

Mistaken Identity

“The image and the reality. That’s what it’s all about, isn’t it?”

From *Doris Day: Her Own Story* by AE Hotchner, p. 161

Many people have asked me about my auntie. They always want to know if she was like the characters in her books. If she was as eccentric and diminutive as Clare Bixley in “Tea for Three: After Hours at the Bookstore,” as outrageous, tomboyish and theatrical as Kay Lamity in “Deadwood Stage,” or as tall and wacky, musical and dog-loving as the hairdresser Mrs. Nelson in “That’s All for Now Vladimir.” They also want to know if she was a lesbian.

I guess the first thing you should know about my auntie is that she prized privacy above all. No one knew that Jo Howard was my auntie because that was not her real name. Another thing you should know about her is that she adored me, Doris Mary Anne Kappelhoff, tap dancing and cats, although I don’t know if I’ve got the order right since Doris was a part of her life long before I came along.

I think I can hear you saying Doris Mary Anne Kappelhoff? Doris Mary Anne Kappelhoff, the singer, movie star and animal rights activist? Or maybe you’re saying, Doris who? At this point just know that Doris was a singer, dancer and actor, “a working lady,” who started in radio when she was a teenager, sang with big bands during the 1940s, made her first movie in 1948 and her last, and 39th movie, nearly twenty years later. She recorded more than 1000 songs, hosted her own radio show in the early 1950s, starred opposite Hollywood’s top leading men, and, for five years in the late 1960s and early 70s, had her own television series on CBS. She was born on April 3, 1922 or 1924, depending on which biography you believe, and became an icon of the “American Century.” She also is an icon to gay people around the world.**(This will be a footnote. Little known fact: Her television series was the first to depict a gay couple, if only in one episode. Their profession: Interior decorators.)* She was raised by her mother after her father left the family for another woman, she married four times, had one son, and left Hollywood, forever, in 1981. She also, unintentionally, outed Rock Hudson (need footnote) just a few months

before he died of AIDS in 1985 when gayness in Hollywood was like the military slogan: “Don’t ask, don’t tell.”

When I asked my auntie why Doris and not Katharine Hepburn or Judy Garland or Elizabeth Taylor, she hummed and stared out the window, sipped her tea, and thoughtfully and slowly addressed my question.

It’s a question I keep asking myself. I think once I would have said Katharine Hepburn. She defied convention, always. But she arose from privilege, she didn’t ascend from the working class. Doris reflected the women around me, even though her image was manufactured by the male sensibilities, fantasies and business of Hollywood. She was my grandmother, my mother and me. She was the woman who taught me to dance, the chorus teacher who taught me to sing, the daughter and sister and friend who always remained true to herself despite disappointments and betrayals. She wasn’t afraid to be seen swinging a bat or getting her hands greasy fixing a car. She was the kind of woman everyone knew could pull herself up by her bootstraps. Her story was my grandmother’s story. She came of age during the depression in the Midwest, started working at fifteen to help support her family, never finished high school. She believed she’d grow up, get married, have children, create a beautiful home. She grew up in a world with deeply ingrained racial, religious and social prejudices. I love the line from her autobiography: “It wasn’t until I started singing with the bands and got to know the real people who lived inside the skins of those prejudices.” Isn’t that a beautiful image? To me, her life, her journey, her adventure reflects all that was beautiful and heartbreaking about America and women in the twentieth century. Another thing I admire about Doris is that she never played a nun or a prostitute, the madonna and the whore. Her women were never manipulative. There was something very democratic about how she interacted with her fellow actors, even children. She wasn’t afraid to be vulnerable, to be hurt. Love me or leave me. Or maybe respect me or leave me would be better. I don’t know. Scholars have been analyzing the “Doris Effect” for longer than you’ve been alive. I just know I love watching her. I love watching her sing and dance and act. She makes me laugh. And she hated going to parties.

I would not be offended if you wanted to stop reading and search the Internet for more information on Doris or do an image search, there are millions of sites to choose from. My auntie, however, would probably

not approve. Otherwise, I've provided footnotes so as not to impede the flow of the narrative.

My auntie was born the day Doris turned 36, the year one of our favorite movies, "Teacher's Pet," was released. The movie stars Doris and Clark Gable, another Hollywood icon of the twentieth century; he was 57 when it was filmed and it would be one of his last pictures. He would die before he turned 60 after co-starring in "The Misfits" with Marilyn Monroe, (need footnote) yet another Hollywood icon who was often said to be the antithesis of Doris, (a conceit that would be exploited by screenwriters Fay and Michael Kanin (need footnote) in "Teacher's Pet.") Gable, like many of his generation, would die from heart disease, compliments of the tobacco and alcohol industries. (The surgeon general's report on the harmful effects of tobacco was still five years in the future.)

In "Teacher's Pet," Doris plays a smart, dedicated college journalism instructor and Gable, a tough, educated-by-the-seat-of-your-pants city editor of a New York daily newspaper. Experience versus education, old pros versus eggheads, and sexual/gender stereotypes establish the basic conflict; mistaken identity the plot device. It was shot in black and white, which gives a gritty feel to the newsroom scenes and suggests the sophisticated romantic comedies of the 1940s with Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. (need footnote)

I don't think when I watched "Teacher's Pet" for the first time I realized Gable had died, and I certainly didn't know that it was released the year I was born. Do you know that a number of critics felt it was not "an attractive picture to watch," that Gable was too old for the part? What kind of criticism is that? I don't think it occurred to me that Gable was twenty years older than Doris. That's definitely an advantage to filming in black and white. And isn't it interesting that men can play romantic leads until they're practically dead, but if a woman dares to, as Doris did, she's vilified in the press for not playing women her age?

When my auntie was a young girl watching old movies on television she never realized that Gable died before John F. Kennedy became the 35th President of the United States, before the Civil Rights Movement awakened black and white America, before the pill was invented and Betty Friedan wrote "The Feminist Mystique," and before Marilyn was found

dead at the age of 36, from an overdose in 1962. She didn't realize that Doris had stopped making movies and had planned to pull a Garbo (need footnote) after completing her television series in 1972.

After my auntie introduced me to Doris's movies, she confessed: *You want to know something funny? I thought all the old movies they showed on television were in black and white. It never occurred to me it was because we only had a black and white television set.* She'd laugh her big, joyful laugh and say, not too smart your auntie. (Which was as far from the truth as could be.) According to a resume I found among her things, she worked as a college journalism instructor in the mid-1990s, when she would have been 36.

Chapter: Picasso Time

Although my auntie's will requested that the first thing I was to do after she died was to burn her papers and journals, I decided not to. I don't want to appear like the obsessed scholar in Henry James's "The Aspern Papers," but I reasoned that if she didn't want someone to read her stuff she would have made sure everything was burned before she died. From what I can surmise, she must have been burning her journals and letters, because she once told me that she'd kept a journal since she was a freshman in high school. I can find nothing earlier than 1987, the year she fell in love with a married man, something else she had in common with Doris.

It's important that you know that my auntie was 50 when I entered her life, and that she was living in a very small town far from the suburbia of her youth and urbanity of her post-college work life. The town was so small and so remote many people lived off the grid. To see a movie in a theatre would require either a 5-hour drive or a 4-hour ferry ride, either way it would take more than a \$10 bite out of her budget. *I'd rather give the money to the library to buy more books and movies. Isn't it amazing that we can own the movies we love, movies made even before we were born, and watch them in the privacy of our own homes? I wonder if Doris imagined that in the year 2009 libraries and individuals would be adding her movies to their film collections, not to mention all her recordings and her television shows.*

I grew up watching videos and dvds so I didn't quite understand what my auntie found so amazing. I didn't know the world had worked any other way. But I digress. You are probably wondering how I came to know my auntie and why I am the one answering all your questions.

When I was ten, my auntie volunteered for Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS). If you are unfamiliar with BBBS, it's an organization that operates on the belief that kids need at least five mentors besides their parents to develop into healthy adults and responsible community members. Like many families in America during the first decade of the new millennia, both my parents worked. When the director called to ask if I'd be interested in having a big brother or sister, my parents decided for me. I didn't mind though. BBBS was so cool in our community that having a big brother or big sister gave a kid status. Even the kids who had stay-at-home parents wanted a "big."

I met my auntie the year our town broke all snowfall records, the year the adults complained about their shoulders and backs aching from shoveling the white stuff; the year kids jumped off roofs and filmed crazy snowboarding stunts with camcorders and posted them on youtube. It was the year two high school kids drown canoeing in waters and weather that forecast tragedy; the year Juno's mother returned from Afghanistan only to get called up again. It was the year I entered fourth grade and our class read the book "Harris and Me" by Gary Paulsen.

I can't say if what I'm going to tell you is the truth, but from my observations and my memories (which scientists tell us are not exactly reliable) fourth grade can be a traumatic year for some kids, especially if the child's home life is chaotic and their most important relationship is with a screen. How to describe my fourth-grade self? In pictures I seem to always be in motion; standing and smiling for a camera must not have been something I enjoyed. Although I did find a picture of my auntie and me rafting down the river in all our rain gear with smiles a mile wide. How could we have been smiling? We must have been wet and cold and miserable. What I remember most about that day was watching my auntie build a fire in the wood stove while I sat on the sofa wrapped in a blanket made from abandoned cashmere sweaters sipping the best hot chocolate in the world. When I was older she told me her secret ingredient, and it wasn't marshmallows. Marshmallows were another thing verboten in her house.

In fourth grade, if you would have asked me my favorite subject, I probably would have said recess. I did not like sitting still. I wanted to be outside. I wanted to be running and jumping. I wanted to be swinging on a star. My parents would always tell people I was overactive. Not only was I labelled overactive, but one of the special education teachers told my parents that I lacked an awareness of time. Ten minutes, an hour had no meaning in my world. To remedy my lost time clock I was given a timer. I tried to make the timer my friend, but it just made me anxious, anyway at first. After I got use to it, it did help. I was also forced to write a list of all the tasks I needed to accomplish each day with given times. That helped, too, but I still couldn't complete all my school work like the other kids. I'd get excited about a story I was reading then we'd have to put it aside and do math. I'd finally hit the zone in math and we'd have to move on to

social studies. I would finally figure out the melody to a song and we'd get shuttled to P.E. I also tended to get a little obsessive. Facts comforted me. I still find facts soothing. If you're thinking I was the weird straggler kid who'd get lost learning the names of every poisonous frog, I was.

Time. I much preferred the world of my auntie where we were always getting lost in time or letting time get away from us. She called it "Picasso time." I should probably provide a footnote, but I'd rather let my auntie tell you the story and let you decide if you want to learn more about the artist Pablo Picasso.

When my auntie was in her sophomore year in college she took an art appreciation class. *I didn't know a Rembrandt from a Renoir. If my philosophy class made me realize I'd spent the first 18 years of my life unconscious, my art appreciation class made me realize that I didn't know how to see. I wish I still had a copy of the textbook "Varieties of Visual Experience" by Edmund Feldman. Rocked my world. Anyway, one day the professor showed a film of Pablo Picasso cartooning a painting. It was mesmerizing. I can't remember how long the film was, but it was obvious that it had been edited. At the end of the film, the filmmaker asked Picasso: How long do you think you've been painting? Picasso said twenty minutes. It had been eight hours, eight hours! Probably everyone experiences losing track of time, but somewhere inside me I knew that I had watched someone experience what I experience in the act of reading. I didn't know it then but falling in love can have the same effect. You meet someone, fall into conversation, and before you know it everyone and everything else disappears; it's two in the morning and you're still awake and talking and your whole body is tingling. Sometimes I think our western concept of time is making a lot of people crazy.*

Time. My auntie believed time is one of the reasons people love movies. It's the way movies, like novels, play with time—past, present; present, future; a decade rendered in minutes of images and songs, the changing of seasons revealed while a young woman twirls on a swing, a lifetime of misunderstanding captured in a facial expression. It's the way movies compress and express the unfolding of events, the actions and reactions of characters. Movies create Picasso time. We get lost in them. We become voyeurs, legitimately. I can stare and stare without anyone reprimanding me. I have to admit, there's something about Doris that causes me to stare. Helen Mirren, whose two favorite actresses are Judy

Garland and Doris Day, said it's because of her "wonderfully expressive and subtle face." John Updike (need footnote) must have felt the same way. Certainly my auntie did. A. E. Hotchner, Doris's biographer, said that because Doris had no professional training she was without artifice, that there was nothing between her and the audience but the truth.

On my auntie's desk in delicate calligraphy is a quotation from Jeanette Winterson's book "Art Objects." "If truth is that which lasts, then art has proved truer than any other human endeavor. What is certain is that pictures and poetry and music are not only marks in time but marks through time, of their own time and ours, not antique or historical, but living as they ever did, exuberantly, untired." And speaking of time, it's time I describe meeting my auntie.

When the local director of BBBS introduced me to Doris, yes, her mother named her after Doris Mary Anne, I sort of lost my tongue. With one look and handshake, I could tell she was nothing like my parents. I could tell she hadn't grown up here. I could tell she'd come from somewhere down south. I could tell she didn't have kids of her own and I was worried she wouldn't like me, and for some reason I really wanted her to like me. When my tongue finally unwound and I made a stupid joke, I think it was her smile and the way she laughed that put me at ease. I didn't know it then, but like Doris, her smile and laugh could light up the world just as much as her tears could inspire compassion. Although not always.

One night, after she'd heard about an incident at school, she invited me to dinner. It was my senior year and I was deep into what you might describe as my surly teen years. Even though our BBBS days had ended when I hit high school, my friends and I still plopped on her couch for a movie night once in a while and we helped with the firewood and weed whacking. In a small town it's not easy to stay under the radar, especially if your auntie is what Malcolm Gladwell calls a "connector." (need footnote)

While she prepared my favorite food—homemade pizza with smoked salmon, purple onions, capers, spinach, mozzarella and olive oil—I sat in her creaky old kitchen chair texting a friend on my cell phone, a forbidden activity in her home. As she was kneading the dough, she stopped for a moment and looked at me, her eyes filled with so much love and so much pain I couldn't look at her: *You know, you do not have*

grow up to be your parents. It was like her words stopped before they reached me and created a wall as big as the sky. But she continued.

Do you understand what I'm telling you? I am not saying your parents are bad people. They are who they are. We're not born with a handbook. But we are born with imagination and creativity and the capacity to experience so much more than the palliatives found in drugs and alcohol, television, inane movies, violent video games, and that cell phone you're holding in your hand. She went back to shaping the dough into a ball, and I stopped texting and put the phone in my pocket, but I couldn't lift my head to look into her eyes. Still she continued.

Do you think it's easy to live a good life, to not let all the ugliness and meanness and stupidity overwhelm all the beauty and love and enlightenment? It takes work and courage and dedication to create a good life, to be a good person. Do you understand? It's not easy. I'm the first to admit that knowing what is good is not always apparent. We make wrong turns, we look away, we keep silent, we bow when we should stand up straight, we believe when we should doubt, we accept when we should reflect, we fabulate before we get all the facts. We misinterpret. Sometimes it seems like life is just one big misinterpretation. Just think how long it took humans to realize that the earth revolves around the sun yet we still say sunrise and sunset. Look at me. No life is without missteps, but some missteps just aren't worth it. Am I making sense?

I wish I could tell you that I understood what she was trying to tell me, that I took what she said to heart. But I did not. I ran away. I stopped visiting and adopted the steps and missteps of my peers and my longed for independence. Little did I realize that my flight would serve as the inspiration for her most loved book. But more about that later.

Chapter: Teacher's Pet

After my first year at film school, I returned to spend the summer in the quiet, unpolluted skies of the place where I grew up. But most of all I returned to reconnect with my auntie, my auntie who had taught me so much more about movies than my teachers.

I had heard through friends that she had converted the garden shed into a guest cottage and hoped that she'd let me settle in for the summer.

Weeding never ends I said after I crossed the little red bridge into her overgrown garden.

There's some gloves and a trowel over in that bucket. Get to work.

I laughed and walked along the row of lettuces to where she was rooting out the enemy and held out my hand. I could use a hug.

And a good meal from the looks of you.

Auntie, you haven't changed.

Oh yes I have. Look at all this gray hair.

Looks good. Now the little kids won't mistake you for a teenager.

Ha-ha. You know I don't volunteer at the school anymore. I heard about your parents.

You always said drinking and driving don't mix.

I wasn't the only one saying it, but saying isn't believing.

Hey, I finally made it to film school. A little late but I just finished my first year.

I also heard you spent some time in Afghanistan.

Still can't keep a secret in this town.

Gonna make an anti-war film?

I've decided there are no anti-war films, only war films.

I'll have to think about that.

Besides, who knows, I might not be able to cut it. I'm still adjusting to being back in America.

Sounds like we have a lot to catch up on. Where are you staying?

Well

Let me give you a tour of the cottage.

I was hoping it was available, although no one told me you painted it purple.

Wa-la. One 10 x 12-foot room with loft, electricity, tea kettle, water crock, and spiders. The composting toilet and solar shower are through that door.

Who painted the mural?

Do you remember Kate Robinson, daughter of the couple who owned the bookstore and yarn shop?

Kind of. I heard her brother's working with Peter Weir in Australia on another adaptation of a Patrick O'Brian novel.

That's right. Did you hear how he got the job? He'd watched "Master and Commander" so many times he knew the film shot for shot. I always kinda hoped he'd work with Anthony Minghella or Alan Rickman. Not to be. You know what I've realized in my advanced age, some people die leaving us to wonder what if. What would they have accomplished if they'd had five more years, ten more years? What would Keats have written if he'd lived to be 30, or Mozart have composed if he'd lived to be an old man, or Virginia if she hadn't committed suicide? And yet there are those whose lives seem to end long before they die, or as a sweet coda to a life well lived. What the hell am I talking about? You're probably still picking through your own negotiations with death.

I've been thinking a lot about the term afterlife lately. Maybe it's not the dead who experience an afterlife, but us. The dead live an afterlife in our memories. But if you want my opinion, I think you're the sweet coda type. So when did Kate paint the mural?

Well, this is her early high school period, her giant flowers and sea creatures period. She's writing and illustrating children's books now.

Oh Auntie. Don't tell me you turned her into a Doris admirer.

Now, what makes you say that?

The mermaid.

Ya know, that movie still makes me laugh.

So has “The Glass Bottom Boat” replaced “Teacher’s Pet” as your favorite comedy?

And why do you think “Teacher’s Pet” is my favorite?

Any chance we can sit awhile? I walked in from town.

The cottage is always open for tea and conversation—and prodigal friends. What’s your pleasure? Assam? Jasmine? Oolong? Organic Blueberry Ceylon?

The blacker the better. I like the view from here, the garden below, the snow-capped mountains above. I forgot how quiet it is.

The light stays longer here too. No bank of ninety-foot hemlocks blocking the light. I love sitting here just to watch the light change. Cabin doesn’t have as good a view. Let me see, I’ve got a wonderful Assam Yuanna blend I think you’ll like. So why do you think “Teacher’s Pet” is my favorite Doris movie?

Well, Doris gets to wear beautifully tailored clothes designed by Edith Head.

Ha- ha. Finally noticing the credits. And you’re right, the sleeveless fitted dress in the nightclub scene. Perfection.

Film history class. The professor demands we pay attention to the credits. Do you know a woman edited that film? Plus you drummed it into my skull: Clothes reveal character.

Ah-ha. Film critic not filmmaker.

Don’t go imaging my future now. Film history is a required course. Another reason why I think it’s one of your favorites is because it doesn’t resolve with marriage.

Hmmm.

Both play respected professionals who are passionate about their work.

Agreed. What else?

They both have similar flaws.

Huh.

Well, they're both basically good people who are well respected in their professions, except that Doris's character is educated and Gable's barely finished the eighth grade. At the beginning, both are very certain about the beliefs they hold about journalism and education. But by the end, they realize that some of their beliefs are prejudices. I like that it's a movie about overcoming prejudices, resolving differences, becoming a better person—even becoming better at their jobs.

Me, too.

I also like how they use a psychology professor to help both of the characters understand each other's behaviors. It's kind of like what you were always trying to tell me. Don't just react but take time to stop and think about what's behind someone's behavior as well as my own.

Hmmmm. Anything else?

This might sound funny, but another thing I really noticed is that nobody was mean like in the movies people make now. I think if Hollywood remade "Teacher's Pet" today, they'd make Doris's character a severe, iceberg woman and the Gable character would have slept with her and then felt guilty about his deception. Or he would have left Doris's place and spent the night with the Marilyn knockoff. What do you think?

I think you're a pretty wise character. Here's a question. If Gable's character hadn't have felt guilty about deceiving Doris's character, would they have spent the night together?

Whoa auntie. You're talking about Doris, Doris who wouldn't let her character in "Lover Come Back" end up in bed with Rock Hudson without a marriage license even though they're both blotto on VIP. Besides, Gable leaves Doris's apartment because he finds out her father was a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, the editor of a newspaper "read around the world" and feels unworthy.

Okay, but is she willing?

Obviously you think so.

I didn't say that. It's 1958. Erica Stone is in her mid-thirties. She's a successful journalist who decided to pursue teaching. She's attractive. She enjoys living in New York, going to nightclubs, the theatre, concerts. And let's face it, she can mambo. Every image tells us something. The camera doesn't linger on her swiveling hips in a tight dress out of sheer

admiration. What do you think is being suggested when she fans her face and opens a window to take in some cool air after Gable kisses her?

She's hot?

I hope you're making a pun.

It's fun to pun.

Okay, talk to me about the nightclub scene.

You know what your neighbor said when she watched it.

Ah, in her inimitable slang: the "my dick is bigger than your dick" scene. What do you think?

It's more complicated than that.

Complicated how?

Well, it's not his sexuality or virility that's in question. It's his intellect. It's his insecurity about not having a formal education.

What makes you say that?

Because he reveals his beliefs about intellectuals. You know, the typical blue-collar stereotype that they didn't start at the bottom and work their way up, that they have no real life experience, that they live in ivory towers.

Sound familiar?

Guess it's a prejudice that just doesn't go away.

So how does this scene tear down those stereotypes?

Don't you wish you could have been there when they shot this scene? It's funnier each time I watch it.

Why do you think it's funny?

They're making fun of so many things. In some ways, they are making fun of themselves, of Hollywood images. I think they are even poking fun at the production codes. (need footnote) I bet there are a lot of funny outtakes. I'd love to see the footage that ended up on the floor. In fact, I wish I could re-edit it. There are some funky cuts. I don't think Doris's reaction shots are held long enough either.

But how does this scene tear down stereotypes? You didn't mention that he's paired with an overtly sexy blonde nightclub singer who doesn't hide the fact that they spend nights together.

Talk about a Hollywood stereotype. It's like they put Marilyn and Doris in the same room to see what would happen. Watching Doris's face when "Miss DeFore" enters the room to sing "The Girl Who Invented Rock and Roll" is hilarious. Even more hilarious is when Doris reprises the song to tease Gable a few scenes later. So funny. And, I don't know, disarming. It's a way of letting Doris ask about his relationship with Miss DeFore in a playful way that's also asking him, and the audience, to question our ideas and Hollywood's images about what makes a woman sexy.

Can we backup for a minute? How do you read Doris's reaction to Miss DeFore when she parades onto the floor to begin her number?

I'm not quite sure. I think initially her face shows curiosity, but once she looks her up and down, it's hard to say. She's certainly not shocked or appalled or disapproving or anything like that. I don't think she's jealous, although my professor thinks so. It seems to me that once Miss DeFore begins her performance the scene becomes more about Gable's character being embarrassed and Doris trying not to laugh. What do you think?

I've always found it interesting that we don't get to see the reactions of Gig Young's character.

I never noticed that. But when you think about it, how would his reaction serve the story? The director clearly set up triangles, moving from Doris in the middle of Gable and Young to Gable in the middle of Doris and Miss DeFore.

Agreed—the archetypal triangles. But aren't you just a bit curious as to "Dr. Pine's" reaction?

Isn't Dr. Pine what Robertson Davies would call "fifth business," the character who is essential to bringing the lovers together?

Guess all those reading recommendations I made didn't completely go to waste.

Long airplane ride and I found a used copy at the Sal (need footnote) for fifty cents. Anyway, his reaction doesn't matter. Doris and

Pine are just colleagues, friends. What's Doris say when Gable confronts her about Pine? "We're collaborating on a book." Personally, I think that relationship was a stroke of genius. A man and a woman who respect one another's professional talents collaborating—like the Kanins who wrote the script. Dr. Pine's the one who tears down the stereotypes, and that's why his reaction to Miss DeFore doesn't matter. He's a scholar who is interested in understanding human behavior, not in judging it.

Huh. I never thought about it like that.

You know, that's Doris's line when Dr. Pine explains the psychology behind Gable's deception.

Are you trying to tell me that I've made you sit through "Teacher's Pet" too many times?

Actually, I had to write a paper on romantic comedies. I used "Teacher's Pet" as one of my examples. I bet I've now probably watched it more than you.

Oh really? But the audience is led to believe that there's something going on between Pine and Doris otherwise how do you account for Pine having the waiter spike Gable's drinks?

Was that legal? But the audience doesn't know that Pine had slipped the waiter some money to spike Gable's drinks until the next day when Gable tells Pine that he shouldn't feel too badly for passing out because he had the waiter spike his drinks.

It's interesting that they both resorted to the same tactics.

At least the movie deals with the consequences of consuming that much alcohol. I watched a really dumb romantic comedy the other night where the characters were belting back tequila shots all night and woke up as if they'd just had a beer together and weren't at all worried that they didn't use birth control or might contract an STD. At least they made Gig Young look like he'd been run over by a truck and unable to go to work.

But you are aware that spiking someone's drink is really not a laughing matter. It could lead to alcohol poisoning and potentially death. Hey, how about you write your master's thesis on the use of alcohol in

movies. Image/Reality. Doris's movies alone would provide enough research for a thoughtful essay.

Auntie, I'm not even a sophomore and you have me going to graduate school? Besides, it's the film geeks obsessed with movie trivia that scribble stuff like that.

You're not calling me a film geek, are you?

Auntie, you're just a Doris geek.

I'll take that as a compliment. So do you want to spend your summer with a Doris geek who needs a lot of help around here?

It will be like old times.