

Hollywood's BEAUTIFUL BULLDOZER

By GLADWIN HILL

She acts, writes, directs, produces—no film job is too big for Ida Lupino

A PERSPIRING electrician, wrestling with an exceptionally arduous problem in cable-laying on an RKO sound stage one day recently, paused to mop his brow and grunt to a colleague:

"The things I do for Grandma! I wouldn't do this for anyone else if I was on golden hours."

"Golden hours" was a reference to the Sunday and holiday superovertime on which Hollywood technicians collect up to five times normal pay. And the "Grandma" was a filial tribute to the winsome, shapely girl, just turned thirty-three, known to the public as Ida Lupino.

She has earned the respectful sobriquet by an unusual and difficult process: turning her back on a career of successful and lucrative film acting for the uncharted and parlous path of female producer-director, the only one in Hollywood.

Although her husband, Collier Young, holds the title of president in The Filmakers, their producing company, while Ida is listed as vice-president, actually they are partners in the enterprise, both financially and operationally.

Ida's activities, in fact, cover a broader gamut than her husband's. While they collaborate with the third Filmakers partner, Marvin Wald, the writer, on fundamentals like story selection, casting and scripting, Young concentrates on the administrative side of the operation. Ida by turn

writes, directs, acts, takes a hand in musical scoring, and on occasion even plies a needle and thread on costumes.

"Collie is the diplomat of Filmakers," she says. "I'm the bulldozer."

This difference in their personalities may help explain why Ida and Collier—who is her second husband—agreed some time ago to live apart. It may also make clear why their separation has had no effect on their working relationship (or, for that matter, on their mutual admiration).

When the word circulated around Hollywood that Ida, the versatile and compelling screen impersonator of fluffy love-bugs, conniving villainesses and hand-wringing neurotics, was taking up the megaphone, people weren't particularly surprised. They wouldn't have been surprised if Ida had announced she was launching an expedition to the Gobi Desert after dinosaur eggs or starting an undersea night club in a benthoscope.

Although she started out in Hollywood in the early 1930s as just another cute starlet, Ida long ago put herself in a different league from most movie glamor girls.

She is brainy, imaginative and unfazed by conventions. In addition to being an accomplished film actress and knowing movie making inside out, she has starred on the radio, written magazine pieces and musical comedies, and has composed mu-

sic for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

Her versatility was powerfully impressed upon a photographer who went to her house one day while she was ostensibly completely preoccupied with eleventh-hour preparations for one of her productions. When he developed his pictures, there was an unfamiliar look to the work. As he examined the negatives and tried to reconstruct what had happened, it suddenly dawned on him that it had been Ida who, throughout the whole afternoon, had been directing the placement of his lights.

When Ida heard of plans for a Los Angeles production of the pantomime *Aladdin*, in which her father had starred in London, she rushed down to the Philharmonic and volunteered to write the score for it. The odd circumstance about her activity as a composer is that Ida has never had any formal musical training; in boarding school she bribed another girl to take even her elementary piano lessons for her. She composed the *Aladdin* score, as she has all her music, by plunking it out on the piano in the key of C and transposing it afterward.

Unique Method of Script Writing

She does her writing the hard way, too. At times when the urge has been upon her, she has been known to keep at it for 24 hours at a stretch, writing in pencil in a nearly undecipherable scrawl. Characteristically, she usually neglects to keep a supply of paper on hand, with the result that her studio associates are bombarded with communiqués that jump from old envelopes to grocery bags to magazine covers and back again. One of her bits of fiction, a short short story about a child star, wound up two years ago in the magazine you are reading.

The essence of femininity in manner and emotions, Ida radiates an almost masculine vitality, both mental and physical, from her slight 112-pound frame.

When she outlines poignant bits of drama she has conceived, her eyes film with feeling; and when she is describing a prospective scene or its photography, she somehow seems to get four arms into action, like two fighter pilots reminiscing. The half-inch length of her eyelashes, her most distinctive physical feature, she ascribes to the fact that in moments of great concentration she often plucks at them nervously the way other people bite their nails.

This tremendous vitality frequently poses a sharp challenge to her body; she is brittle-boned and is always breaking, spraining or straining something. When she fractured her foot just as she was starting to direct a recent picture, she insisted on going ahead with it, with her leg in a large cast, even undergoing the pain of being lifted intermittently onto an elevated stool so she could check camera angles.

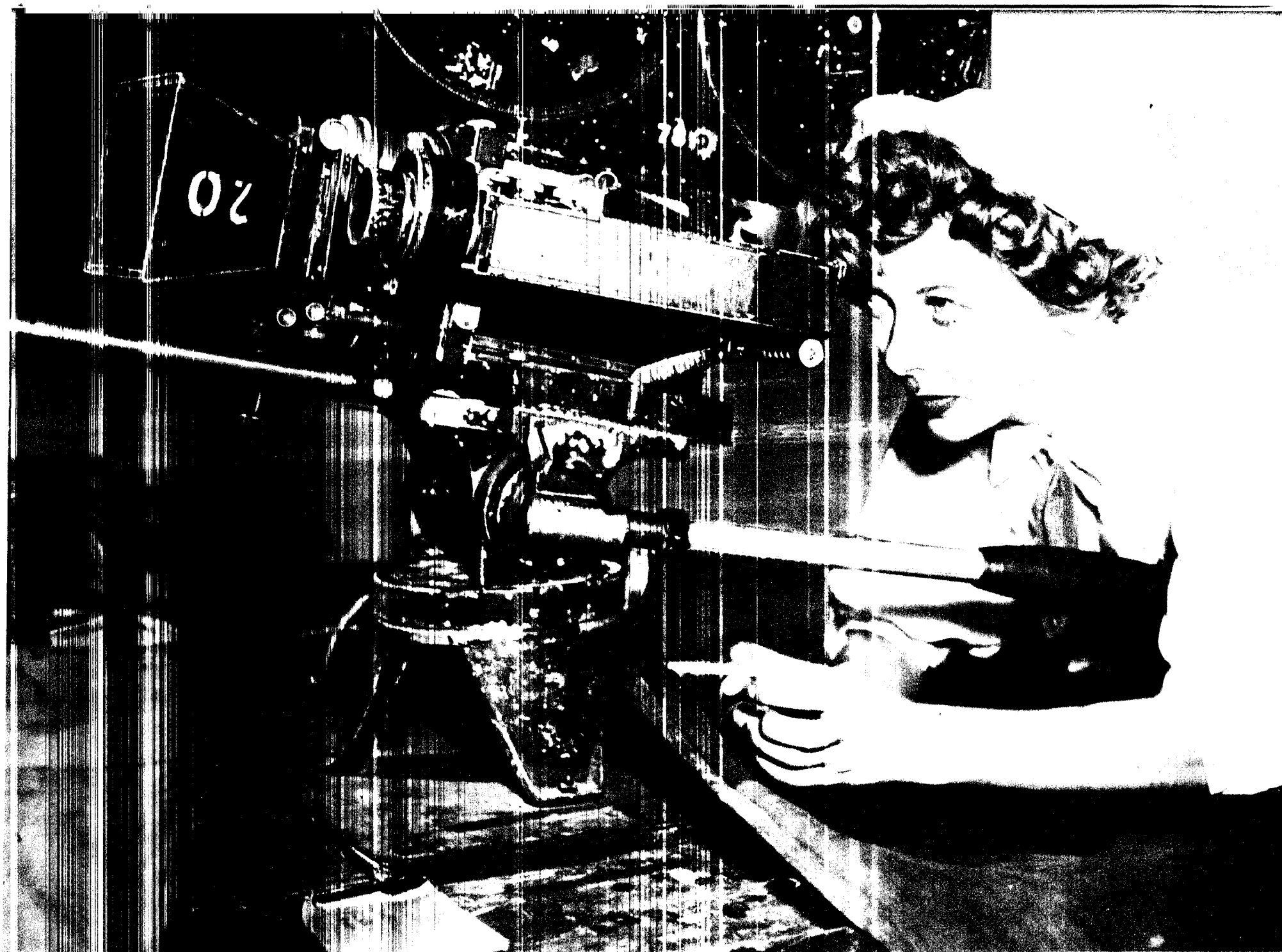
The state of Ida's health is a matter of considerable importance to anyone who must spend much time in her company. For although she is shy about such commonplace matters as entering a room full of people, once there she inexorably dominates her surroundings. "If Ida feels good," an associate commented, "her mood spreads all around. If Ida's got a headache, everybody in the place is sick."

Nevertheless, her friends have learned to mete

Collier's for May 12, 1951

Ida solidified her reputation as an excellent dramatic actress in the picture *They Drive by Night*, in which she played a murderess. Her family has been in show business for 300 years





Checking a camera angle. Cameramen who have worked with Ida say she knows their business almost as well as they do

out their sympathy in inverse ratio to her lamentation.

For example, few people were aware, until it came out in connection with a picture she made on infantile paralysis, that shortly after coming to Hollywood in 1933 she had had a bout with polio that left a slight permanent impairment in both her right hand and her right leg.

On the other hand, she recently telephoned at what she thought was the last minute to beg off from a business conference, pleading tearfully that she had just sprained her ankle. But she had mixed her dates; the conference was still a week off. The following week she telephoned again, and methodically announced that she had just sprained the same ankle.

While Ida serves enough functions with Filmmakers to be completely at home in a business-conference room, perhaps her most notable accomplishment in the eyes of Hollywood has been her success in establishing herself as a director—the only woman member of the Screen Director's Guild, and one of only a half-dozen females since the movies' infancy who have had the temerity to stand behind the camera and tell 'em how to do it.

Ida cut her directing teeth helping the late Elmer Clifton on *Not Wanted*, the picture on illegitimate motherhood which Collier Young made in partnership with Anson Bond two years ago.

Filmmakers was incorporated six months later, in August, 1949. It has produced four pictures: *The Young Lovers* (initially titled *Never Fear*), a daring treatment of infantile paralysis; *Outrage*, a story of a girl who is raped; *Hard, Fast and Beautiful*, about a tennis champion and her Machiavel-

lian mother; and *On the Loose*, a story of adolescent-parent relationships.

Ida directed the first three. She contented herself with lesser chores in the making of *On the Loose* because, she explains, "It would have made five pictures in a row about women with problems, and I didn't want to go stale."

All five pictures have made current movie history in large ways or small. They have dealt with markedly unconventional subjects which most big producers might have boggled at tackling. Despite their intrinsically sensational nature, the subjects were handled tastefully. And the pictures were made on budgets that blazed new trails in production economy.

Although the usual Hollywood picture often costs \$1,000,000—or perhaps \$500,000 in the case of an especially economical effort—two of the Lupino-Young films were produced for less than \$155,000, and the most expensive, *On the Loose*, cost only \$340,000, even with such stars as Joan Evans and Melvyn Douglas.

One reason for Filmmakers' economy is the speed with which it completes its pictures. The familiar Hollywood shooting schedule is on the order of 40 days. Filmmakers' maximum has been 18.

This celerity once caught even the unit's publicity man off base. When it came to filming a wheelchair square-dance scene in *The Young Lovers*, on which an ordinary movie company might have spent a week, Ida allotted one day. The publicity man invited news photographers in to catch the unusual demonstration of the agility and courage of a group of actual paralytics. The photographers arrived early in the afternoon (*Continued on page 76*)

Ida and her coproducer and husband, Collier Young, go over a new picture script together



COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS FOR COLLIER'S BY JOHN FLOREA

BEWARE of

