

"I LOVE the entertainment business," Bill Self said last week. "I like the movies, television, the people in the business. And I like my job in it.

"If I were running a network I'd have a responsibility to give the public cultural, educational and informational programming and if I were in that spot I'd try to fulfill that responsibility. But as the television production head of a major studio, my job is to turn out entertainment and to do it on as broad a scale as possible."

Mr. Self is executive vice president of 20th Century-Fox Television and the programs that the studio has on the air this season offer good evidence that he practices what he preaches.

There is *Daniel Boone*, action adventure lightly based on early American history; *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, underwater science fiction escapism; *Valentine's Day*, the comedic, romantic adventures of a young man about Manhattan; *12 O'Clock High*, dramatic action of the U. S. Army Air Force in World War II, and *Peyton Place*, which smashed TV tradition by putting a serial story into prime evening time, not once but twice a week.

"I'm sure most people thought *Peyton Place* would fail," Mr. Self observed. "When it's a tough job to get people to tune in a program once a week, what chance would we have to get them there to watch our show on two evenings? Well, we have about 60 million viewers and I'd guess that most weeks most of them see both episodes."

Pilots in Production ■ Last year, 20th Century-Fox TV produced seven pilots, got five of them on the networks for four-and-one-half hours of prime time per week. "This year, we're making 10 pilots and if I repeat last year's record I'll be fired, as we haven't got enough space to make that many series," he said smilingly.

"To be realistic," he added, "I expect three or four of our current series to continue next season and hopefully we'll sell two or three new ones."

Of the 10 new pilots, two are one-hour programs, he said, and eight are half-hours. "Last year" Mr. Self said "the breakdown was three hours and three half-hours and one what you might call a doubledecker [*Peyton Place*], so you could say there's a slight trend toward the half-hour program for next season, at least in our thinking. And there are some signs that we're not alone.

"The trend is still strongly to comedy shows, which have traditionally been pegged at the half-hour length. But three pilots for new westerns are being made as half-hours—we have one and so does MGM-TV and Goodson-Todman's *Branded* starts on NBC-TV in

Entertainment: goal and glory of William Self

January—so maybe this marks a return to half-hour dramatic programs.

"In the field of comedy, we at 20th are guessing that there'll be a return to normalcy, with families of the Donna Reed variety more prevalent than the Addamses or Munsters. We're making one with Shirley Temple as a social worker in San Francisco and another with Pat Boone as a young engineer in Hawaii and we have high hopes for them both."

It Had to Be Hollywood ■ The drama bug bit Bill Self early. In high school he spent more time on stage than in the classroom, and while he passed up dra-

matics at the University of Chicago, the minute he had his sheepskin in hand, Mr. Self headed for Hollywood.

In eight years as an actor, Bill Self appeared in many pictures, among them "Red River," "I Was a Male War Bride," "The Thing" and "Adam's Rib." "I worked enough to support my family," he commented, "but at length I realized what I'm sure many others had grasped much sooner—that I was never going to be a star. It was Spencer Tracy, a close friend for many years, who gave me the clincher. 'Bill,' he said, 'acting is great if you're a star, but if you aren't it's no good.'"

So Bill Self moved from acting into production—and concurrently from the movies into television—as assistant to Bernie Tabakin on the *China Smith* series, a half-hour action-adventure show starring Dan Duryea. Next he became associate producer of the *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars* (and he found himself working with a combination of a rooster and a critic: Schlitz's director of advertising at the time was his father, Edwin B. Self). Promoted to producer, Bill Self produced 208 episodes of this highly acclaimed anthology series.

Frankie to Dobie ■ In 1957, he was appointed producer of the *Frank Sinatra Show*, an ABC-TV series with some shows done live and others on film which helped establish the popular singers-on-stools pattern for TV musical programming.

Next, Mr. Self became an executive producer for CBS-TV, where he helped to create the *Twilight Zone* and *Hotel de Paree* series.

In 1959, he was appointed director of programs, administration, West Coast, for the network. That December he moved to 20th Century-Fox Television as an executive producer. He was responsible for putting *Hong Kong*, *Bus Stop*, *Margie* and *Dobie Gillis* on the air. In October 1962, he was made vice president in charge of TV production and last June he was named executive vice president of television.

With his high forehead and unworried manner, Bill Self looks more like the young history professor he once planned on being than the harrassed Hollywood producer. Nor does he act in the high-strung dictatorial manner which supposedly is the mark of his profession.

"In good times and bad—and he's been here through both—I've never heard him raise his voice or treat an employe discourteously," a studio associate observed. His indifference to Hollywood custom is positively proved two ways: His wife today is the same one he married as an undergraduate 23 years ago; the telephone number of their Encino, Calif., home is listed in the telephone directory for all the world to see.

WEEK'S PROFILE



William Edwin Self—executive VP, 20th Century-Fox TV; b. June 21, 1921, Dayton, Ohio; U. of Chicago, 1943, PhB in political science; copywriter, McJunkin Advertising Co., Chicago, 1943-44; movie actor, 1944-52; assistant producer, 'China Smith' TV series, 1952; associate producer, 'Schlitz Playhouse of Stars,' 1952; producer, 'Schlitz Playhouse,' 1953-56; producer, 'Frank Sinatra Show,' 1957; executive producer, CBS-TV, Hollywood, 1958; director of programs, administration, West Coast, CBS-TV, 1959; executive producer, 20th Century-Fox TV, 1959; VP in charge of TV production, 20th Century-Fox TV, 1962; executive VP, 20th Century-Fox, 1964; m. Margaret Flynn, 1941; children—Edwin, 21, Barbara, 18; trustee, Motion Picture Relief Fund; board member, John Tracy Clinic; member—Directors Guild of America, Screen Producers Guild; hobbies—reading, riding, tennis, golf, collecting early Hollywood memorabilia.