

struck terror in their hearts. An old wife's tale began "The hours past midnight are the worst for croup . . ." and for many, the hours were too long.

For Ryan, one close brush with death followed another it seemed, until each attack seemed to set off a chain-reaction of gripping fear, from the first terrifying breath. After a long-drawn-out search to find the cause of those attacks, the cause of his allergies, Ryan was given gamma globulin shots every three weeks, "and they seemed to help . . . The allergy thing is still a path of darkness, really, for the doctors . . . They're beginning now to open it up more and more," she says, but she feels it's an area where much more research is needed. "They haven't done enough on it yet."

Ryan's tests did reveal much information of help and something is being done to relieve much of the little boy's suffering. "He gets a shot every week—one each week, now—every Friday," she explained. "He's improved tremendously with the allergy shots. He can't really play like other children—sometimes I try to let him, and then he comes into the house wheez-

ing . . ." Shirley smiled wryly.

■ Little Ryan has a long way to go yet. But his courageous mother will be beside him every step of the way. Every Friday, Ryan marches into his doctor's office like a miniature soldier, without so much as a backward pleading glance.

"He's the most marvelous patient. I guess it's because he's been ill so much, you know. He goes right in and sticks his arm out," Shirley says proudly. "He takes the shot and never even blinks! He smiles, and comes right out. . ."

Ryan is only five years old, yet he has faced death at least six times in those five short years! He has lived close to tragedy. But his suffering has had positive benefits: he is a far more thoughtful and concerned little boy than most. He has a remarkably adult regard for others.

We were on the Partridge Family set when we talked with his mother. This lovely lady has had minor and major successes in nearly every facet of show business—from stage to screen to nightclub (with Ryan's daddy)—from musical comedy to drama (and an Oscar for ELMER

eye, you know. You can act, there's no question about that. But we need an actor with two eyes."

And Peter, who'd lost an eye when he was three and a malignant tumor threatened his life, would return home to Alice, crestfallen and bitter. But never deflated. Never without knowing that someday he'd show them. Someday they'd be begging him. And that day was indeed to come. But ironically that day may have been the beginning of the end of his relationship with Alice.

Yet those early years were fun. They spelled excitement, hard work, and the first taste of the fruits of Peter's successes. Finally, in April of 1960, Peter and Alice were married; almost as a wedding present, his first major film, *Murder, Inc.*, debuted around that time, making Peter the hottest new celebrity in Hollywood. Critics hailed him as "the new Garfield," "the new Bogart," and one year to the day after their marriage, he was honored with an Academy Award nomination for his performance.

Which was a good enough way to start out married life. Though confirmed Easterners, the Falks settled in California, and Peter went from one smash film to another. In 1964 he scored a personal triumph portraying Stalin on Broadway in Paddy Chayevsky's *The Passion of Josef D.* And in 1965 came his critically-acclaimed, but disastrous series, *The Trials of O'Brien*.

*Trials* was probably significant because, for the first time, Peter and Alice had to face head-on the trials of TV series filming. Living in a rented duplex on Manhattan's upper East Side, Peter for nine months lived and breathed the series. Every day meant being on the set, and since he was in almost every scene, it was a grueling, straining job. One which wasn't over at night. For when production closed down, it meant going home and memorizing the next day's lines, going over the production notes, and getting everything down pat. Peter admittedly loved *O'Brien*; he did everything in his power to make it work. And perhaps at the expense of his home life.

Fortunately (for the marriage), however, the series was ahead of its time and was ultimately cancelled. The Falks returned to Hollywood, and Peter became once more involved in the less-demanding film work which was offered him. And, as if to seal any past rifts, or drifting apart due to *O'Brien*, he and Alice found themselves awaiting their first Big Event—the birth of their little daughter Jackie, now 6.

As in all families, the new baby seemed

GANTRY). She had had a busy day, but she was happily planning to take her two older boys to an Award Dinner for Little Leaguers when she finished there.

All three boys arrived, but Ryan, much too young for Little League, was to return home with the nurse.

"I wish I could go, Mom," he murmured, not wistfully, not whining, not begging, just quietly, politely conversational—a perfect little gentleman.

Shirley's eyes lighted with a sudden happy thought.

"You know," she said to her smallest son, "I was just thinking. I have an extra ticket that was supposed to be your father's." Jack, Ryan knew, was away, and couldn't attend.

Shirley's smile blossomed. "You can be my date!" The prospect, a completely unexpected bonus, pleased Ryan—it was easy to see that.

Ryan beamed.

There are certain compensations that make up for some of the limitations of being an asthmatic child. For Ryan, being Shirley Jones' special date is one of them.

Trudy Barnes

## PETER FALK

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Alice. What a laugh, I couldn't manage my own affairs, but I was going to tell someone else how to."

Perhaps Alice sensed Peter's indecision, his lack of enthusiasm for his chosen line of work, for while rejecting his proposals, she never rejected Peter himself. Nor did she ever discourage him from the Little Theatre work which attracted him like a magnet during the years when he was trying to "establish" himself in the business world. It was as if she knew that some day he would find himself. All she—and the relationship—needed was time.

As Peter once said about himself: "Some people go through life like an express train; some walk; me, I meandered." What he was most likely referring to is the unusual turn his life took when he was 27. With a B.A. and M.A. behind him in a totally unrelated field, he decided to come face-to-face with his dreams and give acting a try. "For three months," he consoled his family. If nothing happened in this time, he would return to public administration, and the possibility of spending his life as an adding machine tucked away in the back of a budget bureau somewhere. With no experience save Saturday classes at the White Barn Theatre in Connecticut, conducted by the great Eva Le Gallienne, and the good wishes of that same lady who had told the non-professional Peter blankly, "You should be an actor. If you're not, you're wasting your time," he plunged in.

And to the delight of Alice, who'd been patiently rooting for him all along, he pulled out a plum. And then another. And another. And soon "meandering" Peter Falk, who'd begun his professional career while others his age were already stars, or at least established, was going at a velocity to take the wind out of the most hardened of pros. Racking up credit after credit with off-B'way ventures such as *Saint Joan*, *Comic Strip*, and *The Iceman Cometh*, he soon became a familiar face on television's many dramatic programs. Professionally, it looked like he'd go all the way to the top. And Alice was there beside him.

But then, she always was. She was there in the lean days as well as the fat. She was there during the frustrating, ego-deflating times when agents, and even studio heads like Harry Cohn, would look at Peter and shake their heads. "No." Flat and final. "No," their verdict would come in. "Sorry, Peter, we can't use you in movies. It's your

to bring the family even closer together, especially after six childless years of marriage. And no one in the world could have been a better, more adoring dad than gruff earthy Peter when playing with his tiny little pink offspring. Yet as warm and comfortable as things were at home, Peter's not the sort of man who can sit around for long without going crazy. Admittedly, he's a fanatic—and fantastic—golfer, and weekends would be spent putting around on the green, perfecting his already astounding golf score. Weeknights were often spent at the pool tables, and Peter's reputation as Hollywood's top billiards and pool champ was earned after many absorbing hours playing. Then, of course, the days were filled up with film schedules, production meetings, reading scripts.

And before long, Alice was alone. More alone than ever. Yet with the young child to underscore so painfully the absence of the father.

Between 1967 and 1969, to add insult to injury, Peter was involved in so many films being made in Europe that matters seemed to be complicated even more, if that's possible. Was he running away from his family? Or was he merely accepting the best offers, trying in the only way he knew how—totally, completely—to be the best actor he knew how? Probably it was the latter. Probably his heart was as totally devoted to his wife and family as ever; it was just that stardom was making ever-increasing demands, demands too tempting to reject. And films like *Luv*, *Penelope*, *Anzio*, *Castle Keep*, *At Any Price*, and *Husbands* kept him working in all parts of the globe, from L.A. to Rome to Yugoslavia to England and New York. All of which meant more freedom and less family life.

And the rumors kept coming up—that Alice was dissatisfied with him globe-trotting, was fed up with his happy-go-lucky ways. Columnist Jack O'Brian admonished, "Peter Falk's wife told him flatly to make a few movies in the USA," and trouble grew louder. But the Falks, with so many years of love and friendship behind them, tried to patch things up.

Peter was still devoted to Alice and to young Jackie. And probably he didn't fully perceive the depth of the growing family rift. When their second daughter Kate was born just about a year and a half ago, Peter seemed happy as a lark, and was just beginning to negotiate for the *Lt. Columbo* series which would keep him home in Hollywood. Since it was on a revolving schedule with other shows, it wouldn't have the same hectic long hours,