

TEXAS

# Ranger

• OCTOBER • 1949 • 25c





"People should go to the theater and let themselves go."

## HOT PASTROMI!

by liz smith

● IN A PASTURE outside Austin, a slender young man was harrassing a bull with a tattered bullfighting cape and cries of "Toro!"—trying to get him to charge.

Indignant authorities put an end to this attempted mayhem by informing the quint-looking "torrero" that he was trespassing and molesting the prize bull of the state dairy farm.

Tommy Jones, our hero, shrugged his thin shoulders, folded his precious cape and came back to town to less exciting practice. Even his dates often find themselves involved in this, the latest Jones hobby.

With Tommy it's like that. You're running the horns (pretending you're a bull) or sitting in out-of-the-way bars while he sops up local color, or learning voodoo chants, or practicing for a Calypso war.

For Tom Collins Jones is a wonderful confusion of talent, imagination, guts,

sensitivity, and ambition. Sprung from the unvarnished realism of West Texas, influenced by writers like Shaw, enamoured of the theater, this boy with the mobile face and great heart is an actor and a character, and moreover, a character actor.

They say a lot about him around the Drama Department, where flattery is often cheap, but it seems the things his fellows say about T. J. are touched with some of his own sweetness and fairness.

"I'd rather work with him than anyone else," says one leading lady, "because he gives so much to his fellow actors and is unselfish, believing that if he helps others in the cast, the show will be better and he'll be better."

Being impressed with T. Jones, is nothing unusual. Some ardent Curtain Clubbers once started a fan club for him. Tommy turns a rather jaundiced eye on these activities, though he admits, "I have occasional daydreams wherein I'm the

idol of millions and during such fantasies am invariably lifted to the shoulders of an adoring crowd which is shouting 'TOMMY — TOMMY — HOT PASTROMI!'"

T. J. came to UT in 1945 to major in acting. "I signed up for Drama 1a and learned to do the 'You're A Regular Wreck' speech four times with one breath. I discovered how to spell 'diaphragm' and got so I could punch myself in the mid-section without getting sick to my stomach."

"I was also taken into the Curtain Club where I found that theater people are more theatrical than people!" Later in '48-'49, the boy who made good became one of the best presidents this club ever had.

But back in 1947, he was so discouraged at never being cast that he changed his major to directing. Immediately he began to get roles and has been a threat to other thespians in try-outs ever since.



"I look like an ostrich up on the stage."

His worst role, he says, was his first one in "Right You Are." Terrified of the play, the actors, and the director; unable to tell up-stage from down-stage, Tommy spent a miserable six weeks.

"I didn't speak my lines, I gargled them," he recalls. Three times he phoned Coleman to ask about openings in his dad's hatchery business and was told by his family to stick it out.

He did. Now he has appeared in eighteen major productions and many call him "the best actor in the department."

A close friend says that Tommy's enthusiasm for the theater is his most outstanding characteristic. But back in high school, skinny, farsighted Tommy wasn't enthusiastic. He was looking for a good deal and says he made the mistake of assuming that kids taking dramatics had it easy.

In his first play, "Six Who Pass While The Lintels Boil," he boiled lintels. "After a week of rehearsal," he says, "some kind soul finally told me what the hell a lintel was."

Later, he endeared himself to his drama teacher by exhibiting theatrical presence of mind in exiting through the audience when a door jammed on stage. The teacher's praise caused Tommy's enthusiasm to burn a little brighter.

Time passed and at UT Tommy ran into a similar situation in "Arms And The Man" when he jammed a door by pushing it in when it should have pulled out. The door stuck fast leaving only a small opening. The cast was frozen. But Tommy was undaunted. He snaked an arm through, then a leg, then inched his thin frame onto the stage. When he emerged, he straightened his uniform, tweaked his mustache and said in an irritated tone, "We must have that door fixed."

"I was the hard luck kid of that show," he sighs. "Later I tried to put my coat on and ran my arms down inside the lining."

A great storyteller, he gets excited, uses his hands, pulls his mouth out of shape, jumps up and paces the floor,



"I'm scared to death of charming females."

rubs his head and acts out every part of an anecdote. In an evening he may mimic everyone from B. Iden Payne to Ann Tynan.

His best stories are the ones about his experiences in summer theater in New Braunfels. With nine other actors, he starved, sweated, lived on No-Doze, dropped to 108 pounds by working 18 hours a day. They had one week to memorize, rehearse, and build a three-act play set. Crew members who passed out were propped against the walls until they recovered. All became ill. One had a heart attack. None of them quit. In the end the show lost money. Tommy looks back on it as a great experience.

In his familiar blue-jeans and sneakers, he is usually moving and busy, clipping his six-foot frame along at a fast stoop. With his cropped hair and angular face, he has been compared to a bald eagle.

There is something in his often sad and pensive appearance that reminds one a little of Hollywood's best comic era—a faint recollection of the Buster Keatons and Harold Loyds—the fluid countenance, the horn-rimmed glasses, the expressive hands. He is a master at the hysterical leer, the frustrated cringe, the serio-comic look of despair. He is perfect acting the Casper Milquetoasts who fill this world and this world's plays. He can submerge himself into Shaw's common man with a sly dig at your ribs, a wink, and a grin. In modern dress, he comes alive like a Thurber character. If he only carried a spear, it would probably be a sharp one.

A disciple of Bernard Shaw, Tommy says that G.B.S. has had a great influence upon his life. On the fly-leaf of his copy of Shaw's "Sixteen Self Sketches," some lady admirers wrote these words, "To T.J.—until he writes his own."

Tommy says they just love him more than they do honesty. Nevertheless, he has tried his hand at writing; two one-act plays presented in drama lab, some poetry, and several successful sets of lyrics for T.S.O. Writing, like dabbling

(Continued on Page 40)



"Theatre people are more theatrical than people."



"What I need in my work is maturity."



"What I need in life is a good woman."



# HOT PASTROMI!

(Continued from Page 25)



in art, is just a part of his versatility. One year Tommy and some friends formed a "Junior Birdman Club." They set objectives and went to them across the campus as the crow flies. In this exhausting and absurd experiment, they even climbed over the law building.

Another time, Tommy decided to stage a voodoo party at Bull Creek, complete with drums, fires, rituals, and chants. A Calypso war was held wherein one faction sang the other down. Eventually people began disrobing and falling into the fire. Things got out of hand. Rather sadly, T.J. gave up his preoccupation with voodoo and turned to bullfighting.

Manhunt Nets  
Two Teen-Agers

HOUSTON POST

*(Oh well, boys will be men.)*

In Mexico this summer, he was given a working cape by a budding "novillero" and asked to join a group of apprentice matadors. But he decided more practically to come back to UT and work on his masters. Mr. Jones, Sr., has been more tolerant of a son in the theater since Tommy raked in cold cash and some free beers directing the Austin Little Theater last spring.

Tommy numbers among his collection of friends, The Sheik, who owns a bar on East Sixth Street. It is Tommy's

present intention to stage a private production of "A Streetcar Named Desire" with The Sheik (a virile ex-wrestling champ) as the he-man lead.

Since T.J. has shown considerable promise as a director, he can probably pull it off. He says, "If I had any guts though, I'd go to New York and starve, begging Elia Kazan or Josh Logan to let me run errands for them and watch them direct."

In The University, his directing notwithstanding, Tommy is best known for his vivid portrayals of DePinna in "You Can't Take It With You" (the little man who made firecrackers in the basement)—of Kit Carson in "The Time of Your Life" (I don't suppose you ever fell in love with a midget weighing thirty-nine pounds?)—of Doolittle in "Pygmalion" (Whut's a five-pound note to you, guv'ner, and whut's Eliza to me?').

Anyone can do a genuine oil painting with this Picture Craft kit. A canvas 12x16" is stenciled with a landscape or still life, with numbers where the color goes. You paint in colors from correspondingly numbered capsules of paint, using a brush in the kit, and you have an oil painting.

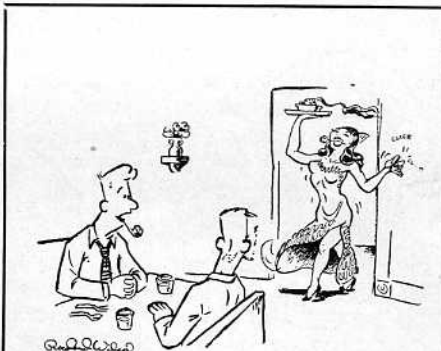
ESQUIRE ADVERTISEMENT

*(See page 16)*

Tommy says his idea of heaven-on-earth would be a situation where he could have a group stock company in an ideal theater-family-community life. "I'm no Bohemian," he says, putting on his western-style straw hat and beginning to sing "Ida Red."

"You know, though," he'll muse, "more than anything in the world I respect talent. It's a shame how much I respect talent!"

We respect talent, too. Maybe that's why it's easy to close this shouting, "TOMMY — TOMMY — HOT PASTROMI!"



*"I just took a chance and ordered the Spanish Surprise."*