

Dorothy Collins Is Happy To Be On Her Own After Long Stint With 'Hit Parade'

NEW YORK (AP)— After living seven years in a “gold coffin,” Dorothy Collins feels right now like an emerging butterfly that has stayed overlong in its cocoon.

“I want to stretch my wings and see how far I can fly on my own,” she said. “I want to show people what I can do.”

The “gold coffin” in her case has been “Your Hit Parade,” the durable NBC radio show that also invaded video in 1950 and for most of the time since then has been among the top 15 TV programs.

Although it is a wonderful showcase for talent, such a program is known in the entertainment world as a “gold coffin.” The reason: It pays too good to leave, but in time it becomes a kind of straitjacket to a performer.

This season will be the last for bandleader Raymond Scott, Miss Collins (his wife) and the other three singers—Gisele MacKenzie, Snooky Lanson and Russell Arms.

Next year the sponsors will continue the program under the same format with a new crew of faces. This decision implies no criticism of the five who are departing. As a matter of fact they have remained on the show far longer than any other similar group in its 23-year history.

It has been a policy of “Hit Parade” over the years to change its singers almost as often as its tunes.

Among earlier stars who have twinkled on the show and gone on to other things are Dinah Shore, Frank Sinatra, Lawrence Tibbett, Dorothy Kirsten, Doris Day and Georgia Gibbs.

Miss Collins and Snooky Lanson, teamed on the show since it started its TV career seven years ago, hold the longevity record. Dorothy doesn't mind admitting it is a real wrench to leave “Hit Parade,” but she is realistic about it.



“It has been my life for so long,” she said. “I turned down all outside offers to stay with it, and I’ll always be eternally grateful for the break it gave me.”

“But it really is time to move on to something new. You have to grow up. You have to leave school sometime.”

Dorothy, a cute blond whose trademarks were a blouse and a velvet ribbon bow tie, started by singing the commercial jingle on the show, quickly graduated to stellar rank.

To cure a tendency toward lispiness, she spent years hissing practically every word in the English language containing the letter “S.”

Today nothing annoys her more than people who think she still lisps.

“I don’t,” she said, “But people don’t really hear what you say. They look at my lips as I sing and think they hear a list—but isn’t in my voice.”

This is actually true. Dorothy can say "Mississippi: endlessly and never lisp once.

Canadian born, she became a vocalist at 12 but never took a singing lesson until after she became a professional at 16. Until then she had dreamed of being a secretary.

To prepare herself for a dramatic career, she has been studying acting and dancing intensively. She is currently considering two musical comedy roles and a movie offer.

"I'd really like to see what I can do in a serious role," she said. "But most of all I want to escape from singing teen-age love songs. I'm a little tired of them."

She and Raymond Scott live in a 32-room house on an 11-acre Long Island estate with their daughter, Debbie, 2 1/2.

"Fourteen of the rooms are full of Raymond's hi-fi equipment and a collection of more than 5,000 records," said Dorothy.

Scott expects to have more time now to concentrate on his musical compositions. One of his latest efforts is entitled, "Dedicatory piece to the crew and passengers of the first experimental rocket express to the moon." It has never been featured on "Hit Parade."