

portant in my unhappy ones. The part of me that wasn't running around and building models all the time was very aware that my mother was really pretty unhappy!

And this was the other side of my life. There was a lot of unhappiness in our house at that time, and both my mother and I had to learn to live with it and then conquer it. I think it made her stronger, and I know that it definitely changed my life!

For one thing, this was the time that I first really got into music! There had always been music in our house—after all, both my parents were professional singers! But that music was always just “around” and it wasn't really for listening to. It meant practice sessions and singing scales, and it also meant that I couldn't fill the house with my usual deafening racket! But now that my father was gone, music began to take on a new meaning for me—it became my most secret friend.

BEGAN TO LOVE MUSIC

There were times when I just wanted to be alone in my room, not to see anybody or talk to anybody, and at those times music was my closest companion. My mother says that she can remember me always sitting in my room with the record player blaring away, not really looking at anything or doing much of anything either. Well, I went in to think things over and be alone, but I came out having discovered music. And that's probably the most important single discovery in my life!

I think basically that music is the best thing in the world. It is the purest kind of joy and beauty there is, and the way I see the world it is always filled with music, even if you can't hear it all the time! I don't just mean that there is always music playing somewhere (although, of course, that's true, every second of every day) but I also believe that everything has music in it somehow. There's the quiet music of the sea and the high, high melodies of the clouds as they change shape across the sky. And I often think of people as kinds of music—a fat man is a tuba solo, and a pretty girl might be the sound of wind chimes! Somebody who thinks he's really important is just the same loud note, over and over, and a girl with soft eyes and a kind voice might be the secret sound of tiny finger-cymbals and ankle bells in some far Eastern temple!

INTEREST IN SHOW BUSINESS

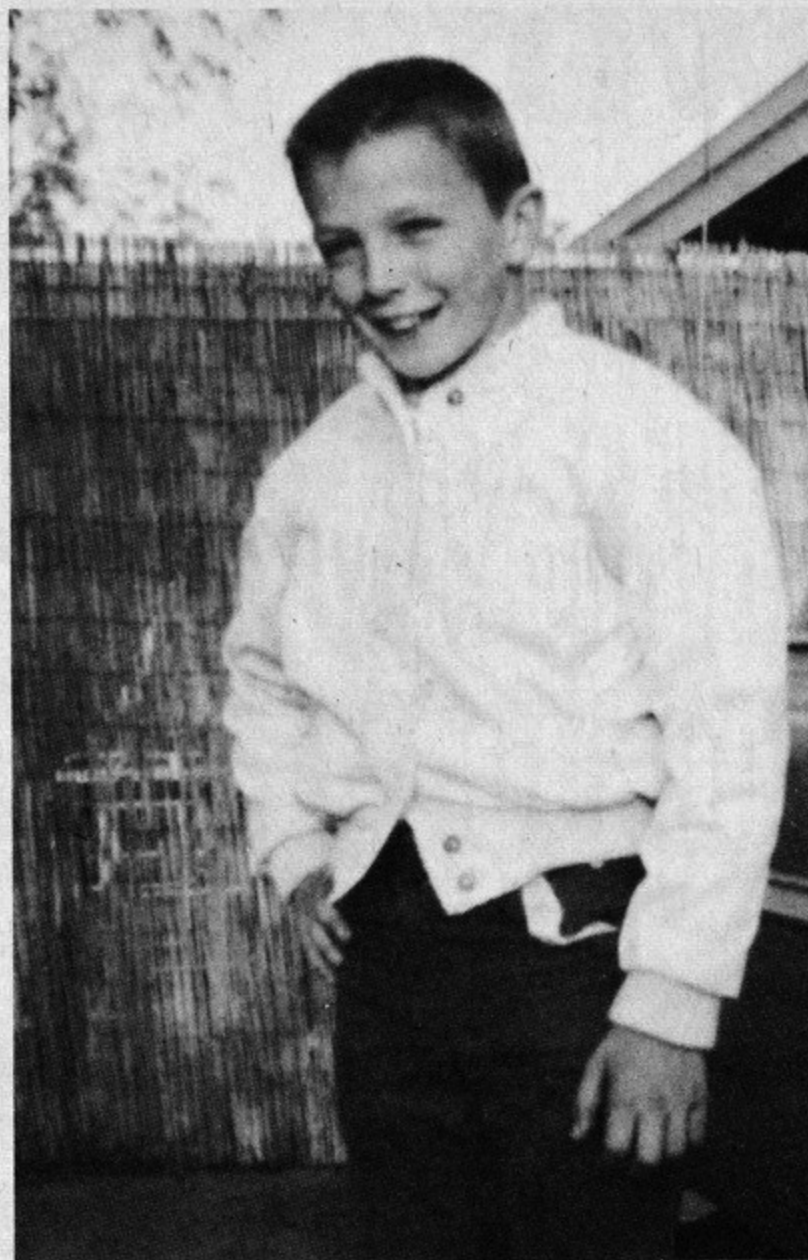
So I spent a lot of time listening to my favorite things, and I also began to read—which is something I've never done as much as I should! All these things came out of my “alone-time.”

But there was one other thing I found out in that time, and that was the surprising fact that I wanted to be in show business! It was another thing, like music, which had just sort of been lying around the house for so long that I'd never given it a thought! I have this very vague memory of having seen my father in a play once when I was really little (about three) and I kind of knew that I wanted to do that someday, but it took until I was seven or eight for me to realize that that was really my life-work!

The first thing that I remember happening was one day when my mother came home from job-hunting and told me that she had gotten a part in a commercial for aspirin. There was a little boy about my age in it, she said, and all of a sudden I found that I was furious! I wanted to know why she hadn't made them use me, and I couldn't understand at all when she tried to explain that she couldn't! All I knew was that I wanted to act in that commercial more than anything in the world!

MOTHER WAS AGAINST IT

My mother was against my going into show business in any form, up to and including cleaning up after the



A LESS FORMAL SHOT at age 12, I loved wearing jeans even then. Photo was taken in Calif.

animals in the circus! She'd seen what a hard life it could be, how terrible it was to not know where you were working the next night or even what you were going to eat! She didn't want me to have any part of it.

But my mom is also a pretty fantastic lady, and she realized that she couldn't try to keep me from doing my thing, even if it did turn out to be show business. Once she understood that I really meant it (and that it wasn't a “phase”) she did what she could to help me.

In fact, her attempt to help gave me the greatest summer of my life—touring with a show in New England. Everybody was really nice to me and behaved as if I was working with them (which is the highest compliment you can get from theatre people) and they let me help out, moving sets, hammering nails (crooked) and sweeping up! They even let me go onstage with the chorus, and I will never, as long as I live, forget the first time I stepped on the stage and felt the heat and brightness of the lights, and realized that there were people waiting, out there in the dark. By the time the summer was over, I knew where I wanted to be!

Actually, I had found out two really important things about myself in the three or four years after my parents' divorce. I discovered that I loved music, and I learned that I wanted to act. Imagine how fantastically happy I would've been then if I had known that today I'd spend almost every day acting and singing—sometimes at the same time!

Next time around I'll tell you the tragic story of my best friend, and some of my first real experiences with girls! Take care and stay happy! See you here next month!