP GIRL - TCF1945BILLY ROSE'S DIAMOND HORSESHOE - TCF
THE DOLLY SISTERS - TCF1947THE SHOCKING MISS PILGRIM - TCF
MOTHER WORE TIGHTS - TCF1948THAT LADY IN ERMINE - TCF
WHEN MY BABY SMILES AT ME - TCF1949THE BEAUTIFUL BLONDE FROM BASHFUL
BEND - TCF
WABASH AVENUE - TCF1950MY BLUE HEAVEN - TCF
CALL ME MISTER - TCF1951

MEET ME AFTER THE SHOW - TCF

1953FARMER TAKES A WIFE
HOW TO MARRY A MILLIONAIRE