

Actors roles, lives unlike

Soap stars discuss show

by SUSAN HOPKINS
Battalion Reporter

Whoever said television stars look better in person than on TV was right.

Daytime TV's "All My Children" stars Ellen Shepherd (Kathleen Noone) and Dr. Cliff Warner (Peter Bergman) were no exceptions.

Noone and Bergman looked nothing like the parts they play on "All My Children" when they arrived in Bryan Friday night for a press conference, and for a program at Manor East Mall Saturday.

Both Noone and Bergman were quick to agree that there are differences between them and the characters they play on the show.

Noone, who plays a middle-aged divorcee (Ellen), with a 20-year-old daughter and 1-year-old granddaughter, said the conservative role she plays on the show and the way she handles relationships with males conflicts with her personal views.

Bergman, the 26-year-old "heart-throb" of the soap, said he wishes he had some of the good qualities his character (Cliff) has on the show. He said Cliff never swears, and is very conservative and straight-laced.

He said that although "All My Children" is considered one of the "straighter" soap operas on TV, it was one of the first to deal with social issues such as abortion, down's syndrome and rape.

Bergman said the actors and actresses are allowed to change their dialogue on the show as long as the director knows ahead of time. He said the changes are usually minor and deal only with the phrasing of lines.

Bergman said the audience can also have a big effect on the plot of "All My Children" through letters, which he said are answered personally by the actors on the show.

Noone said that between answering fan mail and learning script lines, an 11-to-14-hour day of work is not at all uncommon. She said they stay at the studio from 7:30 a.m. until 10:30 p.m. frequently, since five one-hour shows must be put together each week.

Bergman, from Camp Springs, Md., said he got into acting in the 11th grade, when he had a crush on a girl in the drama department at his high school. He said he always thought drama people were weird in high school, but changed his mind when he was asked to play Captain Hook in a school production of "Peter Pan."

After graduation, Bergman said, he went to Prince George's College in Maryland for one year, then went to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York for two years. He said he waited on a lot of tables before he got a break on a "Kojak" episode, and began "All My Children" 11 months ago.

Noone, a native of Laurelton, N.Y., said she studied fine arts at Ithaca College and West Virginia University. After graduation, she sang full time, but had intentions of becoming an actress.

Noone said she enrolled in Southern Methodist University to do her graduate work in acting, but only had \$50 to start with. Through a lucky break, when a graduate student didn't accept his scholarship, she said she was offered his position and was able to finish school.

Noone said she acted in Houston at the Alley Theatre and did repertory work for 13 years before she became Ellen Shepherd on "All My Children."

Saturday, at the mall in Bryan, Bergman and Noone signed autographs to promote the soap, while a special master of ceremonies, called the "Trivia King," answered questions about "All My Children," and other soap operas.

Although he said he could only guess what would happen on "All My Children," he said the audience could probably expect "Edna Sago" to be killed in a plane crash on her way home from the Bahamas. He also said Erica Cain had a baby in February, and will return to the show after she supposedly "flops in Hollywood."

He said the actors themselves don't find out what will happen on the show until two weeks before it is taped.

When Bergman was asked if Cliff Warner and his fiancée Nina Courtlandt would eventually be married on the show, he said, "I'm not sure, but I have a feeling Palmer Courtlandt will get in the way one more time."

He said that is not surprising since, "In soap operas, the worst thing that can happen to you is to live happily ever after."

Alcoa fund to support engineers

Grants for engineering scholarships have been presented to Texas A&M University by the Aluminum Company of America.

The ALCOA Foundation funds include \$2,500 for a fellowship in mechanical engineering, \$1,000 each for scholarships in mechanical, electrical, industrial and chemical engineering, \$450 for a Summer Institute for Science Teachers and \$750 unrestricted, Foundation Vice President Earl L. Gadberry said.

Checks were presented by a group from ALCOA's Rockdale plant led by W.D. Essary, engineering manager. Essary is a 1947 graduate of Texas A&M. With him were Garry Blagg, W.B. Howell and Glade Lantz.



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Scoutmaster motivates kids to win speech championships

United Press International
DALLAS — Mike Alexander says he doesn't teach public speaking — he motivates. In the past two years, Alexander has "motivated" students to national public speaking championships.

Alexander, 32, is known as the "White Shadow," named for the television basketball coach, at tiny J.M. Ervin School in southeast Dallas. The school is 99 percent black. Alexander is white.

"I'm the icing in the Oreo," he said.

For the past two years, Alexander has sent the eventual national champion to the Reader's Digest Association-Boy Scouts of America national public speaking contest.

"I'm not a speech teacher," he said. "I have never taught speech. But I know how to motivate."

It started about 10 years ago when Ervin was going to begin a Boy Scout troop but didn't have anyone to be scoutmaster. Alexander, an Eagle Scout in high school, volunteered.

"One kid showed up the first meeting, we doubled our attendance to two the meeting after that, but, by summer, we had 35 kids at our camp," he said. "When we got back from a jamboree, one of the Scout officials asked if we had someone from our troop who could talk about his experiences. I said, 'Boy, did we. Ernest Tutt.'"

Alexander reminisced about "King" Tutt.

"That kid had the biggest mouth," Alexander said. "He just needed a little motivation."

"I was always in trouble at school," Tutt said. "The teachers were always writing me down for bad conduct because I was always talking. I saw Mike Alexander one day at a school assembly and he was wearing those Boy Scout short pants. I don't know why, but he looked really neat."

"When I went home from school that night, I asked my mother if I could join the Scouts. For all practical purposes, he became my father. It was like being shot out of a slingshot. He gave me goals."

Tutt entered the public speaking contest in 1977 and went as far as the regionals. He made only the area contest in 1978. He went back in 1979 — all the way to the national

victory, and then entered and won a summertime "Super Bowl" for winners of major speech contests.

Alexander looked around for a successor and settled on Kirk Willis, another member of the Boy Scout troop.

"Mr. Alexander wants you to do what you want to do," young Willis said. "Once you have started something, he is going to push you to the finish. He is sort of like two people: when you are younger he is very helpful, but when you turn 15, he expects you to change, be aggressive."

"He doesn't tell you what to do anymore; he expects you to make your own decisions. He will give advice. He will give you anything in reason, but he lets you know your future is up to you."

Willis followed Tutt's route through the national finals and won. But Alexander was not there to

watch the victory speech. He was back at Ervin.

"I've got these four kids," he said. "They are great. Any one of them might do it. The potential, most people can't see it coming out of this small school. But it is here; it is really everywhere. All they need is a little motivation."

Now you know

United Press International
A tree found in a Tenere Desert Oasis — 31 miles from the nearest frond — is believed to be the most remote in existence; it was removed to the Museum of Niamey, Niger, after surviving a 1960 accident in which a Frenchman rammed it with his truck.

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