

# SECRET FAMILIES

Players Are Warned That Home And Marriage Take Away That Romantic Appeal—But It Isn't True.

By  
Maude Cheatham



Basil Rathbone

SECRETS are always intriguing. And, if coupled with romance, they become doubly intriguing. That's the reason why, whenever a screen favorite reveals a "secret family," the imagination is stirred and an additional glamour hovers over everybody concerned.

Once the stage encouraged its actors to keep their domestic affairs from view, but the screen has never created such a ban, though in the early days of motion pictures several players thought it wise to hide their families in order to enhance the mystery the film emphasized. Remember how the first screen Adonis, Francis X. Bushman, kept his many children a secret? And the late Belle Bennett passed off her son as a younger brother?

Modern Today, however, doesn't bother much with secrets. That is, as a rule. So the surprise is even greater, now-a-days, when a popular player suddenly divulges hidden chapters in his—or her—personal romances, and trots out a hitherto unknown husband, wife or child.

The most sensational "secret family" disclosure was that the handsome Phil Regan was not a romantic bachelor but had been married for thirteen years. Furthermore, that four husky children called the singing Romeo daddy!

The film world buzzed with the news but Phil's fans were so delighted that during the following week he received more than eight hundred congratulatory letters and wires from all over the world.

Phil was happy to have the truth come out. Unlike most stories of this kind, it never had been his idea to throw a veil of secrecy over his family, instead, it was the gallant Mrs. Regan. She argued that a wife and children would interfere with her husband's budding screen career and insisted that he should appear as a fancy-free bachelor. Few wives would have had this courage, but she knew her man; she had

no fear of his going Hollywood. So, arriving in California three years ago, the Regans leased a quiet home in Pasadena, where the children entered school and Phil commuted to the studios, some fifteen miles distant.

Oh yes, they both admit, there were times when the "secret" complicated their lives but they managed the situation with amazing skill. Ever gay and debonair at the studio, Phil faded from sight when the day's work was over and if something came up calling for him to make an appearance, he was always accompanied by his pretty girl friend, Josephine Dwyer, of Pasadena, whom everyone admired. As for the children, Joseph, aged twelve, Phil, who is ten, Jo Ann and Marilyn, seven and six, they

thought it a great joke and never so much as peeped to their school friends as to who their beloved daddy really was. I'll say, that's a fine family loyalty!

It was fourteen years ago, in Brooklyn, that Phil first met his Josephine, when she accompanied some friends to the hospital where he was ill.

"It was love at first sight," Regan gaily explained. "I sensed Cupid's swift steps down the hospital corridor even before the door opened and I caught a glimpse of Josephine." Then he added, "Here's a record of fidelity that few couples can top: we've never been separated a single day since our marriage thirteen years ago!"

An exciting surprise was to discover that George Raft has a son—a son who looks much like his father. The lad has lived with George's idolized mother in New York City ever since the breakup of his early marriage, and it wasn't that he deliberately disclaimed the boy to the screen world, it was just one of those peculiar Hollywood edicts that overtakes some players.

Following the sensational success of his second film, "Scarface," the studio decided to feature Raft as a menace, but a romantic menace, mind you, with a warm, warm heart. He was instructed not to mention that he was a father, it being explained that children were not counted an asset to romantic appeal. Innately sincere and honest, this didn't please George at all, yet, he figured, if he could make big money and give his son all the advantages that he, himself, had missed, it would be worth it. So, the sleek-haired hero kept mum about his early romance and no one guessed his secret. Even that famous newshound, Walter Winchell, who knew all about it, didn't tell.

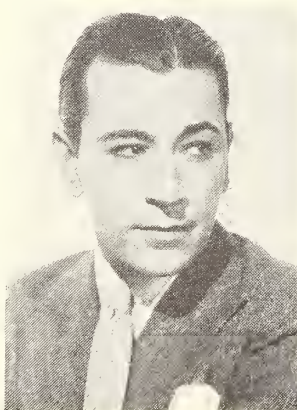
A couple of years ago, George sent for his mother and the boy to come to Hollywood for the summer and he introduced the youngster as his nephew. Perhaps it was his devotion to the handsome twelve-year older, perhaps it was the striking resemblance between them that aroused the suspicions of the columnists. Anyway, when asked the direct question, George refused to lie and proudly admitted this was his son.

"He's studying to be an aviator," George told me with happy enthusiasm. "All his life he has been fascinated with airplanes; why, he even keeps a scrapbook of the new inventions and of the record flights. Once, he won a miniature machine in a contest. I'm glad he chose aviation and I'm going to see that he has every chance. Proud of him? You bet I am, he's all that a father could wish for in a son. Want to know something? Just thinking about him makes me feel rich, very, very rich!"

Hollywood took another  
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Carol  
Hughes



George Raft



Phil Regan

# Secret Families

[Continued from page 28]

**"Always worth stopping for"**

surprise jolt when it learned that the very fine English actor, Basil Rathbone, had a "secret son."

At nineteen, Basil was swept into an impetuous World-War marriage, and later, a son was born in London, whom he named Rodion. After his romance crashed, he set forth to win fame as an actor, while the boy remained in London with his mother. Coming to America, Basil remarried, and few knew of this early chapter in his life.

There have been a few brief meetings between father and son and last summer it was planned that Rodion should journey to Hollywood for a real visit. Then occurred one of those ironical incidents that frequently punctuate the life of the screen player; before his son arrived, Basil was called to London for an important film engagement and the two passed each other *en route*, without even a chance of a "Hello!"

The tall, distinguished Rodion arrived and immediately conquered Hollywood, all on his own. The high point of his visit being that he developed a terrific crush on pretty Olivia de Havilland, calling her the *Ideal Girl of the World*, and having no eyes for other screen charmers. Now, having been graduated from Cambridge this spring, Rodion is coming to Hollywood for a lengthy stay and his father is exuberantly excited about it.

Said Rathbone, "The boy followed my father's footsteps rather than mine in his education, by becoming an electrical engineer, but the acting profession intrigues him tremendously and he may try his luck on the screen. I would be very proud were he to become an actor and shall encourage him, but the final decision will be his. One must choose his own career if he is to be happy in it. Whatever comes from this visit, I shall have the great joy of his companionship and, at last, my son will be a reality. This is something I've dreamed about for many years."

A recent Hollywood laugh came with the clever hoax put over by Carol Hughes, one of the most promising of the new starlets, who was at the Warner Brothers studio for almost a year before anyone knew she had a husband and a six-year old daughter. Her story is one of youth and optimism.

Carol and her handsome young husband, Frank Faylen, had been vaudeville headliners for several years when it occurred to them to try the movies. They determined to win or lose on their own, each to start out independently, and the way to do this was not to mention their marriage. After several good rôles in Warner Brothers' pictures, topping off with her priceless weeping wife in "Three Men On a Horse," the studio hastened to put Carol under contract. In the meantime, Frank's excellent work in various films at the same studio interested the executives and he was given a contract. All this, and still absolutely no one guessed that these two promising new players even knew each other.

"It wasn't difficult to keep our secret," confided Carol. "Everyone seemed to think I was too young to have a family and, of course, I never mentioned it. If anybody asked for a date I explained, very sweetly, that I had a steady boy friend, and that always ended that. We each had our separate telephone number and soon learned that my calls for dates came around seventy-three in the evening and Frank would answer them, pretending he was the Japanese houseboy—you should hear his accent, it is perfect. We're very pally, Frank, our daughter Catherine and I, and spend all our play hours together, either swimming,



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skating, playing tennis or riding, which lessened the risk. Then, after almost a year, when we both had won our contracts, the story leaked out, which was just as well. But it was fun while it lasted."

Ann Sheridan, another Warner Brothers' beauty, tried the secrecy route when she eloped to Mexico last August and married Edward Norris, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer contract player. No sooner was the wedding over than they began worrying as to what their studios would say, each fearing for the other's career, and the only way out seemed to be to keep it a secret. It worked beautifully for several months, then some inquisitive snooper discovered the records at Ensenada and the newspapers flashed the story. Much to Ann's and Edward's surprise, neither studio minded in the least.

Then, there's the case of Constance Bennett. When she returned to Hollywood several years ago to resume her film career, following a marriage and divorce from Philip Plant, she was accompanied by a baby who was surrounded by the greatest mystery. Rumors flew wildly in every direction; he was the child of a relative, of an old family friend, and it was even whispered that he was Connie's. For a long time the baby was taboo with writers when discussing the eldest Bennett, but her great devotion for the handsome, brilliant boy finally gave the news away that he was her very own son, Peter Plant.

It is always amazing to me, in this gold-fish bowl of Hollywood, where the relentless spotlight is ever penetrating the private lives of screen players, that any pages of "secret happiness" could remain hidden and each disclosure is new evidence that actors are, indeed, masters of their art.

## Pictures on the Fire

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goes to the Firefly Night Club with Grady Sutton (Charlie's nephew) and Johnny goes with another girl. Charlie is furious that his plans are being tampered with so he calls Grady to his table, leaving Eleanore alone. Then he orders the girl with Johnny to go to the store for something, leaving Johnny alone. So Eleanore and Johnny get together. Eleanore, knowing Grady has plenty of money, has ordered more enthusiastically than wisely. When she's left with Johnny they're in a pickle because he hasn't much money with him. They're stalling in the night club, trying to figure some way out and the waiter is becoming suspicious. He keeps eyeing them until at last Johnny calls him over.

The waiter comes eagerly. "Check, sir?" he asks.

"No," John replies promptly. "Another glass of water.

The waiter scowls but pours the water and as he does so Johnny rubbers at the check he has in his hand. He almost faints when he sees the total. The waiter catches him peeping at it and scowls at him. Johnny smiles weakly.

"Some water for you, too, miss," the waiter queries.

"Yes, please," Eleanore smiles.

The waiter stands there while they drink their water and then fills the glasses up again. He finally leaves but a little later Johnny calls him back for more water.

Of course, it's a gag but the director keeps taking the scene over and over until those kids must have drunk a gallon of water apiece before he finally calls "Print it."

They stagger over to the bench where



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