A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

CORRESPONDENT JESSE BIRNBAUM makes it sound simple. "It was a typical assignment," he recalls. "Someone in New York telephoned me in London and said, 'Go to Athens, find Liv Ullmann and interview her for a cover story.' So I went to Greece and found Ullmann and interviewed her for a cover story."

Actually, Birnbaum's reporting for this week's story on the Norwegian actress was not nearly so routine. Before he sent his files to Writer Gerald Clarke, Birnbaum trailed Ullmann and the company filming Forty Carats for five days over the Greek countryside. Then he startled the star by announcing that he was traveling with her to Hollywood for still more conversations. Trapped by her seat belt, Ullmann talked at length about her life and work, pausing only to watch an in-flight movie.

"Wouldn't it be funny if they showed one of your pictures," said Birnbaum. As it turned out, the movie was The Candidate, which includes no role for Liv Ullmann but has a scene in which Birnbaum appears—for about 20 seconds—as a reporter. "Unlike Liv, who says that she can't bear to watch herself in films, I can indeed bear

watching myself," admits Birnbaum. "Later, after an extraordinary amount of thought, she offered her discreet professional judgment. 'I thought, she said, you looked very...uh...natural."

No wonder. Birnbaum has been interested in things theatrical since his college days. After a stint with Margo Jones' Theater-in-the-Round in Dallas, he joined TIME in 1951 as contributing editor. Later, as a senior editor, he presided over the Music, Show Business and Cinema sections, among others. Once, while gathering material for a cover story on Dick Cavett, he temporarily took

LOOKALIKES BIRNBAUM & SCOTT over the talk program, which became "the Jesse Birnbaum Show, with Jesse's guest, Amateur Magician Dick Cavett

This year Birnbaum moved to London, whence he covers the European cultural scene. His resemblance to Actor George C. Scott makes for easy ice breaking. At one point Ullmann introduced the makes for easy too ordaining. At one point Olimann introduced the correspondent to Swedish Film Director Jan Troell, calling Birnbaum George C. Scott. "Poor Troell bit," says Birnbaum, "shook hands eagerly, apologized for not having recognized such an imhands eagerly, appropriate the having recognized such an important star and wondered whether he might discuss a little project portant star and wondered whether he hight discuss a little project that he had in mind. Liv collapsed in shame and laughter and blew my imminent stardom."

Then the Scott connection got to Ullmann. As Birnbaum recalls it: "One morning she phoned and said, 'I dreamed about you—or George C. Scott—last night. It was a terrible nightmare, with mur-George C. Scott—last light. It was a terrible nightmare, with murder and everything, but you—or George C. Scott—saved me.' I told her that it was I who had performed the rescue, not Scott. She seemed reassured."

Ralph P. Davdson
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