

ONE thing Jack Lord has in abundance: Confidence. An hour with the guy sends you reeling, woozily convinced that he's not only a competent actor (as in "Hawaii Five-O"), but a leading light in the world of art, a guy who played football well enough to attract professional attention, a supersalesman, a judge of horseflesh and (rarest of all in Kookville) a one woman man. The disturbing thing is, he's either right on all counts or one of the town's better talkers. It must be admitted that prying is not required to get Lord going.

The man takes off on any topic, switches agreeably to any other, insists he doesn't give a hoot what people think, and keeps up the conversation until his wife calls to tell him the roast is getting

cold. This sends him packing. Lord worships his wife, insists that she accompany him on any out of town trips, praises her cooking and has been married to her for 20 years.

Lord says he's the only art major to have attended New York university on a football scholarship.

"I took heat for three years of varsity ball about being an artist," he said. "But I never cared what people thought and I still don't."

Lord (then known as John Joseph Patrick Ryan) played quarterback well enough to get tryout offers from the Philadelphia Eagles and Pittsburgh Steelers, but decided that he had had enough of football, he said.

He's 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighs 185, which is 20 less than his college days. His brother, he said, "went the other way — he played at Alabama at 200 and weighs 250 now."

Although he says his ambition is to "paint eight hours a day," he adds: "I don't think I could ever give up acting entirely."

Lord keeps four or five canvases going at once, moving from one to another as the spirit moves him. He describes his style as "impressionistic — not photographic in the Dali sense; I use hot colors, very bold. I'm working with acrylics lately. They dry quickly, and that's good for an impatient man."

"I was a much better painter when I was 18," he said, "but I couldn't sell anything. Now that I have name value as an actor, people want to buy my work. I've sold 40 paintings in the last two years, starting at \$1,000. The best went for \$3,500. Some were bought by astute collectors."

"I destroy 50% of what I paint . . . things that don't come up to the standards I set for myself."

He approaches acting with the same zeal (seldom destroying himself, however), regarding his profession as an art. He is among the growing number of performers who believe that today's sophisticated audiences can be better reached with authentic backgrounds.



Jack Lord

"There's an electricity, an extra dimension, about location shooting (in Hawaii)," he said. "It helps the actors. Sometimes it's tougher for cameras and lights, but it adds to the atmosphere."

As chief of the mythical Five-O unit in the series, Lord has a chance to do his sleuthing all over the islands. With the exception of James MacArthur and Richard Denning, and imported guest stars, "Hawaii Five-O" has to lean heavily on local amateur talent, but Lord says he and his partner, producer Lenny Freeman, have been running an in-service acting school, "the Five-O stock company."

Getting proper scripts was a problem the first year, Lord said. The show now has the highest writing budget in TV working for Freeman, the creator and executive producer of the series.

Born in New York, son of a steamship company executive, Lord went to sea at 14 as a summer deck cadet, later attended the Fort Trumbull academy at New London, Conn., and earned third mate's papers. In 1950, he was sent to Washington to work on training films for the maritime service — "how to launch a lifeboat, nuts and bolts films like that," he said. He worked on 23 in all, then went back to NYU in 1953 to complete college. But the notion that he might be an actor was now with him.

"I decided to show the training films around Broadway, but people just laughed at me," Lord said.

Acting teacher Sanford Melsner finally took Lord under his wing in a night class. Daytimes, Lord sold Cadillacs.

Lord says he was making \$18,000 a year selling Cadillacs but wasn't getting anywhere as an actor.

"I went to my marvelous wife, and said: 'Honey, the time has come,' and she said 'Go.' I have been forever grateful to her for that. My income the next year dropped to \$1,100, but I was doing what I wanted to do."

Ralph Bellamy gave Lord his first job, a role in the TV series "Man Against Crime." His first big break came when he was awarded a role opposite Kim Stanley in "Traveling Lady" on Broadway. That indirectly led to his replacing Ben Gazzara opposite Barbara Bel Geddes in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," and that, in turn, led director Otto Preminger to invite Lord to Hollywood for a part in "The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell."

Lord nearly turned Preminger down because the part wasn't big. But Preminger said: "My boy, it's a picture in color with Gary Cooper. Think of it as a screen test with the greatest actor in the world." That clinched it.

Lord's career seemed to be in high gear, both on Broadway and in motion pictures, when he found that he had been type cast as a heavy. He began to refuse roles.

After a long, dry period, Cecil Smith wrote about Lord's plight in the Los Angeles Times. An executive at Paramount, remembering Lord from Broadway, offered him an outright hero role in a western, and things have been upbeat ever since.

How come Lord didn't stick with John Joseph Patrick Ryan?

"I always thought the name sounded like a police commissioner in New York," he said. "I've always been called Jack, and I found the name Lord in the family." Somehow, it seems to fit.