

Hit Parade's Dorothy On Straw Hat Circuit 1977

Rarely does a show business lady who has advanced into the middle years of life volunteer her age without prompting. But Dorothy Collins is almost eager to point out that she is 50. Surely you remember Dorothy Collins, the sweet-faced, blonde haired vocalist who sang just about every smash pop song to come along between 1950 and 1957 when she co-starred on the weekly television series, "Hit Parade."

"I started singing professionally long before that," said the singer-actress, who will be appearing in "I Do, I Do," which tours the straw hat circuit this summer. "I began when I was 13. I've been around so long that I have to tell people my age. Otherwise, they think I'm 65." But Collins is proud of the fact that she has remained svelte, and so it is both a source of comfort and mild aggravation when she overhears someone observe during an appearance that "she really looks great...Who, she must be 65." Not hardly.

And at the age of 50, Collins finds herself at a stage where she is enthusiastic about the prospect of reactivating her career into high gear — a state of mind she had not experienced for several years. Separated about a year ago from band leader-arranger Raymond Scott and recently divorced, Collins conceded that the break-up of her lengthy marriage had caused a degree of trauma and a period of adjustment. However, now she talks about the situation with philosophic casualness; "It was just one of those things that sometimes happen to people." "Work," she noted, "was excellent therapy. And a lot of good things have been happening to me."

While "old-timers" — pick your own starting point for that particular period of ripeness — automatically identify Dorothy Collins with "Hit Parade," she is quick to point out that she had never been completely retired. It's just that in recent years she shifted the emphasis from singing to acting. Or best of all, a combination of both. Her career prospects have been extremely bright since she appeared in the Broadway musical "Follies" four years ago. Since then there has been an abundance of summer stock and dinner-theater roles.

Prior to her present tour, for instance, Collins appeared in a Long Island dinner theater production of "Gingerbread Lady" a heavier role than she is ordinarily offered — allowing Collins to "stretch out a bit dramatically." Collins has three daughters, age 22 to 9. Her middle daughter, Liz, appeared with Collins in "Gingerbread Lady." "The funny thing" Collins noted, "is that when my 9-year-old daughter, Melissa, heard that Liz was going to be in the production,

she asked to see the script. She seemed to think that she would be ideal for the role of Toby. It didn't seem to make any difference to her that Toby has to be around 40 years old."

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