



Dear Barbara:

In the movies, when a man discovers he's about to become a father he behaves like a fugitive from a straitjacket! It would never happen this way in real life, I've always told myself—all of which proves that we should never be positive about anything.

Ever since the doctor confirmed the news, I'm sure I haven't made much sense. Naturally I was thrilled. Hadn't we both dreamed about this moment since we were married two Decembers ago? I thought the first excitement of expectant fatherhood would wear thin and I'd get around to saying a few thousand things bottled up inside. What fools we future

fathers be—if you'll pardon the Shakespeare!

By this time your curiosity must be aroused. Why this open letter to you? After all, I do see you the first thing each morning and that man's me who kisses you good night each night! Being the sweet understanding person you are, I'm sure you'll appreciate my predicament, Barbara, dear.



Jeffrey Hunter and Barbara Rush, soon to be three, decorated their new home in Early American style

Up to now, you and I have always said what we have to say to each other—direct, straightforward. But there are occasions when the things that mean the most become the hardest to say. This is one of those times. It's probably hap-

pened to everyone at some time. A strange sort of self-consciousness sets in. If he does manage to mumble them, they almost sound insincere.



These so-in-love kids can be seen in Prince of Pirates—Barbara Rush's latest—Dream Boat and Lure of the Wilderness—Jeff's newest

As you know, the doctor wants you to get lots of rest but being Miss Energy of 1952, you have to be strong-armed into obeying orders. That's why I tiptoe out of the apartment, so you won't insist on getting up and making coffee. Ofttimes when I'm driving along to the studio and I think about us and our life together, a wave of gratitude engulfs me. So many wonderful things have happened and yes, I've got a couple of confessions tucked away, too!

May I begin at the beginning, spring of 1950 when I went over to Paramount to make a test? I hoped one of their established actresses would make the test with me. I wasn't too sure of myself. Well, I've never told you this before but when I learned that Barbara Rush, a

beautiful and talented newcomer, was going to be my pidgeon, my heart sank!



Both Jeff and Barbara play the organ. Their favorite possession is the only item in the den so far

You had never seen or heard of me and I had never seen or heard of you. On the day of the test, as I came out the doorway from the make-up department, we met face to face. Now love at first sight had never happened to me in the past and I still don't believe in it—*I think!* When I looked at you that day, however, you generated a kind of excitement. I noted how alive and glowing your eyes were. What an interesting face. Mentally, I whistled!

Turning to the make-up man at my side as we walked toward the sound stage, I nonchalantly asked who you were and he answered, "That's Barbara Rush—the girl who was supposed to make the test with you. She's going on location, so someone else is doing it."

I was so disappointed and looking back now I regret the time lost until we finally met the latter part of the summer. By this time I was under contract to 20th Century-Fox and here we are a little less than two years later, looking forward to the birth of our first child.

Now comes confession number two and never let it be said that your child had a father who holds back the truth! Remember, we had only been going together a few months when we just sort of automatically talked about a June wedding. Then we decided that June was too many centuries away, but before we could do anything about it, Paramount sent you on location for Flaming Feather.

Sitting alone in that furnished room made me realize any room without you in it was a dismal place. In the middle of the night I got up and drove to Sedona, Arizona. I didn't give you any warning, and I guess I'll always remember that expression on your face when you saw me. I literally crept on the set. You were yakking away with your hairdresser so I slipped into the empty chair beside you.

Suddenly you looked around, then went right back to your yakking again. Then came that doubletake. Between shots we took a walk down by the river and made our plans. You were finishing that day but a studio rule compelled you to return home by train. I went on to Las Vegas to find a minister and make arrangements for our wedding. At the Desert Inn, when I engaged a room and wrote Henry McKinnies, Jr., and wife on the register, self-consciousness stuck out

all over me.



He likes to cook, too. So when it's eatin' time, Mr. and Mrs. pitch in

As per plans, you were supposed to wire me the time of your arrival. When you didn't, or so I thought, I was fit to be tied. We finally caught up with each other after I realized I had been going to the wrong hotel inquiring about that telegram!

Even if I forgot to shine my shoes and get the car washed, our plans did go off on schedule. Our two-day honeymoon followed our phone call to our families. They were thrilled and gave us their blessing. You were due back at the studio and I was scheduled to go on location for *The Frogmen*. You had been living at the Hollywood Studio Club (for girls only!), there hadn't been a spare second to find another place, so you moved into my bachelor quarters for a few days. Will you ever forget that experience?

There hadn't even been enough room

for my clothes before, so we really lived like a pair of sardines. You slept on the old davenport which was more comfortable and I took the single bed. There wasn't a kitchen, so between drive-ins, restaurants, and the great kindness of our good friends the Koesslers, we didn't starve. How we both regretted not having a kitchen, for you were one bride whose biscuits couldn't be kidded. A few days later when we found that house in the valley, you cooked your first meal. Fried chicken and cheese cake! No, I didn't pinch myself. I wasn't taking any chances of waking up to find it was all a dream!

We weren't expecting the baby while I was making *Belles on Their Toes* and *Lure of the Wilderness*, so now I wonder what I used to think about between scenes. Recently on the *Dream Boat* set they kidded me a lot because they said I acted like I was in another world. I have news for them—I *was*!

When I wasn't before the camera, my mind took little trips. I thought about how nice it was that we had married young. How wise we were to start our family soon enough to keep growing right along with them. I visualized our future together and compared it to the devotion my own parents have known. Because I know how much I've meant to them, I hope they can move here from Milwaukee when their grandchild arrives. You have your sweet mother and sister here, so you can appreciate what we both mean to our families.



Color photo by Charles Rhodes

As long as this is a one-man confession and it's good for the soul, here's a final secret. I may live to regret telling you this, but I guess I can take it! You have amongst many wonderful qualities, Barbara, dear, the capacity for remaining unspoiled and appreciative. Naturally this inspires me to break my little ol' neck for you.

When we were first married and you went east to do summer stock, I was miserable without you. Then I began counting the days toward the time when we'd be together again. Then I remembered you had said the one thing you had always hoped to have was a red

convertible. I know you didn't expect to own one for years, which made the surprise doubly exciting.

I was at the airport hours before your plane pulled in. My heart was pounding as we greeted each other and as you started to follow me toward the parking lot, I insisted that you wait until I get your bags and pick you up in front of the airport. You waited and I drove up in the reddest convertible in town. It sparkled like an engagement ring. Okay, sweetie, I called out—this is it. Hop in. You froze me with a look and then—there was that doubletake again.

"Oh, Hank!" was all you could say, as you cried all over the brand-new upholstery. I was so pleased. I couldn't say what I'm about to say now. Any time you want my gold watch, the mortgage to the old homestead, or an option on my love for you, all you have to do is look at me that way and say, "Oh, Hank!" Honey, you'll even get better results than penicillin!

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