

made up—if Broadway was the place where all the theatre action happened, then Broadway was the place for me!

Sam Hyman and my mom took me to the airport. I was so excited about going that I'm afraid that I didn't notice that they both looked a little sad, but the instant the plane's wheels left the ground a wave of loneliness swept over me, and I pressed my face to the glass trying to catch one last glimpse of them waving goodbye. No luck, I turned back to the front of the plane, and at the same time the "no smoking" sign went off. Instantly the fat man sitting next to me lit a big, smelly cigar, and somehow that made it much worse. I was going to be among strangers!

ALONE AT FIRST

Well, of course, I was being a little dramatic, because I was going to be living with my father! That was a little strange at first, too, though, and it took us a few days to really get used to each other. Luckily I was busy, so we didn't have to sit around and have long conversations until we knew each other a little better! By the time I'd been there a week, we had really gotten to know one another!

New York was really far out! I had been there when I was a kid, but it was as though I were a complete stranger to the city! The first few days I was there I just walked the streets, pushing through the crowds (and finally learning to push back) and lifting my head from time to time to stare at that thin, thin ribbon of sky that hangs so far above the streets. The hubbub of voices, the shouts of taxi drivers and the blaring of horns, all these sounds and a million others blended into a symphony in my ears, filling me with the excitement and energy of New York City—the biggest city in the world!

MY FIRST JOB

I got a part-time job sorting mail for a textile company (not the most gripping work I've ever done) and I enrolled in a musical-comedy school. I realized that I had to train if I wanted to work with the real pros, and so I really put my mind and my will to it—memorizing scenes, learning to dance (something I wasn't really good at until I had worked at it for a long time) and just generally getting the feel of being in the theater. On lunch breaks from my job I'd sneak out of the building where I worked and walk along Broadway, looking at the fantastic theaters where the greatest stars of the stage appear every night. Sometimes I'd stand and stare at the marquee, and if I squinted my eyes just right I could—sort of—see my name on it!

After working and training for a few months, I got my first bunch of interviews for parts in shows that were just going into rehearsal. I was so nervous! The dark theater (usually really cold inside) and the few men huddled in the front seats, a script pushed into my hand—and there I was, shaky knees and all, in the middle of the stage!

GETTING DEPRESSED

Well, nothing came of the readings. I'd go home all worn out and sit in my room writing letters to Mom or to Sam, and after awhile I got to doubting whether I should really be in New York at all! Even my classes began to seem silly, and I started going on interviews just knowing I wasn't going to get the job!

And then it happened! I went to a reading for a show called "The Fig Leaves Are Falling," and when I was through reading and singing (it was a musical) they handed me a script with my name on it and said "Be at the rehearsal hall in one hour!" It seemed that everybody else had been cast for weeks, and they were already rehearsing. When I walked into the bright street, I was a Broadway actor! I remember leaping up in the air, clicking my heels, and yelling something insane as passers-by turned to stare at the crazy kid! I skipped all the way to the rehearsal hall.



I USED TO REALLY HATE having my picture taken, because it made me so nervous. Now, though I still don't like it, I know how to move for the camera and it's easier.

For months after that, all my days and nights—six or seven per week—went into that play. I grew to love the smell of empty theaters, the dark stages with their dim "rehearsal lights," the hustle and bustle of backstage work as the show was being put together. The play became my life, the most important thing in the world, as far as I was concerned. I'd rehearse all day, break for dinner, go back to the theater, rehearse till midnight, go home and study lines until I finally crashed to sleep! It was hard work, exhausting work, but I had a thought fixed firmly in my mind, the thing I had first thought when they handed me the script, and I saw my name written on it. **This is day one, I thought. This is where it begins.**

And it was almost where it ended, too! After months of rehearsal we took the show to Philadelphia for six weeks, preparing to bring it back for its big New York opening. The Philadelphia reception was less than thunderous, so a lot of re-writing was done, and everybody had to work doubly-hard to make sure that we were all doing the same play, because the lines changed so quickly from night to night. Finally it was time for the New York opening!

OPENING NIGHT!

I'll never forget that opening night as long as I live. I was in a nervous panic from the moment I woke up in the morning until I had my make-up off that night! The performance went well, better than it ever had; actors have a knack of turning nervousness into useful energy! But somehow, it wasn't there, as far as the audience was concerned. The curtain calls were loud and persistent, but we all knew that it wasn't really the reaction of an audience that had been **thrilled** the way they are at a hit.

Sure enough, the show had to close after four weeks. Those last few days, when we knew it was practically over, and the audience was only half-filled, were some of the most upsetting of my whole life. To have to go onstage and be bright and full of energy, when sometimes the cast practically outnumbered the audience—well, it took a lot out of me. When the show finally ended for the last time, and the curtain came down for good, I was crushed.

But a producer had seen me, and he thought I was right for a movie which was casting in Hollywood. He gave me a round-trip ticket, and a whole new phase of my life was about to begin!

NEXT TIME—David will tell you all about how that round-trip ticket turned into a one-way ticket to a new career—with the Partridge Family!