

Home gives TV actor a measure of control

Dean Butler likes to be able to call his own shots

By Karen Back
Troy News Service

Actor Dean Butler, who stars as Gidget's husband, Jeff "Moondoggie" Griffin, on the syndicated TV series "The New Gidget," lives just two blocks from the world-famous Hollywood sign.

An avid photographer, Butler has been chronicling the changes in the sign by taking photos from the roof of his hilltop home. Though he missed the Hollywood incarnation when Oliver North had his turn as a TV star, Butler, whose brother is a naval pilot, did capture the time during the Army Navy game when Navy covered the sign with Navy.

Sitting on an L-shaped couch covered with off-white chenille in his living room, Butler, a 31-year-old bachelor who has made a career out of playing the all-American spouse (he also played Laura's husband Almonzo on "Little House on the Prairie"), says, "In this city, in this business, home is very important to me because it is something that I can control." He adds, "Creating this home was something substantial that I did. I wasn't at the mercy of someone else."

He bought his one-bedroom house four years ago and has never regretted his decision. "I'm very much a homebody kind of person," he says. "I look forward to coming home. I also don't have to worry about someone banging on the wall saying, 'You're too loud.' I call the shots."

Not surprisingly, this actor wants to be a director. He takes a sip of apple juice and sets it carefully on a coaster on the coffee table. He bought his pine coffee table from a store that restores furniture after you buy it. "This was the most beaten-up, falling-apart table," says Butler, whose home is immaculate to a fault. "I was sort of flattered by this. The owner said, 'You've

picked the worst-looking table in the place. That shows you have a lot of vision to see what something may look like when it's put back together again.'"

On top of the amply restored table is a book called "Happy Birthday Hollywood," a set of dominoes in a wooden box topped with a brass plaque engraved with his name, a tall glass vase filled with yellow tiger lilies and two white camellias from his garden resting on a stone plate.

On the wall behind the couch is a framed relief map of the Moore Ranch which, though subdivided now, was once a large Northern California ranch owned by his mother's relatives. Mounted on either side of the map are two brass quartz lamps.

Butler recalls his discussion with his interior designer. "We thought, 'The room is so small. Let's not clutter it with having lamps standing in it -- that just breaks the line of the room. Let's keep the chairs low, the tables low, everything simple.'"

The 500-watt lights with dimmers that they chose reflect off the ceiling.

Butler sometimes curls up on the couch to read though he admits he hasn't read all the books on his shelves. "I belonged to the Book of the Month Club for a while so these things would just start arriving."

But he definitely has read "The Complete Works of Mark Twain," a collection that has been in his family for years. One of his dreams is to -- when I'm older, when Mr. (Hal) Holbrook is gone -- do his own one-man show of Mark Twain.

Several photographs he has taken of family and friends dot his shelves. A shot of his mother, brother and sister is near a shot of Caryn Richmond, his "Gidget" co-star, and a shot of his father in swim trunks and a bathing cap.

"My dad is a triathlete," says Butler, "so when I get pictures of

Dad he's usually in some state of undress, either getting in or out of the water."

On his old upright piano -- "I don't play but I love the way it looks" -- are photos of his sister's and brother's families. A nearby table hosts an old family globe that still has Stam on it, a piece of pottery made by his grandmother and a picture of the corral at the family ranch, which nestles beneath a mountain called Mission Peak.

Butler's house looks out at a vista that extends from Long Beach to Century City. He reflects, "It's not a large house, but I never feel claustrophobic here. It feels like a treehouse."

His bedroom and office are downstairs. He's in the process of transforming his office into a guest bedroom and will replace the couch there with two twin beds. The stereo system will be moved into the recently completed office off his bedroom. That space originally was going to be his dream bathroom complete with granite countertops, but Butler opted for a new office instead because he thought, "I'm going to get much more use out of this space than I am going to get out of a granite bathroom."

He'll also get a lot of use out of his new 27-foot closet where his clothes are hung in perfect rows.

Upstairs in the kitchen Butler discusses his passion for cookies-and-cream ice cream, then looks around. "This is the house that 'Little House' built. 'Gidget' supports this house, and maybe next year 'Gidget' will build a new kitchen."

He acknowledges that some actors are in the profession "for love of the theater." Then he reflects, "I've always thought of myself as being very much the businessman actor. My goal is to make a living. Otherwise, I wouldn't have this house and we wouldn't be having this conversation."



Dean Butler's role in 'Little House on the Prairie' paid for his Hollywood home, he says, and his role in 'The New Gidget' supports his upscale lifestyle.

Bismarck
WE KNOW BETTER.
THE ORANGE COUNTY
Register

Don't have time to read the entire paper? Today, on page A3, offers an instant summary of everything that's going on around the world, throughout the nation and here in Orange County. In a matter of minutes, you'll gain an instant awareness of many important news stories.

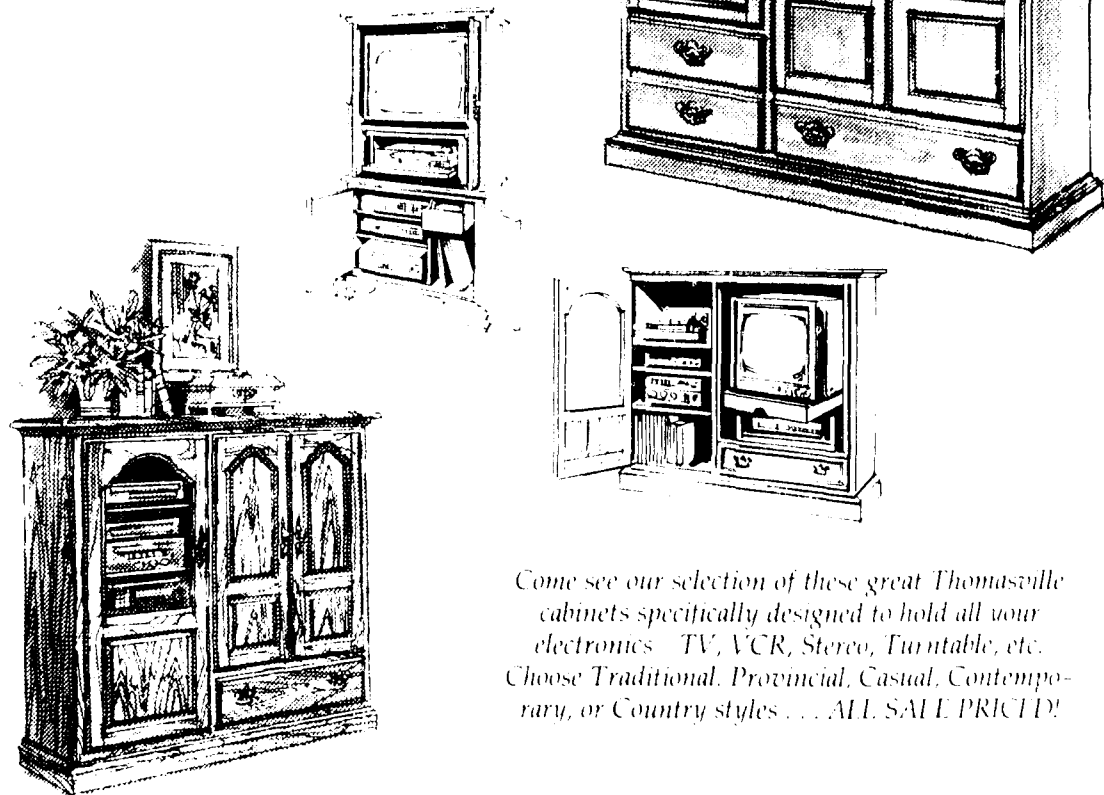
Drunk Driving?

3 minute RECORDED LEGAL HOTLINE explains the laws and penalties... where to turn for help.

*1st Offense Legal Hotline (714) 634-3333
2nd Offense Legal Hotline (714) 634-9111

Chandler's HOLIDAY SALE

SAVE 35%
Home Electronic Centers
by Thomasville



Come see our selection of these great Thomasville cabinets specifically designed to hold all your electronics -- TV, VCR, Stereo, Tuntable, etc. Choose Traditional, Provincial, Casual, Contemporary, or Country styles... ALL SALE PRICES!

Santa Ana
North Main St.
At 10th
(714) 541-4391

Chandler's

Laguna Hills
Alicia Pkwy. & San Diego Fwy
(in HONALI Plaza)
(714) 951-7101

HOURS: 10-6 Daily • 10-7 Thur. • 12-5 Sun.

RED TAG

Holiday CLEARANCE SALE!

EVERYTHING MARKED DOWN! *

Save on our entire collection of barstools, dinettes, and game sets. Most are available in your choice of colors and sizes. In addition, save even more on a select group of floor samples.

Come See Us Today!

* Some items previously marked down

The Casual Dining Co.

"Quality Furniture at Discount Prices"

23562 COMMERCE CENTER DR.
LAGUNA HILLS, CA. 92653
(714) 770-3103

STORE HOURS: M&F 10:00-8:30
T W TH SAT 10:00-6:00 SUN 12:00-5:00

Financing Available!

EL TORO RD. CASUAL DINING COMMERCE CENTER DR. LAKE FOREST N

AVENUE DE LA LANOLITA LAKE FOREST EXIT

SAN DIEGO FWY

EL TORO EXIT LAKE FOREST EXIT