

# 'Magnum' co-star has his own style

**A**CTOR JOHN HILLERMAN calls it "the most appalling sight" he has ever seen—"women actually swoon in the streets" when Tom Selleck, the handsome hunk from CBS' top-rated "Magnum, P.I." walks by. "It's the most amazing thing I've ever witnessed," he said, shaking his head in disbelief.

Hillerman, who has appeared as Higgins, Selleck's adversary since the start of the series four years ago, acknowledged that he never tires of questions about TV's leading heartthrob. "I really like Tom," his co-star emphasized. "We're good friends, and I admire him. If I didn't like him, I'd find it terribly unpleasant."

Hillerman, who considers Higgins the best role he has had in many years, said: "I do not feel like a second banana, nor that I'm playing second fiddle to Tom. My career has been enhanced in every way by the success of 'Magnum, P.I.' and that success is based on Tom and his extraordinary charisma. It has given me economic security. I'm grateful and happy for all of us."

"Tom's a joy to work with, one of the most generous stars I've ever met. I've known him for four years and don't detect any changes in him, except for tensions from the pressures. He's a shy man, and still the same sweet guy."

Like Selleck, Hillerman spends most of the year in Hawaii, where the series is shot. He has a newly decorated 10-room, 38th-floor apartment overlooking Honolulu, and he still maintains a home in Los Angeles.

"When I realized I had to move to Hawaii,"

Hillerman recalled, "I didn't want to at first, but now I've done a 180-degree turnabout. Working there has been a pleasure, there are none of the pressures of Hollywood, and I don't have to get in my car and drive two hours to the world's most insignificant appointment. There's a colony of show business people there, and we've all become friends."

He cites Carol Burnett, Jim Nabors and a future resident, Dolly Parton. "We've become a tourist attraction," he said.

The Texas-born actor is proud of the British accent he has cultivated for his role as Higgins. "When I was first cast," he remembered, "critics said, 'Why didn't they cast an Englishman?' Not an unreasonable statement, I must add. Then, after the first episode was filmed, I was invited to a Universal Studio party for foreign buyers, which meant all the people from the BBC would be there. I didn't want to go; I thought they'd criticize my British accent. When I walked in, a whole group cornered me and one said, 'John, old boy. Your accent is smashing. The only trouble is, you hit too bloody hard, you should throw it away.'"

**HILLERMAN, WHO PREVIOUSLY** starred in two short-lived series—"Ellery Queen" and "The Betty White Show"—called himself a confirmed bachelor, and likes living an orderly life. As he explained, "When I want to eat a fudge sundae for dinner, which I often do, I don't have anyone around me to nag that I need a balanced diet. I'm almost like Howard Hughes in the way I live. I'll often pull the drapes and watch six movies all in one stretch."

The conflict between the two characters in "Magnum" is what the audience loves, he said, but the relationship has evolved to the point "where we actually have moments when we genuinely seem to care for one another—always begrudgingly bestowed," of course. On a continuing basis, the hard-nosed Higgins would have to show more humor and some humanity."

No one guessed that Selleck would become an international star or that "Magnum, P.I." would become such a hit when the series began. Not the two stars, anyway.

"Part of the magic," according to Hillerman, "is that we enjoy working together. Tom's a delight."



John Hillerman