

The Lord of the Islands

By Jerry Buck, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Six years ago, Jack Lord confidently predicted: "This show is going to make it. I don't see how it can fail."

Before that first season in 1968 was half over, Lord nearly had to eat those words. "Hawaii Five-O" was going down the tube.

But at Christmas time, CBS pulled a schedule sleight-of-hand. It switched the show from Thursday, where it was being slaughtered by "Ironside," to Wednesday. There, it killed off the opposition, Burt Reynolds, "Dan August," and the rest is ratings history.

THE POINT IS THAT LORD, on the Mainland for a brief vacation with his wife, Marie, is a supremely confident man. A few disgruntled voices have intimated that it is more than just confidence.

Over the years, reports have wafted over the waters that all is not milk and honey on the island paradise where the series is filmed. That Lord is possessed of a large ego and once rewrote his network biography in terms that would have flattered a Greek god. That his fellow actors are a bit rankled that Lord retains exclusive right to be called "star." The credits read: "Starring Jack Lord, with James MacArthur, Kam Fong and Al Harrington."

I asked Lord about these rumors and put to him the question of ego and star billing. His blue eyes seemed to ice for a moment, and he considered his words carefully.

"SOMEONE ONCE SAID ANYONE who's spoken about is spoken against," he replied.

"I had a deal with the network going in that called for star billing. There was a reason for that. I don't know where the criticism began. It's mostly about Jimmy MacArthur.

"But he wasn't even in our pilot. I congratulated him when he was hired. He's a marvelous actor, but I don't see why any actor, who had nothing to do with the pilot or selling it on Madison Avenue, should be handed star billing. Stardom is something you earn. The two shows I starred in, Hawaii Five-O and

'Stoney Burke,' I helped sell them on Madison Avenue. So, you may call it ego. I call it good business sense."

Lord said he did not know of any open friction on the show.

"HAWAII FIVE-O" IS A flamboyant show and one of the consistently better detective shows on the air. What's interesting is that while the show's production values are a little flashy, Lord's style is not.

The lush locations, the exotic faces and the snap and crispness of its color impart a special look. Add to this the bizarre crimes and the frenetic pace and you have a very stylized show.

On the other hand, as Steve McGarrett, the head of the Five-O unit, Lord's performance is sturdy, almost dour.

After six years on the air, Lord's McGarrett still remains a mystery man. We see only one side of him — the business side.

"Not knowing him works for us," said Lord. "We get letters from people wanting to see something of his personal life. I think the mystery piques people. I think it also annoys them."

In his own life, Lord isn't a mystery, although he is a very private person. He said that living in Honolulu, where he intends to remain once the show leaves the air, doesn't give him a sense of isolation.

"Even when I was in Hollywood I was never of it,"

he said. "I never ran with the crowd. I'm a loner, with the exception of a few people I grew up with on Broadway — Paul Newman, Tony Franciosa, Steve McQueen, Darren McGavin. I didn't have many contacts with Hollywood. I wanted to spend my time with my wife."

Lord and his wife, a former fashion designer, live in a plush condominium at Kahala Beach.

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