



PERSONAL INVITATION . . . Barbara Blackford "Miss S. S. Catalina" provides personal testimony that in all the world, there is no trip like this. She, of course, means a trip to Catalina Island aboard the "Big White Steamer," which sails daily for the Magic Island from her new Catalina Terminal in San Pedro.

Assignment TV

By **TERRENCE O'FLAHERTY**

HOLLYWOOD — Any actor who has had the nerve to call Louis B. Mayer "a venomous little junk peddler" cannot possibly be all bad, and I proceeded to my interview with Charles Bickford in high spirits.

Nearly everyone at M-G-M called Mayer that—and worse—but never to his face. At that time Bickford was the hottest new leading man in town. He had just finished his first two films—"Dynamite" and "Anna Christie"—and when Mayer copped out on the promise for future roles equal to his talents, he asked for release from his contract and told him off.

"It finished me in Hollywood for years," said Bickford here this week. "At that time Hollywood was run by the Producers Association and Mayer—that posturing little ignoramus—was at its head. I was dead."

That was many years ago when Bickford was a young, brawling, Jack London kind of leading man who had enough faith in his own talents to tell off anyone who crossed him—including William Randolph Hearst. Today he is in his seventies and it is time to say that he is "mellowed." But that is far from the truth.

HE HAS JUST begun a leading role in NBC's "The Virginian" and he's as outspoken as ever. I hasten to report. Some of the things he said made an NBC press agent's face turn the color of his network's peacock's tail.

"Honestly I feel I'm no longer in show business," said Bickford who has filmed only a few of the episodes for the fall. "I'm in the advertising business. I'm selling everything from soap to God-knows what."

The veteran is replacing another no-nonsense actor, Lee J. Cobb, who became dissatisfied with the series. Bickford's role is new but I suggested that he, too, might get bored and critical.

"They're paying me too much money to get bored! Anyway, if I didn't like it, I wouldn't pan it. I'd get the hell out of it. . . I go back as far as the original Virginian and I've played both the title role and also Trampas, the heavy, in stock companies all over the country."

lar kiddie show and it seems to worry the network executives. "It seems to me to be a horrible commentary to say you're afraid of a lousy show like 'Batman,' doesn't it?" said Bickford.

Fortunately, throughout his career, Bickford has developed outside financial interests. "I used to throw all my money away at the race track but now I've decided to get it back. I have an outfit that imports hay and feed for race horses from Kentucky. I soon found out the whole business is crooked—including your own jockey. Now I go to the track not to bet but to encourage horses to eat more."

Bickford has just written a book which is now on the stands: "Bulls, Balls, Bicycles and Actors"—a title which should give the typesetters a field day. He now plans another book—this one about America—which he thinks is "Going to Hell in a Handbasket." And I don't for the life of me know why.

"I'M GOING to call it 'The Magnates.' I think we are rapidly changing places with Russia. They will become the great capitalist colossus of the future and we will soon be the new socialist republic. I'm no super-patriot but I am deeply concerned with what's happening in our country."

"I think Washington, D.C., has always been corrupt; but now it's more corrupt than ever. I think it's the most corrupt capital on earth . . . actors in politics? It's not for me but I think anyone is more qualified to govern California than Brown—including Reagan and Yorty who is an excellent mayor of this town. Of course the magazines and newspapers seem to give a different story. They seem to be biased."

It appears that "The Virginian" is going to have a new actor who has the roughness of the frontier and some of the bracing air of independence that is rare in his profession these days.

PARKS MEETING
Members of the Torrance Park and Recreation Commission will meet at 8 p.m. tonight at the city hall, 3031 Torrance Blvd. The Commission will hear a report on efforts to acquire a softball field in the Pueblo section.

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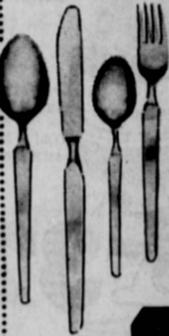
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8

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