

KOOKIE INVITED ME TO HOLLYWOOD

by Judy Clapp

When I answered the phone a hauntingly familiar voice said, "Is Judy Clapp there?"

"This is Judy," I replied, mentally trying to place the voice.

"Hi there, honey," he said. "This is Edd Byrnes."

I almost dropped the phone.

"Oh," I said.

"Hey, don't you know me? Kookie? You won the contest for translating my song, didn't you?"

"Yes, that's me -- I --," I gasped. "Is it really you?"

Kookie started laughing gently. "Yes," he said. "I'm in town doing the Pat Boone Show. They told me at Warner's who had won the contest. Sooo-- I wanted to call and say hello and that I'll see you in Hollywood. O.K., Judy?"

"You bet!" I almost shouted.

"Well, bye now, homey. See you on the set."

I said good-bye and sat down so I wouldn't fall down.

Two months before that famous call I had been listening to Alan Freed's radio show on WABC. He played "Kookie, Lend Me Your Comb." I was fascinated by the lyrics and then Alan announced a contest for the best interpretation of the words. The prize was a round-trip ticket for two to Hollywood -- at Kookie's invitation! The next day I got the record and sat down and started playing it. ~~It~~ I worked very hard on my answer -- I even illustrated it with little drawings. I worked out two or three answers and my mom helped me pick out the best one.

About a month later I was, as usual, listening to Alan's program. I had actually forgotten about the contest. Then all of a sudden I heard Alan saying, "Tonight we are going to announce the winner of our "Kookie Contest." The entries -- all 10,000 -- were mailed to Warner's Records in Hollywood last week and I have just received their answer. The first, and only, prize goes to Miss Judy Clapp of Basking Ridge, New Jersey..."

He went on talking, but I could hear no more. I thought I must be dreaming. It was probably a mistake. The phone rang. It was a neighbor congratulating me. Mom came in and I told her. She was as pleased as I. Then the phone began to ring and ring and ring, but best call of all came from Dom Cerulli at Warner's Records in New York. He invited Mom and me to come into New York and discuss the plans for the trip.

A couple of days later we met Mr. Cerulli. We made all the necessary plans and then he took us to a party. It was for a group of young stars in town to promote a movie and I met Connie Stevens, Jack Kelly, Erin O'Brien, Peter Brown, Diane Jurgens, Will Hutchins, and best of all -- Roger Smith.

Later at home we held a family conference and it was decided to make the Hollywood trip our annual vacation. Pop and my brother would come also.

Within a week we were on our way to Hollywood -- and I was going to meet my dream man, Edd Kookie Byrnes. Mr. Norman Goodwin of Warner's met us at the airport and took us to our hotel explaining that he'd pick us up at 10 A.M. the next day -- and we would start our tour of Screenland.

I could hardly sleep that night, and when we met Mr. Goodwin the next day and finally got started, my dream was coming true.

As we entered the studio lots we passed through several. My camera was confiscated.

"Sorry, but no one is allowed to take pictures on the set," the guard explained.

We were to meet Edd for lunch. As we were seated I know I was too excited to eat a mouthful. A handsome young man walked by our table. I thought I recognized him. Mr. Goodwin called him over and introduced us.

"Judy," he said, "This is Tab Hunter."

I extended a limp hand and said, "How do you do?"

"Swell," he replied. "And yourself?"

I managed to mumble something before he sauntered away.

I looked around the room and saw Roger Moore and Gardner McKay. Actually, I only half saw them. I had my eyes glued on the door -- awaiting the arrival of Edd. I've never been so nervous in my life.

And suddenly there he was in the doorway. He was even more handsome than he looked on TV. He came over to the table and sat down.

"You're Judy," he said.

"Yes."

He talked to me for a minute and then he ordered our lunch -- orange juice, chef's salad, and lemon custard.

After lunch I showed Edd a shirt and hat I'd embroidered with "Kookie" sayings on them. He laughed and tried them on. When we went outside he showed me his motor scooter. He said he used it to get from set to set and asked if I wanted to go for a ride.

I hopped right on and off we went. He took me on a tour of all the outdoor sets -- a Western town, suburban streets, even New York City. I saw old cars and stage coaches. At one place we bumped over some railroad tracks. I didn't mind, I just held tighter to Edd. I was in heaven.

After my adventurous ride, Edd had to leave to do some publicity shots. But we made plans for the next day so that I could actually see him work.

After another sleepless night I returned to the Warner lot. This time I went to the set for 77 Sunset Strip. Edd was there waiting. They weren't shooting at the time so he showed me the sets, including the office and the replica of Dino's famous restaurant. Then we went around the lot and he showed me the place where they were

shooting The Alaskans.

"I gotta cut out for an hour," Edd Said, laughing -- he'd already explained to me that the jive talk was strictly reserved for Kookie. "See ya' later, Judy."

After I went on another tour -- this time to the record studios where I was shown how a record is made and how the sound track is added to a film -- I returned to the 77 set. They were almost ready to shoot and Edd was there.

I can never describe what a thrill it was to stand there and see Edd turn into Kookie and start working. I had to pinch myself to make sure I was me, and that this was happening.

After the shooting I met Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. He was nice enough to pause and chat with me for a minute -- and boy! is he handsome.

Edd took me for one more little walk around the set and introduced me to Roscoe, Louis Quinn, and the telephone operator, Jacqueline Beer from the show. We saw a still photographer and Edd took me over.

"How about a couple more pictures of you and me, Judy?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" I exclaimed. A couple hundred was more what I was thinking.

Then came the sad part of my visit. I had to leave Edd. The beautiful part of my two days in Hollywood was over. Now I would go back to the hotel and have dinner and we would plan a couple of days of sight-seeing on our own. How I wished I could have stayed right there.

Edd came over to me and took both of my hands. He smiled down at me and said, "Good-bye, Judy. Now don't forget me and I'll see you again one day. O.K.?"

I looked up at him and tried to smile.

I said, "O.K."