



**carlyle
blackwell**

ONE CURVE AFTER ANOTHER



Racy chicks or roaring racers, top Hollywood glamour lens ace combines best of all possible worlds for fun, profit.

By Dave Henderson

GIVEN THE CHANCE, most guys would cross a burning desert on a pogo stick to take up either one of man's most pleasurable pastimes—sports car racing or glamour photography. But the son and namesake of a silent screen star named Carlyle Blackwell combines both carefree careers in the sort of fun-filled frolic that would have made even his illustrious dad's easy-street life seem like detention in the salt mines.

Carlyle Blackwell, Jr.—one of Hollywood's most successful shutter snappers—spends his week ends blasting a red-hot D-type Jaguar through the twisting curves of the west coast's most sizzling race circuits. On week days, he witnesses a continuous pageant of racy chicks whose curves are sizzling enough to short-circuit any man's sensory system, especially since Blackwell's beauties usually make the scene wearing nothing more than perfume and a smile.

Quite the opposite of most gay blades who try to mix gas and gals, Blackwell's activities (for obvious reasons, even he does not call it work) are *not* more expensive than a fire at Fort Knox; rather, they pay for themselves as a major source of his income. Many of the girls appear on magazine covers, such as Blackwell's color shot of Marli Renfro on the



ROARING past crowds (top), Carlyle Blackwell in C-type Jaguar competes in Santa Barbara, California, road race. Week end racer, Blackwell makes living at glamour photography (above). In new D-type Jag (right), he spins around S-turn at tough Riverside course.



SHARING victory (above), Blackwell poses with wife, daughter, co-driver Ken Miles (in hat) after scoring win in six-hour Grand Prix endurance race at Pomona.

JAGUAR JOCKEY ON WEEK ENDS,



BEHIND camera (left), Blackwell is master lensman who is famous for sophisticated, saucy cheesecake style. His work (above) is in demand by calendar firms, magazines.



cover of October, 1961, MODERN MAN. Even his racing kicks have led to cover assignments, including his photo on the August *Car and Driver*. In other words, all it takes to combine cars and dolls profitably is a photographic talent sufficient to become—with study, concentration, and hard work—the tops in the field in a world populated with competition from every guy who has a taste for adventure and an eye for pulchritude.

Blackwell's career as a lensman started as a hobby during the days when he was considering following in his father's film footsteps. Since Blackwell, Sr., was known



LENSMAN'S DAD WAS CLARK GABLE OF SILENT ERA

SILENT SCREEN STAR, Carlyle Blackwell, Sr., (left) father of Carlyle, Jr., started long career in musical comedy, moved up ladder as matinee idol in adventure films like *The Beloved Vagabond*, *She*, which he produced, directed, starred in. Married in 1916 to England's Leah Barnato, "Queen of Diamonds," he divorced her in 1933, married ex-Ziegfeld girl same day. Known as Clark Gable of his era, Blackwell co-starred with most of film's leading ladies, including Blanche Sweet, top money-maker at old Lasky Productions, C. B. DeMille's first studio.

BLACKWELL MAKES BREAD AND BUTTER SHOOTING CHEESECAKE.

as the Clark Gable of silent screen, acting held considerable interest for Blackwell, Jr.—had he not entered a figure study in an international photography contest.

"It was a photo of a lovely model named Buella," says Blackwell. "It won the contest, went on to win several more national contests, and was eventually sold to a calendar firm. This started me on my professional career."

As Blackwell became increasingly adept at shooting nudes, scenics, and children for the calendar companies, his work captured the attention of a commercial advertising studio which invited him to join them. "This was my introduction to advertising, and after several years with the firm

which will be as long as he can see through a view finder—he will never run short of material.

"I am sure," says Blackwell, "that almost every beautiful woman in the country—if not in the world—will eventually come to Hollywood seeking a career. This fact makes the task of finding attractive subjects a lot simpler than it would be elsewhere." Then he adds, with only slight concern: "But, of course, there are many girls truly dazzling in face and figure who don't realize it or are not seeking a career unless they are discovered and convinced."

But then, after all, a guy cannot have *everything*.

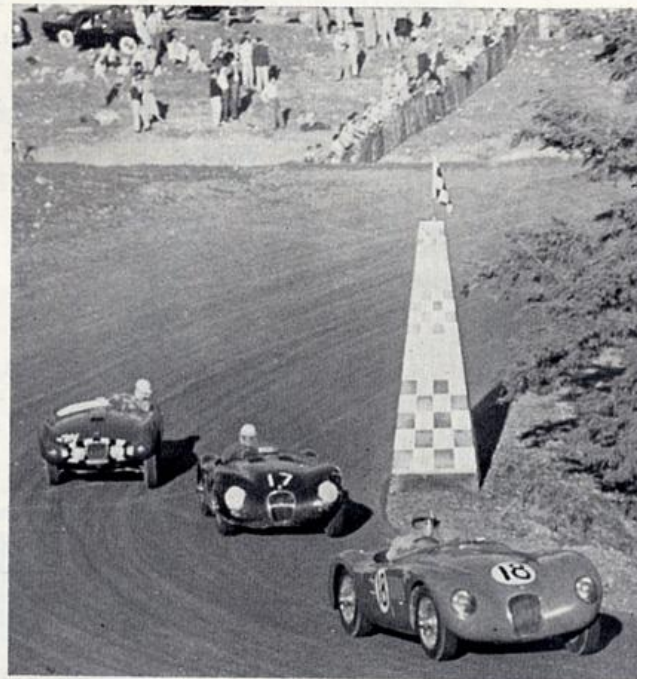
While photography and its related activities are Black-



TYPICAL working day often has Blackwell facing racy curves of beautiful blonde model in his glamour studio.

I became associated with another studio that was moving to the west coast. In the meantime, I had developed a very pleasant relationship of photographing motion picture stars for covers of national fan magazines. My favorite subject in this field has always been Liz Taylor, whose beauty and excellent cooperation make taking pictures of her simply a matter of running film through the camera."

Blackwell's touch for photographing personalities earned him the advertising assignments in which celebrities were used for testimonials. Continuous success in this endeavor encouraged Blackwell to open his own studio; now advertising provides the bulk of his business, and beautiful girls consume the bulk of his film. The most pleasant aspect of it all is that as long as gals remain his prime subject—



UNUSUAL week ends are spent blasting around tight curves at Paramount Ranch circuit, other local tracks.

well's main interest, his sports car racing runs a close second. It started back in 1954, when he drove a Jaguar roadster in a race at March Air Force Base. "I was so busy just staying alive that I didn't learn much that day," he says, "but I liked the scene. And the same day, I purchased my first sports racing machine from a Texan who also attended the meet at the AFB. This car was the C-type Jaguar. My racing number, from the beginning, was 18, and this is my permanent number for as long as I continue to race.

"I kept the Jaguar C until 1958, when I stepped up to the well-known Le Mans winning car, the D-type Jaguar. This has the block bored to 3766 cc, 10.5 to 1 pistons, Winfield 70 cams, and a (Continued on Page 51)

one curve after another

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Halibrand quick change locked rear end."

So far, Blackwell's best race was his toughest, the six-hour race at Pomona Fair Grounds, which he won with Ken Miles sharing the wheel as co-driver. Blackwell started and finished, and they took the D Jaguar—prepared by Blackwell—around for three hours each.

Other Blackwell track successes have included numerous seconds, thirds, and class wins—all in all, some 60 trophies. Not bad for a week end wheeler.

"I have a great admiration for those who go racing," he says, "and it is a great reward to just compete and to finish a race, particularly well up.

"There is a feeling at the start of the race, that might be called the 'moment of truth,' when all of the well-wishers, the family, the back slappers, and the pit crew have all left the starting grid, leaving the driver alone in his machine waiting for the race to begin. This experience is not fear, but a feeling of responsibility to himself, his fellow drivers, and those who have wished him well. I hope this doesn't sound like 'too much,' but I'm sure every driver experiences this same emotion each time he sits at the starting grid to face the task of shaping the next few hours of his life against unknown odds. Needless to say, I have a lot of respect for race drivers and am grateful to occasionally be one of them."

Before taking the wheel of his own sports car, Blackwell was active in racing as a Race Chairman, Course Marshall, and a member of the Board of Governors of the California Sports Car Club. His experience has taught him that the danger of racing is "magnified by the uninitiated because of the seeming violence of the sport."

Blackwell's most dangerous moment took place in April, 1960, during the International Grand Prix in Riverside. Blasting along at a blurring clip in his screaming Jaguar, Blackwell's "14-foot long world" was crossed by Count Pedro Von Dorey, who plummeted across the road less than 200 feet ahead, kicking up a blinding dust cloud like a snarling tornado. Blackwell could hear the wrenching metal on the other side of the dust bank, but could see nothing.

As the Jaguar chewed up the distance rapidly, Blackwell prepared for the worst—a

pile of wreckage in the middle of the cloud, with his machine adding to the heap. He knew that to slow down too rapidly would mean getting struck from behind, which would break his neck like a pretzel. So he kept the Jaguar sizzling, straining for a glimpse of the hidden wreckage.

At that moment of decision, the lights came on and Blackwell saw Count Von Dorey's smashed machine just in time to avert a collision. It all happened in the wink of an eye, and he was through the dust cloud and his worst moment. "A very bad moment," he says, "because I learned later that Pedro Von Dorey had died."

For every bad moment in Blackwell's life, he has had countless good ones to more than even up the score. There was the time, for instance, when he saw a local newspaper clipping with a line-up of shapely dolls who were competing for the title of Miss Burbank. Glancing over the clipping, Blackwell saw a face that he thought would be good for magazine covers, so he looked up the girl's number and called her home. Talking to her mother, he explained his proposition. The woman was cooperative, but thought it very foolish. "Mary Francis only entered the contest to receive the free blouse," she explained. The city of Burbank was giving a blouse to each of the girls that entered.

Nevertheless, Blackwell arranged for pictures and spent the next day roaming the San Fernando Valley photographing the girl with puppies, kittens, flowers, and other sorts of props that seemed to go well with her looks.

"The finished color was excellent," Blackwell says, "and I sent them to my agent to sell. His response was that they were 'nice, but won't sell. No sex appeal,' he said.

"The punch is that we sold several thousand dollars worth from that first shooting and have been photographing Mary Francis Reynolds ever since as Debbie Reynolds."

Although Blackwell seldom mentions his racing experiences to any of his models (except for one cute little number who is a fan of his and watches him in every race), he nevertheless impresses most of his acquaintances as a Bob Cummings type of glamour photographer, a gay, sporting, adventurous, good-natured cut-up who has not yet gotten quite accustomed to looking at eye-popping sweater busters every day.

It is obvious that Blackwell's life has not aged him unduly. The father of a 17-year-old daughter (who objects to Blackwell's studio display of a nude picture of her taken when she was 17 months) and a 19-year-old son (who—obviously no fool—plans to take after his father's cool career), Blackwell still looks a boyish 25 or so, without a gray hair on his head or a wrinkle on his brow. His wife Julie shares his enthusiasm for racing and avidly supports his photographic enterprise.

And they say King Midas had a touch!



what ever became of gloria swanson?

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girl-marries-French-royalty story which could have made a Swanson plot, and often did). Next came Michael Farmer, an Irish sportsman. The last husband, and by all odds the richest, was industrialist William M. Davey, who she married in 1945 and divorced in 1948. Gloria could have used some money a year later when he died, but he left his entire fortune to charity.

"The mess I made of marriage was all my fault," she concludes. "I can smell the character of a woman when she enters a room, but I have the world's worst judgment in men. Maybe the odds were against me. When I was young, no man of my age made enough money to support me in the style expected of me. There's no sense kidding myself. I loved all the pomp and luxury of that style. When I die, my epitaph should read: She Paid the Bills. That's the story of my private life."

Although Gloria went on to make movies after 1929, it is interesting to note that her tremendous popularity commenced to blaze just after the end of World War I and started to go on the downgrade with the stock market crash. With the introduction of breadlines, worried movie patrons wanted new values in their screen stars. They developed the Clara Bow type, the hoydenish but eternally innocent kid down the block. The era of the Gloria Swanson type, with her long white gloves, mile-long cigarette holder, and money-money, who's-got-the-money? characterization, was fast coming to a close.

Over the next rough years, Gloria managed to survive by appearing in summer stock and occasionally on radio, and by learning how to invest her savings wisely. When television arrived she did well enough on it with a chit chat show aimed at women, but it is no secret that in 1949 when Paramount offered her \$50,000 (the fee would have been a minimum of \$250,000 in earlier years) to fly to Hollywood for a picture, she caught the next plane.

The picture was, of course, *Sunset Boulevard*, and she gave a magnificent performance in it, as a bitter, neurotic, 50-year-old ex-movie queen. A fresh generation of moviegoers claimed her as their own, and for a while it looked as if Swanson would take Hollywood all over again. She did, but only briefly. Her follow-up movie was a dud, and she was again out of work.

The years since *Sunset Boulevard*, though, have been fruitful ones. The flamboyant Gloria is now the mature Gloria with keen values and a level-headedness not shown in the past. Her health is superb, and she wears the same size dress she wore 40 years ago.

"The Swanson technique," says a long time fan and close friend, "is the same as a cat's: 'No matter from how high they drop you, always land on your feet.' Gloria will still be around, and more glamorously than ever, when this current mob of so-called glamour pots goes back forever to the sticks."

