

Getting movie role wakes teen in hurry

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Lorraine "Lori" Poirier of Birmingham was in bed asleep the morning the call came through from her agent.

But hearing her mother, her brother and brother's friend "hollering through the halls," the teen-ager knew she had got the part.

Lorraine, as she prefers to be called, was one of the 15-year-olds, called from Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre, to audition for the role of Karl Malden's youngest daughter, Annie McNeil, in the TV film "Word of Honor."

The movie, produced by former Detroit Lion Alex Karras for his Georgian Bay Productions, will be shot on locations including West Bloomfield, Plymouth and Royal Oak.

Karras had originally hoped the small-town atmosphere would be provided with Birmingham as a backdrop, but the Birmingham City Commission turned him down with only one dissenting vote. The movie is about a reporter fighting to protect First-Amendment rights in a murder case.

LORRAINE SAID she's sorry the movie won't be filmed in Birmingham. "I've lived here for 12 years," said the 16-year-old, who celebrated her birthday Aug. 31.

"I really love the town. The people aren't that way (snobbish). They could have gotten out of the facade Birmingham has," she said.

For the three weeks of filming, which begin this week, Lorraine will receive a weekly salary of \$1,000. Nice work if you can get it but still not enough to pay for her tuition over the next two years at Roper School in Bloomfield Hills.

However, Lorraine has been shelving books at Baldwin Library in Birmingham, which will help with tuition at the private school for super-bright, talented students.

"All last year, I took placement tests and got accepted. I applied for a scholarship, but they were low on funds," she said, explaining why she had been unable to attend Roper until now.

A FORMER Seaholm High School student, the young actress said she will

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— Sixteen-year-old actress Lorraine Poirier

miss only six days of school during the filming for "Word of Honor." She will be tutored in the meantime, and her mother, Janet Poirier, will be present on the set (as required by law).

Lorraine is five feet two, with silky, shoulder-length blonde hair. She has blue eyes that gaze attentively, and her composure would rival a seasoned pro.

Interviewed in her home on Pierce Street, Lorraine opened a registered letter from Georgian Bay Productions that returned her birth certificate, required for her work permit.

Her mother sat in a chair across the room, stroking the cat that is one of the family's many pets. A substitute teacher in the Montessori School, Mrs. Poirier has been involved with the individualistic teaching method for 20 years.

Mrs. Poirier said that Lorraine had attended Montessori School from the age of 2 until classes were no longer available for her.

AS A TOT, Lori had self-confidence and even defended her brother, Scott, who is two years older, in neighborhood disputes with other children.

Lorraine has taken acting classes for the last two years at Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre in Bloomfield Township.

"That really started me in live theater," she said.

Her roles at Will-O-Way have included daughter Louisa ("The one who puts frogs in Maria's bed") in "The Sound of Music," a Kit-Kat Girl dancing and singing in "Cabaret," and June, one of the two daughters in "Stop the World I Want to Get Off."

With Maureen Feder, the female lead, and Lorraine's friend, Michele

Stock, who played the other daughter, Lorraine will be in the cast of "Stop the World" when it is presented by another production company at Fairlane Mansion in Dearborn in January.

After 70 girls vied for the role in "Word of Honor," the hopefuls were narrowed to 10, then individual videotapes were made, and from three girls Lorraine was chosen.

THE ASPIRING film star met with Karras, his wife actress Susan Clark and the director Mel Damski the day before she received word from her agent that the part was hers.

A relaxed young lady, with a soft smile, Lorraine spoke highly of Will-O-Way actors' trade school.

"You learn to have confidence in yourself," she said. "The director, Celia Turner, the way she teaches, you just have confidence."

Her role in the film will be of a girl who is a typical teen-ager.

"She's youngish, bouncy, alive," Lorraine said. She has one heavy scene in the film, where the three sisters cry, but mostly, "I think it's just going to be fun."

The Poirier family loves to travel. With her father, Mark (he's a safety engineer and writer at General Motors), mother and brother, Lorraine has traveled the United States, Canada and Mexico. She speaks French and was delighted to spend a week in Paris on the family's annual big trip.

Enterprising Lorraine delivered the Eccentric for two years, and her brother was a Career-of-the-Month, she added — giving a plug to the hometown paper.



Lorraine Poirier will play Annie McNeil, the youngest daughter of a newspaperman portrayed by Karl Malden, in "Word of Honor," TV film being shot in metropolitan Detroit. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

Open house previews schedule

An open house will be held from 2-6 p.m. Saturday at Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre, 775 W. Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Township.

Visitors may meet the teaching staff, discuss fall term courses and view laboratory theater performances.

Registration for Will-O-Way's fall term will be open and students may choose their class preferences.

Families may meet and talk to Celia Merrill Turner, Will-O-Way's artistic director, about the role theater training can play in the emotional development of the shy child leading to social acceptance in the teenager. Adults may

find, after theater training, that long-standing fears can be conquered and new careers or hobbies are suddenly feasible, according to Mrs. Turner.

Will-O-Way's emphasis on learning by doing helps the advanced actor, playwright or director to extend experience and repertoire.

FALL TERM CLASSES begin Sept. 27 and end Dec. 20. Underneath Courses are held Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with Electives and Play Production offered ages 7-10 years and 9-12 years.

Teens may choose from courses held Saturdays from 1-5:50 p.m. This year

courses also will be offered weekdays from 4:30-6 p.m.

Adult classes are held Sundays from 7:30-11 p.m. and Tuesdays from 7:30-8:30 p.m. and 8:30-11 p.m. Both six-week terms and 12-week terms are offered adult students, who range from 18-75 in age.

Senior citizens are being asked to participate.

Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre is an educational non-profit corporation that has been licensed as a theatrical trade school by the Michigan State Board of Education since 1949. For further information, phone 644-4418.

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