

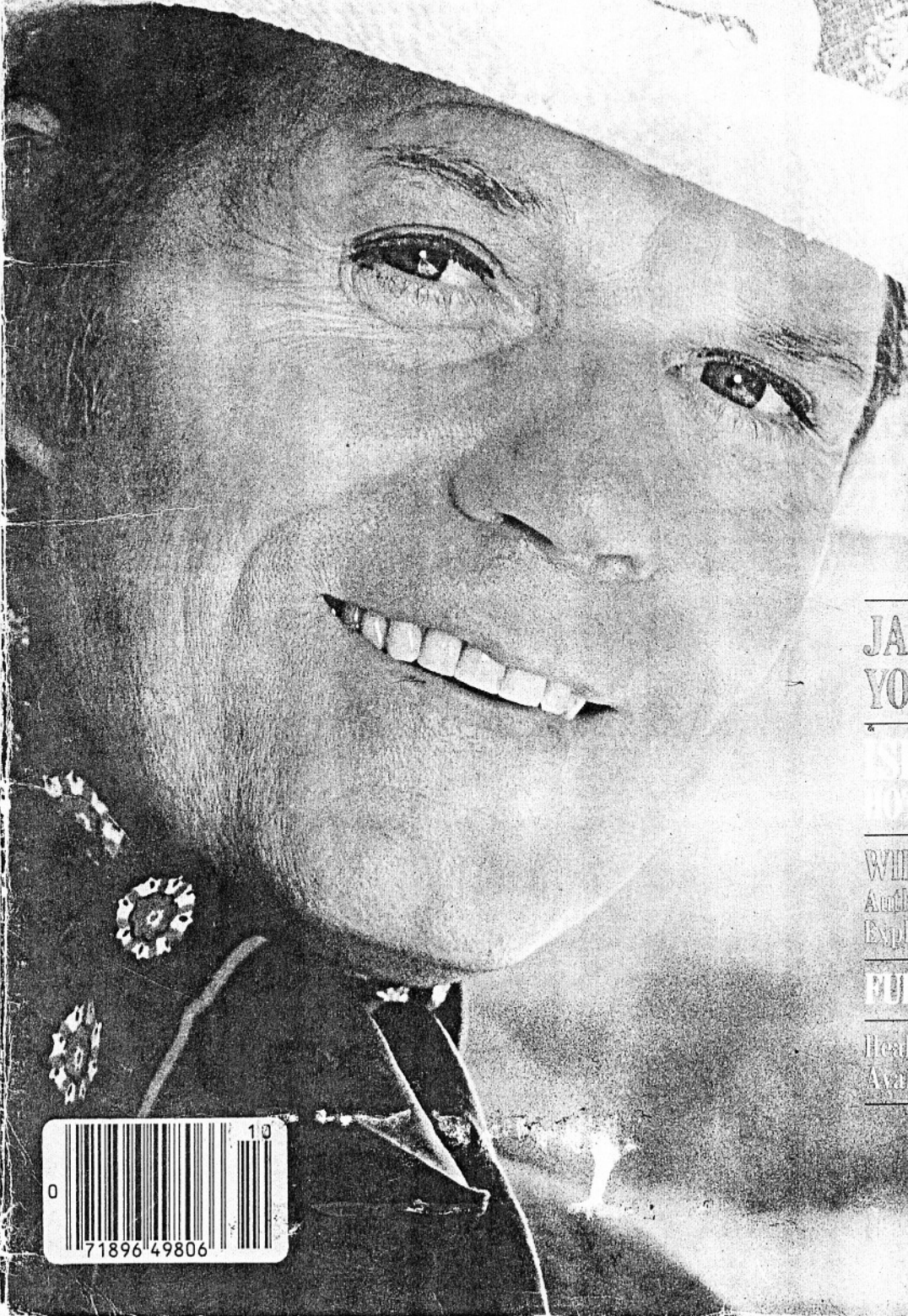
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ALOHA

The Magazine of Hawaii



**JACK LORD: ON LOVE,
YOUTH AND THE U.S.A.**

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Jack Lord

The Man Behind McGarrett

by Rita Witherwax

On screen, he's the tough cop, McGarrett of *Hawaii Five-O*. The loner. The bachelor. The incorruptible cop. Any romantic interest is always scripted to die before the last commercial. It never rains on Diamond Head. All criminals are brought to justice. "Book 'em Dano." Some people say that Hawaii is really the star of the series. But if Hawaii were the secret to success, we'd have *Streets of Honolulu*, *Emergency Five-O* and *The Bionic Beachboy*.

McGarrett, his tousled locks windblown at Makapuu Point, his jaw set as he surveys land and water—he's the one who kept *Five-O* in the running for 12 years. Scenery just doesn't hold up that long and nobody since Joyce Kilmer has written a fan letter to a tree.

On the set of *Five-O* when the cameras aren't trained on him, McGarrett recedes and Lord emerges. The perfectionist:

"When we filmed our last show, the 284th, I strove just as much as I did on the pilot. That last shot meant just as much to me as the first."

The dedicated artist:

"People who don't care, who are dilettantes, people who are in it for the money—I have no patience with them. I was doing a kind of art form and if you didn't have the dedication, I didn't want you there. I fired people who consistently didn't care. It's inexcusable. I wanted an atmosphere where creative people could work. Many people were there for the whole 12 years—drivers, technicians - they'd come back year after year."

The loyal friend:

Out of respect for *Five-O's* producer, Lenny Freeman, who died seven years ago, Lord assumed his duties, and, "No one since has had the title of executive producer."

The recluse:

"On the set I usually ate alone. I know people thought I was being aloof, conceited. But it was my time for spiritual refreshment. 'Okay, Father, here I am.' It was a half-hour or 45 minutes. I could get away and recharge my batteries. It's better than spending the time making small talk." His social life was virtually non-existent when the show was in production, "You can't





get up at four in the morning if you go out at night. We could never go out at night. Marie didn't mind. She knew the demands of the business. When I'd come home, she'd ask, 'What can I do for you?'"

In his office at the Diamond Head studio of *Five-O*, Lord is surrounded with mementos of his acting career. There are posters from his Broadway days: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Flame Out*, *Traveling Lady*. There are the saddles from Stony Burke days. Lord is tense, he is still very much on stage. He speaks of his wife with an actor's polished eloquence, "The bride of my youth who abides with me still." He continues, with a flourish, "Every morning of my life, it's new. She takes care of our home with love and care. Marie is a Leo, a lioness. She is fiercely courageous—no pushover. No shrinking violet. I'm a Capricorn. We're not supposed to get along."

The tough cop:

"You come home tired and cranky and dirty and it all boils down to, 'Boy, I love that dame so much, I'll control myself.'"

The professional:

"I heard of a good talent scout at Twentieth Century Fox. I walked in and said, 'I think I'd like to be an actor.'"

"What do you know about acting?" the man asked—and I answered, cocky, "What is there to know about acting?" His answer set me straight, "What is there to know about brain surgery?" So I asked him where I could learn to be a good actor and he said that the best teacher was Sanford Meisner.

"Meisner's first comment when I told him I wanted to be an actor was, 'Have you got 20 years? Because that's what it takes to be an actor.' Well, I didn't have that kind of time. But when I had been an actor for 20 years I knew what he meant."

Lord is still very much Lord, the actor, at the studio. He wears his plantation luna hat, his dapper scarf, his make-up. He never, for a minute, forgets the footlights in his mind. Lord, the man, is missing in action.

It is at home that we finally meet Jack

Jack Lord, alias McGarrett.



Lord, the artist at work, on the lanai of his Kahala Beach home.

Lord, the man behind the many masks. He is relaxed, waiting. Extremely courteous, he has blocked out the time and he has two coffee cups waiting on the table. There is a softness to his face perhaps induced by the home milieu, perhaps achieved by a month of rest now that production is pau. When he reads poetry, he wears glasses which do not detract from his handsomeness, but instead make him more appealing, vulnerable, as if, finally, there is a flaw, something that's not perfect. He's human, after all.

We talk about values. How did the kid from Brooklyn end up on Kahala Beach among the millionaires?

"I believed in the great American dream—that it can still be done. It wasn't just the Mellons and Rockefellers before us. It can be done now. It takes dedication to an ideal. America is still the land of opportunity and I try to instill that in the young people I talk to. We can all still do it in spite of the

limitations imposed by our society. All the negatives are here and people always talk about them, but you have to learn to shove those negatives aside. I never thought in terms of whether I could or couldn't do something. I thought in terms of accomplishment.

"I always wanted to be the best. When I was in college I wanted to be the best football player. Then the best sailor, best artist, best actor. When you want to be the best it doesn't mean that you are the best, but at least you want to be the best. You have to have a fierce dedication.

"I never wanted to emulate anyone. I always wanted to be individualistic—in my style, speech habits, goals. I didn't wear the fad clothes even when I was a teenager.

"The trouble today is that all people are dragged down to the level of the masses."

Lord pulled from his files, "My Creed" by Dean Alfange, printed in

This Week, December 30, 1951. It reads, in part, "I do not choose to be a common man. It is my right to be uncommon—if I can."

He has a whole collection of poetry and prose he has saved over a lifetime. Here he is not the actor playing to an audience of one. He is sharing. There is obvious happiness in his face as he comes across a favorite piece and reads it . . .

*"I know not how such things can be;
I only know there came to me
A fragrance such as never clings
To aught save happy living things:
A sound as of some joyous elf
Singing sweet songs to please
himself . . ."*

The lines are from Edna St. Vincent Millay and are revealing of his character. As Lord admits, "Other people often say it better."

He attributes much of what he is to his parents, although he discounts



"Water Lilies," a painting by Jack Lord, photographed by the artist.

heredity. "I think the influence of heredity is limited. We're all individuals. I don't think heredity has anything to do with it. I don't think God needs genes to get results.

"Every leaf on every tree is different. There are no two leaves the same in all of creation. That's what the uniqueness of the individual is all about. I think every individual is unique. When I talk to the kids at Koolau (juvenile detention facility) they are so full of vengeance, so full of anger, venom, misinformation. I try and tell them to extricate themselves. I think there are so many excuses made for and by people to excuse behavior. These people accept their limitations. And others are all too willing to impose limitations on them.

"Suppose people didn't listen to that. Suppose they took responsibility for themselves. Everyone has that ability. Certainly the burden is greater on some people than others, people with

unfortunate backgrounds, but it can be done. I know many successful people who were bounced from foster home to foster home and didn't receive any of the good things in life, but they grew up to create beautiful impressions for the rest of us.

"When I was a kid we didn't get an allowance. We had to earn our money. I made a wagon out of a baby carriage and I delivered the *Long Island Daily Press*. I know kids today all up and down Kahala Avenue who have cars and get 10 or 15 dollars a week allowance.

"What about federal aid? You can't starve to death anymore. No one has to go without medical attention. But it's gone too far. The moral fiber of this country is very weak. Look what's happened to England because of socialism.

"I resent the kids who say they refuse to register for the draft. What are they going to do? Run to Canada?

Baloney. Don't they think they have any responsibility to the country that allowed them to have everything they've got? They should see what its like in other places.

"The individual is what made America great. There are no statues to groups. When you see a statue, there is always an individual on that pedestal.

"My set of values grew during my formative years. I was fortunate to have good guidance from my parents. I think a parent has a duty to form a child and lay goals before him. I have two brothers who are lawyers, a sister who teaches at Columbia. We all went to college.

"As children we were taken to the art exhibits—the Metropolitan, the Museum of Natural History—by my father and mother. That's when a subway ride was a dime.

"Both my parents finished high school and my father had a couple of years of college. But he was a self-made man. I am second generation American. My grandparents were from Ireland. But I'm not a professional Irishman. I love America. I don't mean to wave the flag but that's how I feel about it."

When questioned about his parents, Lord remembers his father as the man

who gave him a penny a line for memorizing poetry and who read him a whole shelf of Dickens' books.

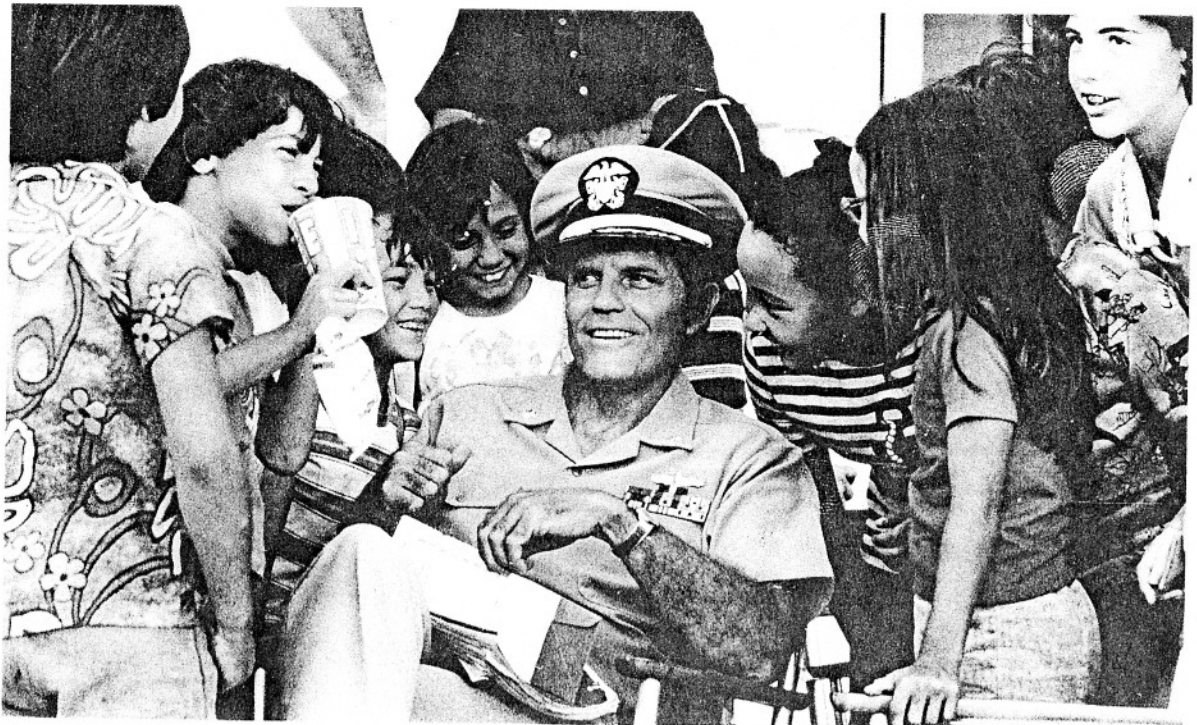
"My mother is still living. She runs a farm in upstate New York. She has people who work for her. She went back to the farm about three years ago when my father died. Mother was from farming country. She's 81. I occasionally see her. All the rest of the family is on the Eastern seaboard so it's easier for them."

For a man with such apple-pie, Fourth-of-July values, he seems curiously detached, even cool when talking about his family, "No, we're not close anymore. We've all gone our own way. I don't miss it. There are plateaus in life. We make our own way."

The walls are up around the man and most people only build walls to defend themselves. "Yes, there are past hurts. Just because people want to know all about a person's private life doesn't mean I have to spill my guts to the press. A person is entitled to some privacy. Why should I start blabbing? Just because people want to know? There is nothing positive in talking about old hurts. It serves no purpose and only opens old scars."

Lord's family ties have for many years been reserved exclusively for his

Relaxing on the set of a film, Lord ad-libs with small fans.





Marie Lord in a photograph made by her husband.

wife, Marie. His dedication to her is total. "She gets my complete love, my whole heart and being. I live for that lady. I adore her."

His ways of expressing his caring have tinges of the sophomoric . . . and what woman doesn't love that! He brings flowers and recites poetry. Once, in New York, he arranged for the neon lights on the New York Times Building to spell out for a full minute, the message:

*DOLL FACE—
MARIE THE MAGNIFICENT,
LIGHT OF MY LIFE, I ADORE YOU,
YOUR JACK*

It was all framed by quivering hearts and flowers.

Many people deeply love each other, but cannot live together. When questioned about the adhesive that has held his marriage together in an industry noted for marital messes and in an age

of fractured families, he said, "Many things. First of all, respect. Respect. Respect. I admire that lady and I guess it's mutual. The other thing is there has to be complete trust. I can completely unburden myself to her and she to me and we'd never hurt each other.

"We share everything. For instance, even the letters I get from women. I get the wierdest, strangest letters from women wanting to meet me, offering themselves to me—sometimes with photographs—nude photographs. There are times when we roar. We laugh over the absurdity. But really, it's very sad. It's loneliness. People lavish affection on a face on the television screen that should be going to other people. But they have no where to go. They transfer affection. The letters are from all kinds of people—little girls, college kids, old ladies, divorcees in their forties and fifties. The point is, Marie and I can tell each other anything."

Perhaps again, one of his favorite pieces will best express the sentiment:

*" . . . Give me, instead of beauty's
bust,
A tender heart, a loyal mind,
Which with temptation I could trust
Yet never linked with error find.*

*One in whose gentle bosom I
Could pour my secret heart of woes,
Like the care-burdened honey-fly
That hides his murmurs in the
rose . . ."*

Darley

There is much that remains a mystery about Jack Lord. He has carefully walled his garden and is happy within. We suspect his roses, though, have large and piercing thorns, so he will seldom, if ever, hold them and offer them.

Another of his favorite pieces, which he has labeled "love" hints at the unspoken: "Here is a mental treatment that is guaranteed to cure every ill that

flesh is heir to: sit for half an hour every night and mentally forgive everyone against whom you have any ill will or antipathy." This is by Charles Fillmore.

Lord is absolutely scrupulous about not denigrating anyone. He doesn't want to be on anyone's pardon list. He would never have printed or say words that would wound another and so he is unhappy in the extreme when it is done to him. He probably finds it incomprehensible why it should be done.

But he also has underlined an Earl Keith saying that goes: "Criticism is something you can avoid by saying nothing, doing nothing and being nothing."

Obviously the man has not chosen that route. Aside from acting and producing he is venturing forth with the script for a television play (production unscheduled) about a young sea captain who is probably a combination of Lord and his father.

As for his art, he was a painter before he was an actor. Going back to college days at New York University, he was an art major—who attended on a football scholarship. He says, "I'll always paint. That was my first love."

He keeps a whole closet neatly stacked with paper. "I buy by the ream." Referring to his new leisure, he added, "I'm gonna fill it up."

The walls of his home exhibit his work. "Waterlillies" which he painted specifically for Marie hangs in the dining room. She was on his mind as he worked. The piece has a serenity and a sparkle to it and says much about the frame of mind of the artist.

"Art is a gift. I don't take any credit for it. God gave it to me."

Lord is also an accomplished photographer. He "fell in love with photography" while a merchant seaman visiting foreign ports. "I used the camera to record what I saw, then I'd translate it into painting. Now I work from the subconscious. Art is the expression of the man. It's like fishing with a net with a big mesh. All the little things fall through. The big things remain. What I try to do is, I try to work from memory. Then it's different, fresh, unique, my own."

He may consider art a gift from God and at the prices he gets for his paintings he may very well be right. They sell in the neighborhood of \$6,000 a piece—which is a well manicured neighborhood. The Margaret Keene Gallery sold \$35,000 worth of his art in one month, and another gallery moved \$64,000 worth of Lord's graphic art in one year.

Bernie Schanz of Center Art Gallery, who once handled Lord's work claims, "Serious art collectors bought his work. People like that don't pay that kind of money unless they think it's worth it."

Woody Collins, now a vice president of India Imports and former dealer in Lord art, recalled, "I remember people coming in and saying 'I want to see McGarrett's paintings.'"

It seems that Lord is going to have to do some deft maneuvering to escape from McGarrett. He will have to be faster of foot than the notorious Wo Fat.

When asked what he plans to do about it all, he said he doesn't really feel that playing McGarrett for so long is a handicap. "I had a lot of roles in movies, T.V. and on Broadway before *Hawaii Five-O*. I played killers, doctors, horrible people, patriots, cowboys, executives, aviators, woodsmen. It could have been a problem—but it won't be.

"What am I going to do? It's a four letter word—rest. I've done 284 hours of film. The series is still viable and very profitable. I may do a *Five-O* movie in two or three years—as *Star Trek* has done—it's too soon now. I have an agent for the first time in 15 years. Agents are scouring the market. I don't want to just go to work. But I do want to get away from dear McGarrett."

Lord has just finished directing a pilot film for a new TV series, *M Station: Hawaii*. Produced at a cost of \$1.8 million, at press time, its fate is uncertain. Lord does not act in this film, but stays behind the cameras. He's also working on a screenplay from a novel. To some people, this definitely could not be classified as rest. But after years of the grueling *Five-O* schedule, the energetic star finds all this relaxing.

"There is a metaphysical premise

that the place you seek is seeking you—the place you need, needs you.

"I honestly think it was divine guidance—my doing the series. The whole thing. Someone else had been cast in the lead role and they tried to sell it all up and down Madison Avenue and couldn't—you know, looking for sponsors. I was under contract to CBS to do a Western. They were going to drop *Gunsmoke*. Then one day Mr. Paley came in to the planning office and asked them where *Gunsmoke* was on the schedule saying, 'It's my wife's favorite show.' They got panicky. Couldn't drop it. But they already had me under contract to do the replacement and were paying me. I was supposed to play a U.S. marshall on the Santa Fe Trail—a character named Cutter.

"Then one morning several weeks later at 7 A.M. Perry Lafferty, vice president of CBS telephoned me, 'We have a hot project. Can you read the script and get back to us by nine?' It was *Five-O*. I read the first half and turned to Marie, 'How would you like to live in Hawaii, Doll?'

"At nine, I walked into the CBS office. Lafferty said, 'Will you do it?' I said, 'When do we go to work?' Then he held the phone out and said, 'Here, talk to this fellow.' It was Lenny Freeman who had created the show and written the pilot film."

The rest is history. Lord took a tough cop role and parlayed it into one of the most successful series on television at a time when the cutting room floor was littered with the corpses of tough cops. He mixed the right amount of beefcake, gorgeous Hawaiian scenery, violence and glory-glory-hallelujah values into a mai tai that thrilled millions.

When the series was finished filming last December, in appreciation CBS took full page ads in the Honolulu Sunday newspaper and all the trade papers, *the Hollywood Reporter*, *Daily Variety*, and *Weekly Variety* proclaiming, in part:

"His rare dedication and unmatched professionalism made *Hawaii Five-O* the third longest running dramatic series in network television . . . fortunately aloha doesn't always mean good-bye." **ALOHA**