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CAROL BURNETT-ROCK HUDSON

(Continued from page 52)

It began innocently enough when Rock signed a \$1.6 million contract with Universal Studios for a new TV series this fall. Friends say that when Carol heard the good news, at first she couldn't have been happier. Carol is not the type to be jealous of another's good fortune. But then she found out that Rock's show, *McMillan And Wife*, in which he plays a San Francisco crime commissioner, with Susan St. James as his wife, is scheduled for Wednesday nights from 8:30 to 10:00 EST. Her own show, previously aired at 10:00 pm, is slated for a new time spot this fall—also on Wednesday nights, from 8:30 to 10:00, right opposite Rock!

Carol's ratings have ranged all the way from fifth to as low as thirty-fourth, depending on what plays opposite her. Usually she's in the top thirties, but she's had to fight to maintain high ratings. "We had a real battle against *Big Valley* our first season," Carol has said. And when asked about last season she coyly smiled, "It all depends on how good the NBC Movie is."

Now that she'll be opposite a star of Rock Hudson's caliber, even her loyal fans may not be able to rescue her from the valley of declining ratings. Carol's history of past successes are no secret. She's the only woman comic ever to maintain a long-running variety show since Dinah Shore. But she hasn't the charisma Rock has, and in 1972 she's old hat on television, whereas it will be Rock's first exposure, and many of his fans—and Carol's, too—will be anxious to see him play a rough and tough cop instead of a sweet and charming ladies' man.

Nothing nasty has been publicly said on either side yet, but no one involved is looking forward to the fireworks that might explode behind the sets. Those closest to Carol and Rock are optimistic. Most of them feel that no matter how stiff the competition gets—and they're all ready for the worst—Carol and Rock are primarily professionals. They were trained for a rough business world, and would

never allow the hazards of business to interfere with their friendship.

But other people, who term themselves the realists in this soon-to-be battle of the super-stars, think otherwise. "Listen, Carol's got a big heart," said a director who has worked with both she and Rock, "and though Rock isn't all that outgoing as Carol, he hasn't got a mean bone in his body either. But no one is immune to the insane pressures of this business. Their professional lives will be at stake this season, and don't think either of them can forget that. It's got to have an effect on their relationship."

Off the set it is very chummy to have dinner and laugh and joke with other actors. But every performer also needs the love and affection of his or her audience. And anyone who threatens to take this most prized of all possessions away from an actor is an enemy—no matter what the circumstances are.

Carol and Rock are both the sort of people who don't make a big fuss about their super-star status. But if they weren't interested in fame, in the applause, they would never have sweated and starved in the early days just to get ahead. No star gives up the limelight easily, particularly when it comes giftwrapped in million-dollar contracts.

Whatever happens, and it's possible that Carol and Rock will be able to come out both with excellent ratings and also maintain their up-till-now close friendship; one thing is certain. Their professional rivalry is bound to put an enormous strain on that friendship. Hopefully, Carol and Rock will prove strong enough and charitable enough to weather the storm of the ratings system.

And it's just possible that professionally the competition will spur each of them on to surpass their past performances. This fall Carol may be zanier and more heart-warming than ever, just to impress Rock's viewers; and Rock might turn on so much of that famous Hudson charm he'll even have Carol watching his show!

But right now only one thing is certain. Carol Burnett and Rock Hudson are the best of friends and out-and-out rivals. Only time (and the Nielsen ratings) will tell which tie is the stronger.

See Carol in CBS' *Carol Burnett Show*.
 See Rock in NBC's *McMillan And Wife*.

DAVID CASSIDY

(Continued from page 27)

I felt like doubling over, it took my breath away, and I didn't know if I was going to stand up or keel over.

"Shirley helped me, she went and got some water or something. I just sat there bent over until the pain went away. The pains were never very long, a few seconds, but they would come regularly sometimes."

As David said, being a young person you don't think too seriously about slight pains. In David's case, he thought it was

just something he ate.

"Until they came so often, and I knew I wasn't eating bad things all the time!"

The phone rang, interrupting our conversation, and David picked it up. Without hearing the other end of the conversation, one could tell it was a well wisher. "Thanks," David whispered into the phone. "They're taking me in tomorrow about noon, and it shouldn't take more than three hours."

David hung up, and resumed his explanation. Any minute now he expected Shirley and Jack (David's father) and his mother, Evelyn Ward Silverstein. They'd all just gone downstairs together for a sandwich. They had been by David's side ever since he entered the hospital early Monday morning, and were giving him moral support.