

LOST IN SPACE

I was acting. I was learning my trade."

In 1942, Gilbert Miller produced "The Heart of the City" on Broadway and the famed impresario cast Harris in a featured part. This led to his next play "Right Next to Broadway," which, as it turned out, should have been titled, "Right Next to the Warehouse," where it quickly repaired.

During World War II, when the American Theater Wing came up with a plan to use actors for war work, Harris volunteered and to his dismay was soon operating "a dozen or more horrendous machines." He escaped into the USO and happily went off to the South Pacific and with such lighthearted romps as "Petticoat Fever" and "Personal Appearance," he helped bring needed laughter to hard-fighting jungle troops.

World War II ended, Harris returned to Broadway and joined Paul Muni and Marlon Brando in Ben Hecht's stirring play about Israel, "A Flag Is Born." From one New York success to another was his creative pattern after that, including "The Madwoman of Chaillot," "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg," "The Grass Harp," and the musical, "Hazel Flagg." Not to mention an impressive list of "flops" about which Harris is apt to say: "Flops they may have been, but they were the theatre, they were acting, and I'm glad I was in each of them."

His last Broadway appearance was in the highly successful "Teahouse of the August Moon," with David Wayne and John Forsyth, in which he played the slightly pixilated army psychiatrist. One New York critic cracked in print that he set psychiatry back 50 years with his hilarious performance.

For the next three years, Harris roamed the capitols of the world with Michael Rennie in "The Third Man," a dashing pair of adventurers involved with the underworld of cosmopolitan Europe. During "breaks" in shooting this series, he was able to accept movie assignments and these resulted in his role in "The Big Fisherman" and "Botany Bay."

"I also did a movie with Gilbert Roland that was filmed in pre-Castro Cuba," Harris revealed. "But as far as we know, the only one who has seen it has been Castro and he keeps it in a vault. I am afraid he thinks it tarnishes his image — and I'm sure it does."

Aside from his other series role as the autocratic hotel manager who made Bill Dana's life miserable, Harris has appeared in literally hundreds of television's top shows. Several self-pleasing performances that stand out in his mind are his portrayal of Charles Dickens on a "Bonanza" episode and his role as a meek railroad conductor who robs a train of \$1,000,000 in a segment of "The Outlaws" called "The Outrage of Pawnee Bend." Also, his portrayals of the title role in "The Reluctant Dragon" with Shirley Temple, and the evil Judge Ryncheon in "The House of Seven Gables," again with Miss Temple.

When producer Irwin Allen was casting about for the role of the villainous Dr. Zachary Smith in "Lost in Space," he looked at literally dozens of screen tests before finally deciding on Jonathan Harris.

"Jonathan can do anything," stated producer Allen, proudly. "He's equally at home, whether it be comedy, tragedy, whatever the part calls for. The characterization of 'Dr. Smith' in 'Space' is a pivotal role. Without it, the series would be just another soap opera. Remember 'Ming, the Merciless' in the old 'Flash Gordon' serials? 'Ming' was ably portrayed by that arch screen villain, Charles Middleton, and the kids would boo and hiss him at the Saturday matinees but he would bring