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**An Intimate View  
of the Real  
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by his secretary!**

**The Girl Who  
Healed  
Mark Slade's  
Broken Heart!**

**MY SISTER-IN-LAW  
Carol Burnett!**



His proposal to Melinda was completely unconventional. With her at his side he phoned his mother and said, "I've just asked Melinda to marry me!"



By BRENDA MARSHALL

■ Handsome, blue-eyed Mark Slade runs up the eighty-eight steps leading to his Laurel Canyon home—a happy and contented young man.

Behind him are three years of heartache that no longer cause him pain—and ahead, the wonderful prospects of marriage to his beautiful, dark-haired fiancée.

Life wasn't always this good—for Mark well remembers a phone call that hurt so much it took three whole years for him to recover from his bitter disappointment.

The bad news that so upset the sensitive, young actor? The girl he loved had married someone else.

The young couple met in high school, dated steadily for four years, and—when Mark went away to study acting—wrote regularly.

"I wanted to marry her—and had always told her so," said Mark, with deep sincerity, when I visited him on the set of NBC-TV's western series "The High Chaparral," in which he plays the rebellious young son.

"But," he added, "It wasn't possible at that time. I couldn't even support myself—let alone a wife.

"She was so beautiful," Mark recalled, wistfully, "A small town girl—very independent—with the loveliest big, blue eyes.

"We met in Massachusetts when she was fourteen and I was eighteen—and went out together for four years," he went on. "Then I left for New York to study acting, and we saw each other only once or twice a year. But we always kept in touch through letters.

"Suddenly — she stopped writing, and I couldn't understand why. Then I got this phone call from her mother to say she'd married a college professor.

"It was an awful shock," said Mark. "That was three years ago, and I've only recently got over it.

# THE GIRL WHO HEALED MARK SLADE'S BROKEN HEART!

It took Mark three years to get over the shock of being jilted!



"You see," he explained, "Although I dated other girls—I just couldn't find anyone to compare with her.

"The trouble was," he recalled, "I put her on a pedestal—and nobody could ever have equalled the image I'd created in my mind.

"Looking back," he went on, "I realize it wouldn't have been fair to have married anyone at that time.

"There were many years of struggling, looking for work, and trying to make ends meet," he explained. "If we'd married, and she'd had to go through all that, I'm sure it wouldn't have lasted," Mark added.

Then—a year ago July—a 21-year-old dark-haired, dark-eyed secretary and model entered Mark's life and was responsible for ending his three years of heartache.

Mark recalled: "A group of us were celebrating completion of 'The High Chaparral' pilot, and we went to this little restaurant on Santa Monica Boulevard—a popular meeting place for actors, directors, and so on.

"We met two girls that night—and one of them was Melinda Riccilli—who's now my fiancée."

Mark continued: "Actually, it was her friend I phoned to ask for a date—but she wasn't home, so I asked Melinda."

It was, perhaps, surprising that Melinda ever spoke to Mark again—for he wasn't exactly kind to her on their first evening together.

"We spent it with some friends at my apartment, watching pictures of a recent trip I'd made to Europe with Rudy Solari—who's now in 'Garrison's Gorillas,'" he recalled.

"Melinda struck me as a vibrant person—and very attractive. But," he added, a little shamefacedly, "I told her she needed to lose

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Mark's hard times are a thing of the past. He's happy at work on NBC's "The High Chaparral" and happy in love with Melinda Riccilli.



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## ELKE SOMMER

(Continued from page 32)

Joe is a great reviewer and biographer of film personalities. He has written many uncomplimentary things about actresses. He considers many of them selfish, arrogant and fickle, and believes they never really fall in love with anyone but themselves.

Now, bless him, he has to eat his own words, although he does say that there must be an exception to every rule.

After our first interview he wrote: "Asleep, she resembles a child, but awake and in fluid motion before the cameras, she makes Bardot look like an awkward school girl. On screen she seems kitten soft, but off the screen she possesses an iron will."

## MARK SLADE

(Continued from page 27)

weight—and that she wore too much make-up."

Melinda, obviously, wasn't offended—for when Mark called a few weeks later to ask for another date—she accepted. And Mark received quite a surprise when they met. Melinda had listened to Mark's advice, and—lost thirty pounds.

Soon they were dating steadily, and—this past February—became engaged.

Typical of Mark, his proposal was unconventional. Smiling as he recalled the incident, Mark described: "Melinda was with me one day when I decided to phone my mother in Massachusetts. I told her—'I've just asked Melinda to marry me.' Then I turned to Melinda and said: 'Say hello to mother.'"

"Melinda was so surprised—she didn't know what to say," he smiled. "Then—she started to cry."

Becoming suddenly serious, Mark explained how she'd completely changed his attitude toward life.

When he realized—almost to his surprise—how much he loved and wanted to marry her, memories of his high school sweetheart no longer caused him pain.

For the first time, he saw things in their proper perspective—and understood how such a young marriage would have been impractical—and that the image he'd created in his mind was unreal.

What was real was—Melinda.

And Mark became a changed person.

Mark Slade, his two younger sisters, and younger brother, lived in Danvers, Massachusetts, until Mark was fifteen. Then their parents were divorced. Both remarried—and the children lived with their mother and step-father in nearby Hamilton.

"Despite the divorce, it was a happy childhood," Mark reminisced. "When we lived in Danvers, father used to take the whole family skiing

I confess that Joe wasn't as kind about my acting ability. In fact, he said there was doubt if I could act at all, but that didn't really upset me. I just tried harder to be a good actress.

As for the wedding and our life together, I want to get it settled. I want to have a baby as soon as possible. I lost one for which I blame myself. I went on working while I was pregnant, which was foolish. The next time I'll stop working immediately. I don't care if I'm offered the greatest role in the world—that's the way it's going to be.

People often ask me what I dislike. At the moment mini-skirts top the list. I'd rather walk about with nothing on than wear one of those. At least nudity isn't suggestive. Men can be nice and polite to women who are wearing short skirts but they laugh the second their backs are turned."

(Elke stars in "The Wicked Dreams of Paula Schulze" for UA.)

every weekend. I still love to ski," he added, "and go to the mountains whenever I can.

"As for my step-father—he's a great guy. He gave me lots of good advice, and did a great deal for me—and the whole family," he added, fondly.

Mark was an unusually creative child. At the age of about six, he became keenly interested in cartoons and comics. In his teens he began selling caricatures and comic strips to various magazines and newspapers.

If he hadn't become an actor, Mark could easily have made this his profession. Right now—he has a comic strip called "Sea Breeze" ready for syndication. "It's about an intellectual seagull," Mark smiled.

Mark confesses he was a "poor student" at high school. "The greatest thing my step-father ever did for me, was getting me out of high school and into prep school," he commented.

It was at the prep school—Worcester Academy—that Mark first developed an interest in drama. There, he was asked to fill in for an ill member of "The Male Animal." Later, a professor suggested Mark write to various drama schools. He chose the American Academy of Dramatic Arts—and gave up the idea of college.

After eighteen months at the Academy, Mark was offered a role in the Broadway play, "There Was A Little Girl," starring Jane Fonda, followed by a part in the movie "Splendour in the Grass."

Actor Gary Lockwood was in both the play and the movie and he and Mark became close friends.

Afterwards, as neither had any immediate prospects of more work in New York, Mark and Gary decided to travel across country together—to Hollywood.

There they rented a small, unfurnished apartment and began job hunting. "We had a TV set, mattress and air mattress—and no other furniture at all," Mark recalled. "We slept on the floor and lived on \$32 a week unemployment.

"Gary was luckier than I was,"

Mark added. "He had it rough for about a month, then found work. I spent six months parking cars and doing other odd jobs."

Then Mark won roles in several episodes of "My Three Sons" and in the movie "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea."

"But I had to go into the army for six months. I returned to Hollywood without any money and no job."

After working for a while delivering liquor for a local store, Mark was offered a part in the pilot and four episodes of the television version of "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea," closely followed by guest roles in numerous television shows.

It was his performance as the baby-faced narcotics pusher in an episode of "Mr. Novak" that won him the role of the seaisack radio operator in Screen Gems' "The Wackiest Ship in the Army." From here on Mark's career was well on its way.

During "Wackiest Ship," he received more fan mail than any other young performer on the NBC network—several hundred letters a week.

"Most were from young teenagers," said Mark, "and many asked for advice about their personal problems."

"I replied to about three letters a week, but didn't feel qualified to give much advice," he smiled.

"One girl wrote a letter twenty-five feet long. It was so sincere, I decided to phone her and say 'hello,'" he added.

"Another asked how she could become an actress. I wrote saying there was no easy way—that it meant lots of hard work. In fact," he commented, "if I'd known eight years ago how hard it was, perhaps I wouldn't have decided to become an actor. The main thing is," he added, "to have faith in yourself."

Mark's faith paid off! He's delighted with his role in "The High Chaparral."

He rents a furnished, two-bedroomed house in Laurel Canyon, which has 88 steps to climb. "I usually run up them, to keep fit," he commented.

In his spare time, he and Melinda go into the hills on Mark's Honda motorcycle—or to the beach in his Camaro car.

Melinda has given up the idea of acting, and works as a secretary for a public relations firm. "She was born here in California, and knows how hard it is to become an actress. I don't think she was that dedicated," Mark commented.

Right now, the couple are busy searching for their dream house. "We haven't decided exactly where—but it must be out of the city," said Mark. "The trouble is—I have a New England taste with a beginning actor's salary."

"But one thing is sure," the handsome, young actor added. "We'll find our perfect house—and get married very soon—probably around December."

THE END

(Don't miss Mark on NBC-TV's "The High Chaparral," Sundays at 10:00 p.m., N.Y. time.)

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