

# LANA TURNER

## SHE WAS SIPPING A STRAWBERRY MALT WHEN FAME WALKED IN TO MAKE HER THE MOVIE SWEATER GIRL

#### by NIVEN BUSCH

The sharp-faced man with the little black mustache kept looking over at the young girl. She was playing hooky—that much was clear. It was a Tuesday, and not yet 3 p. m. Her books were lying on the counter beside the strawberry malt. She looked about second-year-high-school age or third, maybe-the red sweater she was wearing was painted with white school emblems. Besides the sweater she had on a beret, a tight-fitting sports skirt and high-heeled shoes. She was well set up. Every time the man with the mustache looked at her she lowered her eyes the way a young girl is supposed to do but when he finally came round the counter and spoke to her, she removed her lips from the straw, regarding him calmly. "How would you like to be in pictures?" he inquired.

Both the scene and the man's opening line are stencils, repeated many times each day in Hollywood drugstores. What made notable the meeting that occurred in the Top Hat Malt Shop, Sunset and Highland, on a January afternoon in 1936, was not dialog or business but superior casting. The man with the mustache was William Wilkerson, editor and publisher of the Hollywood Reporter, a motion-picture trade journal; the girl in the sweater was Julia Jean Mildred Frances Turner-better known today as Lana Turner. Men often use that come-on chatter about pictures but to the young girl there was something different about Editor Wilkersonthe easy, unconcerned way he walked up to her, his expensive-looking suit and the snappy, professional way he asked the old, old question.

For several moments after Mr. Wilkerson had left the Top Hat, the redhaired girl sat on her stool, studying her empty glass. Her thoughts were in a whirl. After a while she got her lipstick out and made up her lips, then took her check and paid it. With a nickel of the change she called her mother.

Why aren't you in school?" demanded Mrs. Turner.

"Teacher was sick so we got out early," lied the red-haired girl. "Listen, mother . . .

She reported what had happened. Standing at the pay phone in her place of employment, the Lois Williams Beauty Salon, Mrs. Turner listened wearily.

'You'd better go home, dear," she said at length. "A man like that is liable to be no good-no good in the world.'

"He's not here now, mother," said the Turner girl. "He gave me his card. He seemed as if he had lots of influence.'

"You'd better go home, dear," said Mrs. Turner.

"I will, but first I'm going to catch a show," Mrs. Turner's daughter said. "By, dear." She blew some kisses into the phone.

"Goodby," said Mrs. Turner slowly. She hung up and turned to the customer under the drier.

"That girl of mine," she said. "Always thinking about motion pic-

"She's awful pretty, Milly," said the customer. "Whenever she comes in here I think, my, but what a pretty girl she is. She might make it." "I don't know," Mrs. Turner said. "Sometimes I don't know at all."

She began to take the curlers out of the lady's hair.

Hollywood traditions alter fast. In the once-gaudy oligarchy of female stars, young women of serious dramatic training, like Bette Davis and Luise Rainer, and of polite social background like Rosalind Russell and Katharine Hepburn, had made names for themselves. A well-placed hotfoot was becoming less and less approved as a Hollywood form of drawingroom wit and even male stars had been completely weaned from dope and almost so from liquor. Looming on the horizon was an epoch in which modesty would be so much the hallmark of class that the Great Faces would be seen only in station wagons, bound to or from the walnut ranches, peach orchards and stud farms where their private lives are hidden away.

Rarely indeed does an exception interrupt the trend. Rarely does somebody without a day's experience in a group theater, a finishing school, or a committee for the relief of foreign refugees knock over an important place in a business providing weekly entertainment for 55,000,000 people and attracting an annual gross of one billion dollars. Yet such a person Julia Jean Mildred Frances Turner has turned out to be. Since the afternoon of



Lana Turner at 8 was this chubby, carrot-headed figure trudging up a steep hill in San Francisco, where her impoverished widowed mother worked in the Ritz beauty parlor. Ten years later Lana, who had wanted to be a nun, and then fashion designer, became a movie starlet.



Sharp-eyed William Wilkerson, publisher of a motion-picture trade journal, spotted Lana four years ago as she imbibed a soda in Hollywood malt shop.



Producer Mervyn LeRoy, who promoted Ginger Rogers, Loretta Young, gave Lana first part in They Won't Forget.

IN DRAWING ROOM OF HER HOLLYWOOD HOME, LANA SERVES TEA TO BETTY ASHER



## He says Plenty . . . in prose that sings . . . in drawings thrifty of line. What Don Herold says about good food and good wine rates high, too, among his friends in the Society of Amateur Chefs... where he "toasts" and "roasts" with . . . TAYLOR CAPTURED FLAVOR In wines the name Taylor stands for "good taste." Taylor achieves wine perfection by choosing "pedigreed" grapes . ... and "capturing" the glorious full flavor of these choice grapes by Taylor's famous Cellar Treatment, Your guests will enjoy Taylor Wines—there's such a noticeable difference! Ask for Taylor's when you dine out ... or at package stores for home use. From a renowned Dry Wine District. Clear, with delicate taste, Taylor's Sauternes... Dry or Haut (slightly sweeter) ... are ideal companions for fine food. ling and dancing — Taylor's New York State Champagne adds verve to any occasion. For gaiety and good cheer —establish the mood with Taylor's Champagne . . . a Toast to Joyous Holidays. TAYLOR'S

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#### HOW TO POSE LANA



The early publicity pictures of Miss Turner successfully emphasized her title of Sweater Girl, which she won in her first picture, They

Won't Forget. In her most memorable scene, she won fans by the simple device of walking down a street in a tight-fitting sweater.

#### LANA TURNER (continued)

the strawberry soda, she has failed to distinguish herself in any solidly constructive fashion; yet the U.S. public will soon see her in the best role of the biggest picture to be released by the industry's biggest company within the next few months—the part of Sheila Regan in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's Ziegfeld Girl. Although her favorite color is red, her temperament unstable, and her education limited to three months of second-year high, she is now making \$1,250 a week as stipulated in the second-year clause of a seven-year contract which in five more years will be paying her \$4,500 every seven days. She is regarded by her employers as the most important of their youngsters and described by Lillian Burns, the company's dramatic coach, as "the most brilliant girl I've ever taught."

#### Lana becomes the Sweater Girl

Not brilliance but a quality less commonplace is Lana Turner's main stock-in-trade. She had made only a few pictures when it became evident to specialists in such matters that she represented Something. She was the Sweater Girl. She was Young America's idea of what a motion-picture starlet ought to be. Maybe she didn't look like the average high-school girl, but she looked like what the average high-school boy wished the average high-school girl looked like. She was the girl with whom the enlisted men of any U. S. battleship would like best to be cast up on a desert island. The proprietor of Beverly Hills's famed Tropics Resa taurant concocted a rum drink for her, christening it "Untamed." The Royal Hawaiian Hotel of Honolulu created "Baked Potato a la Lana." Lana has achieved still other, more formal honors: She is the sweetheart of Phi Delta Theta, Beta Theta Pi, Sigma Pi, Alpha Tau Omega and 36 other fraternities; 2,500 students of Los Angeles City College voted her "The Girl They Would Like Best To Marry;" she was offered half of Pitcairn Island by Judd Boulon, its resident, if she would come there; she has been asked to accept such positions as Queen of the Dartmouth College winter carnival, Honor Guest at the Princeton house parties. Spying a bandwagon, Walter Winchell named her America's Sweater Sweetheart.'

For such a national reception Lana Turner's actual screen record is surprisingly slim. She has appeared in minor roles in two big pictures (the girl who was murdered in They Won't Forget and a Germanic dancer in Marco Polo), and leads or second leads in several good but minor productions including Dancing Co-ed, Two Girls on Broadway and a couple of items in the Dr. Kildare and Andy Hardy series. None of her performances made her a candidate for the Academy Award; their importance lay in the reactions conveyed by fan-mail letters and the cards on which, at pre-

views, studios invite audiences to express their opinions. "Okay, Lana Turner! Give us more," the cards said. "Zowie! . . . Send more Turner! . . . Put a sweater "Okay, Lana Turner! Give us more," the cards on her! . . . Boy, oh, boy. . . . . " Wrote a group of fans: "Miss Turner, we are students of Alhambra High. We have a sort of club. We want a picture of you in a glamorous pose. You know what we mean...

On Lana the tag Sweater Girl had been hung without professional guidance, a natural derivative of the costume worn by her in her second scene in her first picture, Mervyn LeRoy's They Won't Forget. That scene consisted mostly of a 75-ft. dolly shot of her as she hurried along a crowded street in a small Southern town. Lana didn't have to act; she just walked along wearing a tight-fitting sweater. There was nothing prurient about the shot but the male U. S. found it more stimulating than a year's quota of chorus girls dancing in wampum loin cloths. As far as is known, it profoundly shocked only one person—Lana Turner. She was 16. She knew she had a good-looking body but she hadn't thought much about it. The subdued but delighted sounds that emanated from the preview audience made her feel shy. After the show she went home quickly without talking to anybody. Since then she has bitterly opposed not only her tag but also the cause of it. She refuses to wear a sweater in front of a camera, even for advertising stills, and usually objects to garments which reveal or emphasize her pectoral development. When required to wear a decolleté evening gown in Ziegfeld Girl, she had her wardrobe girl fuss round with pins to make it higher.

#### The U.S. says hello to Lana

The reception accorded LeRoy's famed dolly shot was a kind that few actresses achieve. The U.S. was saying hello, welcoming in its large and uncouth but natural way a quality it wanted-offering an honor, not an insult. The boys in the Coast Guard stations and the Express Mail cars hitched to the night fliers were not insulting Clara Bow and Jean Harlow when they pasted their pictures on the wall. Even if Lana Turner achieves all the dramatic prowess which the studio anticipates, it must always be remembered that she came in right, on the ground floor.

At the time she made the dolly shot Lana was under contract to Director LeRoy. Astute, small and plump, LeRoy has a name for being smart with new talent. He it was who promoted Loretta Young, Ginger Rogers and tried fruitlessly to sell an unknown young man named Clark Gable to J. L. Warner, who objected to the size of Gable's ears.

Julia Jean Mildred Frances Turner was taken to LeRoy by the Zeppo Marx Agency—a contact made for her by Editor Wilkerson. When she walked into his office, Director LeRoy, pulling the contracts out of his desk, asked only one question: "What's your name?"

#### HOW NOT TO POSE LANA





Completely off the track, later publicity pictures like these attempted vainly to call attention to such unsalient features of Miss

Turner as her back, her head, and so forth. She is now extremely sensitive about her title Sweater Girl and avoids those garments.

When he heard it he said: "Not so good." For half an hour he and Julia Jean Mildred Frances and a gentleman from the agency sat around thinking up a new name. At the end of this period she named herself Lana (pronounced Lah-nah). She didn't know why. It just came to her.

#### Virgil Turner gets in a crap game

The contract started her at \$200 a week-good money for a Hollywood beginner. It came in handy for the Turners. Things had been all right when Lana's father was alive and working in the mines in Wallace, Idaho, or later, on the docks of the Pacific Steamship Company in San Francisco. Things had been swell but one night, along toward Christmas when a man naturally wanted some extra money, Virgil Turner got hot in a crap game in the basement of the Chronicle Building and the gambler's muscleman blackjacked him as he stepped into the alley. As he died slowly of a cerebral hemorrhage, Virgil Turner's playmate drove him to a lonely street in the district known as Butchertown and propped him up against a wall and put his coat over his face. When the police found him the next morning his corpse was bent back at an awkward angle. His left shoe was missing: that was where he always put his roll when he got hot shooting craps.

Mrs. Turner got a job in a beauty parlor. She had studied beauty operating back in Wallace, wanting to keep busy even though her husband didn't see the sense of it. It was lucky now that she had a way to make a living. The store where she worked was a small one, in the Richmond district. It was owned by a woman named Meadows who had a daughter, Hazel, three years older than Lana. The Turners lived with the Meadows family. Lana and Hazel became close friends. They lived there while Lana was going to the Convent of the Immaculate Conception and, later, to San Francisco Junior High. In the convent Lana felt sure she would become a nun. When she found nuns had to cut their hair off she decided to be a fashion designer. In junior high, the thwarted nun was girls' yell leader, re-elected twice. She still corresponded with Hazel after moving with her mother to Los Angeles where it was thought the climate would benefit Mrs. Turner's weak chest. They had only been living south a few months when Lana wrote to Hazel about the sharp-faced man with the small mustache who had spoken to her in the malt shop.

Soon the Turner career was rolling at a pleasant clip. The \$200 a week from LeRoy made a big difference. Lana and her mother moved into a better apartment and Lana bought a little roadster, fire-engine red. She met Gregson Bautzer, a young Hollywood attorney. They made a good-looking couple and were often photographed at parties and night clubs. M-G-M,

where LeRoy had now moved, taking Lana with him, liked this romance. It was just right. They liked it much less when, in February 1940, she eloped with Band Leader Artie Shaw, sometimes jokingly called the King of Swing.

This marriage was the No. 1 Cinema Elopement of the year. It had all the necessary front-page elements—the deserted Bautzer who was called on for a gentlemanly statement of renunciation; Shaw's girl friend, Betty Grable (a predecessor of Lana's at Hollywood High, who was presumably grieving furiously in New York); the shocked studio officials and the girlish bride hiding coyly from interviewers in the "tasting room" of Bellows & Company, wine merchants, a sanctuary offered the couple by a friend of the groom.

#### The "I'm-sick-of-it-all" routine

The truth was that, at the time of their marriage, Shaw and his wife were barely acquainted. They had worked together in *Dancing Co-ed*, sitting most of the time at opposite sides of the set while up above the lighting crews, who dislike temperament, were planning how to drop a sun arc on Shaw's head. On the night of their elopement the future Mr. and Mrs. Shaw had driven to the beach. It was their first date. Describing what happened, Herbert Radden, an informed commentator, reported: "Artie was in rare form. He gave forth first with the 'I'm-sick-of-it-all' routine, followed by the 'futility-of-it-all' barrage, then the 'chaos-of-the-world, desire-for-the-tranquility-of-a-home-and-family. . . .'"

At the end of this campaign Miss Turner, who was still skeptical about her film career and pushed around by the conflicting impulses, hopes and fears which beset people of 19, gave her consent with a brevity almost Lincolnian.

"Let's go," she said.

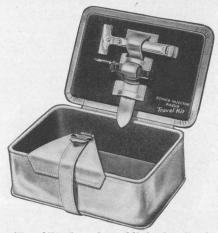
Lana refers to her short marital interlude as "my college education." From the evidence of intimates, the Shaw diploma was not easily won. The King of Swing, a widely read youth, told her she was ignorant, which she admitted. Then he gave her big, thick books to read. He wouldn't take her dancing or let her wear red, or dip potato pancakes in the applesauce. He called her "Turner" and "Carrots" and kept her up late mixing drinks and making sandwiches for his musician friends. Said Critic Radden: "To Shaw and his friends, four bars of Bobby Hackett meant more than the Fall of Paris. . . . There's no telling what eight bars meant. . . ."

Although she could not cook or sew and has always balked at washing dishes, Lana did her best to be a good wife. She made a desperate effort to conceal a secret passion for the music of Clyde McCoy and gave up going to Guy Lombardo's opening at the Grove. (There was quite an argument over that.) She washed

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#### LANA TURNER (continued)

Artie's shirts in the bathroom sink. Since she was earning close to \$1,000 a week at the time and the King of Swing had earned an estimated \$150,000 in the previous twelve months, this chore was not financially obligatory.

The Shaws' parting was made public in a peculiar manner: it took place without fanfare but next day Artie called Lana up and asked her if she'd come to the radio station where he was working on a sponsored program and pose with him for newspaper stills. He'd promised the stills, he said. Lana agreed to pose and the divided couple spent the morning in affectionate attitudes while cameras clicked. At the conclusion of the séance a newspaperman who had picked up the story of the separation asked Lana about it. "That is correct," she said, disengaging her husband's arms. "We're through for keeps."

Mrs. Shaw sued for a divorce four months and 17 days after their elopement. In a studio car on her way to a boat bound for Honolulu, she kept remembering things she had to do—those shoes of Artie's at the shoemaker's; the suits she'd sent to a cleaner he didn't know about. She'd have to stop and telephone. . . And the bathroom door! She'd promised him she'd have it fixed, the lousy door that was always sticking. They'd had one of their worst fights about that door, Artie inside trying to get out, insisting she'd locked him in, she outside telling him to pull harder and he refusing, making threats, finally . . . well, it didn't matter now. . . . It is a matter of record that before Lana took the boat she'd fixed it up about the shoes and the suits—and called a man about the bathroom door.

#### "Before Honolulu" and "after Honolulu"

The trip to Honolulu was almost as much of a milestone as her marriage. Instead of saying, "Before I was married," she says, "Before Honolulu... after Honolulu." The studio sent along Betty Asher, a Turner friend and M-G-M employe, to keep Lana cheered up and to make sure she danced with the right people. Outside of a trip back to Webb City, Mo. to visit her father's relatives, Lana had never been anywhere and it was a thrill to get on the boat and look down at everyone waving while the whistle blew harsh, homesick-sounding blasts and the brown strip of water widened.

When she examined her accommodations, however, she was disappointed. The boat wasn't a bit like the set in 'Til We Meet Again, more like a ferryboat, only one swimming pool, and people seemed scared because she was a motion-picture star and didn't talk to her. Lana cried every night for two nights before she realized what the trouble was. She'd let a gypsy on the Venice pier kid her into wrapping up some pennies in a handkerchief and sleeping on them to make sure she'd have fun on the trip. She stopped crying and pegged the pennies and the handkerchief out through the porthole, and next day, sure enough, she met a boy from Princeton and he introduced six other Princeton boys. Lana and Betty went dancing and after that the trip was swell except that it was a nuisance having 21 pieces of luggage instead of a couple of trunks. Next trip Lana made up her mind she would take trunks.

Lana did all the usual things in Honolulu. She and Betty got off the boat up to the nose in leis and were down at the landing a few days later, complete islanders by this time, to look disgustedly at the people who were disembarking in a similar condition. "Get a load of those chumps," Lana said. She'd read a book of Hawaiian love lyrics on the boat. She had a hard time reconciling the poet's description of Waikiki Beach with the hot-dog concessions and the radios blaring Beat Me Daddy, Eight to the Bar. Still, they had a fine suite with a lanai (the Waikiki word for balcony), and Diamond Head looked somber and beautiful standing out across the water.

**Gregson Bautzer**, Hollywood attorney, was Lana's first-publicized beau, to whom during 1939 pleased press agents reported she had "narrowed her affections." They were often photographed together although Lana said, "We won't be married for a while."









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Mary Livingstone was there with another girl in another lanai suite so that made things very friendly and one night when there was a big party at the hotel they didn't even go down but had dinner brought up to the suite and after dinner, Betty cut Lana's hair with a pair of manicure scissors. But it looked all right. It really did.

"After Honolulu" a new life began. With her mother, Lana moved into a pleasant, Mediterranean-style house off Benedict Canyon in Beverly Hills. She fixed up a little suite for herself consisting of a bedroom, dressing room and bath and a small sitting room. In the bedroom is a kind of shrine, large made-to-order showcase containing 36 different kinds of perfume. For personal use she prefers cologne to the expensive contents of the showcase but enjoys looking at the odd-shaped bottles with their provocative names: Sous le Vent, Safari, Coquette, Shocking. Collectors of items on the personal habits of cinema stars will enjoy knowing that her hip and bust measurements are 34½ in., her waist 23½ in., that she sleeps in satin nightgowns and has one scar-the result of an emergency appendectomy performed two years ago. Her fondness for malts of all flavors and chocolate cake causes her to put weight on with ease if she gets careless. Her principal item of jewelry is a \$2,500 star sapphire ring which she bought for herself. About her wardrobe there is little to be noted except that she has 50 tailored suits (her favorite form of garment), many pairs of slacks and shoes (she considers it bad luck to throw old shoes away). She has just a few sweaters, enjoys reading motion-picture magazines, and of all screen actresses admires Bette Davis most. When depressed she makes it a rule to go out and buy something, setting a high limit of \$75 on this form of consolation.

#### Romance assails Lana again

Early last fall Lana Turner went to San Francisco to be maid of honor at Hazel Meadows' wedding, and met Tony Martin, the radio crooner, who was up there for the ASCAP convention. Columnists now feature their romance as one of Hollywood's most torrid. In its general outlines it has an almost placid air. Lana is no longer Conga-crazy; she goes to Ciro's seldom, often to the Tropics where she drinks daiquiris in preference to the concoction called Untamed. She likes to go to Tony's broadcasts, drive to previews in his sleek, black Packard. A golf fiend, he has occasionally persuaded her to walk around the Hillcrest course with him. As an actress she still has no great confidence in herself and is moved almost to tears when someone whose opinion she respects tells her she is doing well.

For her role in Ziegfeld Girl, Lana Turner tried to make a test, failed miserably till she had spent two weeks looking at photographs of Ziegfeld girls, reading old programs and listening to Ziegfeld songs. Her part is that of a show girl who goes to pieces due to drink and deserts her boy friend, Jimmy Stewart. In her last sequence, ill, she attends a performance of the Follies and, dreaming of herself a success once more, collapses as she walks down a flight of stairs in the theater lobby. Twenty-six takes and rehearsals of that fall were required before Director Robert Z. Leonard was satisfied. Chary with praise for fear of making her swell-headed, Leonard was impressed. Not, he insisted to friends, that the knocks Lana sustained on head and back each time she took her fall were anything. She had, he said, the Ziegfeld look.

When lectured by studio executives on the great future before her, she is cautious. "I like it the way it is," she insists privately. "If you get too wound up you—I don't know—you lose too much. I want to have a lot of time for things."

"Some day. . . " says Lana Turner, 19, ". . . some day I want to go much deeper into the human mind."

Lana married Artie Shaw, a band leader, in February 1940, eloping after their first date to Las Vegas, Nev. After a married life of four months and 17 days, most of it one long jam session, Lana got her divorce. Her new beau is Tony Martin, a crooner.



## "How I won my stepchild's confidence"



1. I'm John's second wife. And when I married him, I married his little girl, too. It's worked out beautifully, except ...well ...you know how it is in a small

town. If Nancy should happen to be crying when some busybody passes by, the whole town hears about how I "mistreat that poor motherless child."



2. Well, I love Nancy so dearly that I refuse to spoil her... gossip or no gossip. And this morning, when she refused to take her laxative again, I forced her to. She flew into a tantrum and cried, "My real mommy never made me take that nasty-tasting stuff—you don't love me!"



3. That hurt so much I burst into tears. When my sister, Laura, dropped in a few minutes later, I told her all about it—how Nancy kicked up a fuss every time she had to take a laxative. And right then and there, Sis explained how her doctor had solved the same problem for her.



**4.** "I used to force my children to take a badtasting laxative," Laura said. "But, according to the doctor, that may shock a child's delicate nervous system. He said children should never get an adult's laxative. They should get a nicetasting, gentle one—one made especially for children. He recommended Fletcher's Castoria."



5. "And believe me, it's wonderful!" Laura went on. "Fletcher's Castoria is thorough...yet it's always mild and safe. There isn't a single harsh drug in it. It works mostly in the lower bowel so it isn't likely to upset a child's digestion. I wouldn't dream of giving the children anything but Fletcher's Castoria."



**6.** The minute Laura left, I went right out and bought a bottle of Fletcher's Castoria. It's everything she said it was, PLUS a peacemaker. Nancy loves the taste of it... and our laxative tussles are ended. Now we're friends all the time.

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