

# After Lassie Comes Mommie

**Dorothy's biggest fan is her young daughter, Debbie,  
who knows a good singing star when she sees one**

**By Florence Epstein**

Every summer Dorothy Collins and the rest of The Hit Parade crew take a 13-week vacation. Dorothy generally spends hers singing at the Thunderbird in Las Vegas.

"At the end of my first engagement there they gave me this," Dorothy said, showing me a diamond-studded watch on a platinum band. "And Ray gave me this," she pointed to a diamond wedding ring, "and for my birthday, he gave me this," she lifted her right hand under the weight of a beautiful diamond ring.

"All of a sudden I've become a diamond girl. I never thought I was the type. But now I love diamonds, even though I don't like my hands. They're awful." They didn't look awful to me. They looked like pretty nice hands, but it was obvious that arguing would be useless. We were sitting in Raymond Scott's New York office. He's the music director of NBC-TV's Hit Parade, also Dorothy's husband (for four-and-a-half years).

"Of course, it's wonderful working together," Dorothy said. "In fact, the whole show is just plain fun. Everybody connected with it is so nice. "This morning I just missed the train coming in. I felt terrible about it—being late for rehearsal and holding things up. But when I called to tell them I'd be delayed nobody blew up. They were all more concerned about me. Just don't be nervous."

Now it was afternoon, the rehearsal was over and Dorothy looked composed and smart with her blonde hair brushed long and smooth, her make-up and brow line artfully applied, her dress quietly chic.

I mentioned that she'd changed a lot from the cute little kid who sang Lucky Strike commercials in a white blouse. Now she was glamorous.

"Well, I've been on the show seven years," she said. "I should hope I'd change. It would be pretty boring if I didn't. It would bore me most of all. I think it's mainly my hair. I used to cut it myself. Snip, snip, snip up to here. I was lucky to have any left. But now I put my head in wiser hands."



She thought a minute. "Maybe it was having the baby," she said. "I think I've changed since then." The baby is Debbie—now a little over two years old. Dorothy whipped out a photo of her, a sturdy little girl with golden brown hair and a charming smile.

"She isn't beautiful—but isn't she cute?" Dorothy said. "You ought to see her playroom. I always used to say that my child would never have too many toys. I didn't approve of it." She gestured, helplessly. "But Debbie knows and loves every toy she has."

"What else does she know?" I said. "Does she know how to sing?" "Oh, yes. She has a good voice. She hears me run through the lyrics of a song and picks them up immediately. My mother always told me I could do that at her age but I never believed it until now. Debbie's current ambition is to sing on television. She stands up in front of the set and thinks she's on."

"Once I did a filmed commercial and it followed the Lassie show. Debbie and I both watched it at home. She looked at the set, looked at me sitting beside her and snorted. Now every night after Lassie she shouts, "Here comes Mommie!"

Mommie comes in person every time Debbie lifts her little finger. "I'd like at least one more child," Dorothy says. "I'd really like three more, but I'll settle happily for whatever I get." She has a nice place to settle in—a 32-room house on Long Island that the Scotts bought a couple of years ago. "That's a lot of house," I said. Dorothy laughed. "I know. Once someone came out there to interview me and she wanted to know if it frightened me having such a big place. It doesn't frighten me at all. I love it."

**NOW** very chic, Dorothy's changed a lot from the cute kid who used to sing commercials.

They used to call it the old Milburn estate—they're the same Milburns who own Borden's. It's Georgian style and has four floors, if you count the basement. We closed off the top floor completely. It's as if it isn't there." "That left three floors to decorate," I said. "What a job that must have been. Who did it?" "Me," Dorothy said, in that blithe and careless way. "So far I've done 14 rooms. My bedroom is French Provincial fruitwood. I'm mad about fruitwood. And the rest is traditional. The walls are paneled beautifully—they came that way. And there are so many fireplaces. It was a nerve-wracking experience for Debbie at Christmas. She expected Santa Claus to come out of everyone of them.

They also have between ten and eleven acres of ground—much of it wooded and a lot of it peat bog. A gardener keeps the front lawn trim but the Scotts aren't planning a park. Large as the house and grounds are (friends have suggested they call it Windsor Castle—Windsor, Ontario, being Dorothy's birthplace), the estate hasn't swallowed them up. The reverse is true. Their personalities are stamped all over it. "Ray has a million hobbies—every hobby man can think of except hunting," Dorothy says, with wifely admiration. "And he has a room for every hobby." Without hesitation she reeled them off. "He has a complete electronics lab, a woodworking shop, a recording studio, a ham radio room—say amateur, not ham, Ray doesn't think ham's the right word—a theatre with a projection room for running off kinescopes of the show, a complete darkroom. Did you get all that? Another thing, He loves to collect technical manuscripts. He has a library full of technical stuff. He's also a brilliant composer."

"It must have been love at first sight," I said, overwhelmed. Dorothy laughed. "You don't believe in that, do you? Is there such a thing as love at first sight? I'd known Ray for many years. Then gradually it dawned on me that it was more important being with him than with anyone else. And he felt the same way about me." "Well, let's see. We were talking about the house. We have lots of parties there. The terrific thing is we can invite a hundred people and still have room to move around in." "Formal parties?" I asked. "Oh, no. Definitely not. Just a lot of people talking and eating and sitting around. Most of our close friends are not in show business. Ray's closest friend is Sam Freeman. They grew up together in Brooklyn. We see him and his wife, Eileen, very often. And another couple—a lawyer and his wife. I don't mind if Debbie goes into show business when she grows up, but I don't particularly want her to." "Is that how your mother felt about you?" I said.

"Oh, me," she said. "I used to sing all the time at home but nobody paid any attention to it. You see my mother had studied opera—until my father came along. He didn't go for that career business. But we grew up with music in the house. (Well—meaning Dorothy, her older sister and younger brother.) "Well, one day a friend of mine said she was going on an amateur show. I thought to myself, 'Gee, I can sing as well as she can,' and told my mother I wanted to go on the show, too. She was surprised but she didn't object. "One of the reasons I wanted to do it was because the prize was a trip to Toronto where my grandmother lived. I won the contest, but by that time they'd switched prizes. All I won was a wristwatch. I won five wristwatches and gave them all to my mother who lost them. "I won a lot of cups, too. You know, my brother and sister were always winning beauty cups. They were the most exquisite babies. I always used to ask my mother, 'Why can't I look like them?' and she'd pat me on the head and say 'that I was the one with character.

After her mother discovered that Dorothy had talent as well as character she spent five years touring the country with her. The way it happened—Dorothy auditioned for Raymond Scott in 1942. He told her to go home and practice and he'd be sure to remember her. She wasn't so sure he would. But, a year later, she sang for him again and this time he hired her as featured vocalist for his well-known quintet. She left Scott to join The Herb Shriner Time on radio and then toured with Raymond again. A few months later when he disbanded his group to direct the orchestra on Your Hit Parade, she was out of a job. But in 195—Ray got her back—first to sing commercials, then hits.

"During the seven years I've been on the show," Dorothy says, "I've gotten about 20 movie offers and eight or ten Broadway offers. I never paid much attention to them because I wasn't ambitious. I feel different about it now. With my new contract I can take off any eight-week period during the season—and who knows what I'll do. It's very exciting."



**DOING** one of her "Hit Parade" numbers. Dorothy's now studying drama—for the future.

To prepare for who knows what, Dorothy takes dancing and dramatic lessons Mondays and Thursdays—for three hours she's at the New Dramatists Workshop.

"I never realized how much was involved in acting," she says. "It was amazing how everyone came to class frightened and inhibited. I thought I'd be the only one. But after a while we got used to acting out things in front of each other and taking the criticism. It's all so scientific. I mean, there are definite tools that actually *work* for you. When I get applause from that class, I'm telling you, you can't live with me!"

Also on Mondays and Thursdays, for one hour, Dorothy studies "free-style" dancing at the June Taylor studio.

"Aside from that, I don't have any special hobbies—except ice-skating. I ice skate whenever I get the chance. And then there's baseball." "You play baseball?" I said, astounded. *I watch* baseball. The Dodgers. Well I *used* to play baseball. When I was a kid I used to be a pitcher."

"Debbie is really my whole interest but, of course, she's no hobby. Except for those two days when I'm in town I spend as much time as I can with her. So does Ray. You know, Debbie loves to watch TV, but let Ray walk in and nothing can compete with him. Talk about little girls having crushes on their daddies! "The thing she loves most is to have Ray take her out for a drive. Just the two of them. Ray gave me a car for a wedding gift but I never did learn how to drive. At first I thought I'd let him teach me but everyone warned me against that. Never let your husband teach you how to drive! "I think I'd better learn pretty soon. Debbie's getting old enough to go to nursery school and she'll need a chauffeur." And whatever Debbie needs, Debbie is sure to get. That goes for everyone at the Scott house.