

THE HAPPIEST MOMENT IN MY LIFE

ROY FOX

confesses he's such a lucky sort of guy, that his life is about chock full of happiest moments! "Was it when I got married . . . or when I discovered Mary Lee . . ." he ponders

I always want to know whether people are happy and what makes them happy. It helps one to understand them so much better. So, recently I went to see Roy Fox, and I said: "I want to know if you are happy."

He looked a bit surprised, cleared his throat, smiled, raised his eyebrows. "Is this a joke? What's the idea?"

Finally, Roy Fox sat down, and we had tea together, and there in the hotel lounge, and surrounded by men and women who were talking gossip and drinking cocktails and flirting and making a great noise, I heard the story of his life.

And what a life! And what an extraordinary young man!

To begin with, I did not realise that Roy Fox is so thin. He sat there in his dark brown suit, and the immaculate shirt with the loose American collar, and I was looking at a young man with a pale face, thin hands, and a quick nervous energy written all over him. Very American.

And I knew that he was going to tell me that his work is the most important thing in his life. So American.

"I guess I would rather work than play. Yes," he said, "that's when I get my greatest kick out of life. My greatest happiness. When I've done a good job of work. When I've discovered a new singer with talent, or started something, or created something."

"Do you want to hear the whole story? Right from the beginning?"

"Well, I was only twelve years old when I got my first cornet and learnt how to play it. That started me in my ambition."

"When I was sixteen, another boy told me how marvellous it was to be earning your own living in a bank, so I decided to leave school and become a bank clerk. Yes, that was in Los Angeles. And I was paid twenty dollars a month—about £10."

"I guess that seemed a lot of money in those days. Especially as I made some extra money with my cornet. I worked with a band in the evenings, any time I got the chance. Then what do you think happened? Suddenly I was offered £10 a week to give up my job in the bank and join a band in Santa Monica!"

"Of course, £10 a week seemed like a fortune to a kid of seventeen. I resigned from the bank right away, and pretty soon I got the feeling I was a millionaire."

"You see, when I was eighteen years old, I was earning £25 a week and running my own car."

"Well, for the next few years I went right on climbing the ladder to success. Before long I was working in Hollywood with my own band, appearing at all the smart places . . . and so it went on."

"I made films. You remember Janet Gaynor and Charlie Farrell in a picture called 'Seventh Heaven'? Well, I was in that picture. My job was to stand around with my cornet and play sad music very softly. What I had to do was to make Janet Gaynor and Charlie Farrell cry, and the more I made them cry the better they acted!"

"When I was twenty-six I got married to Dorothea Booth. Yes, that was one of my happiest moments. She was a film actress, and she was working with the Marx Brothers in a picture called 'The Coconuts.' I was making a lot of money, and so then I suddenly thought I would fall in love and get married."

Roy Fox and his wife spent their honeymoon in a little place called La Jolla, a little blue and golden place between the sea and the mountains.

They stayed at a hotel which is called "Casa de Mañana", or "The House of To-morrow".

"Yes," Roy Fox said, "that was one of my happiest moments. When I took my wife to that hotel, and all day long we lay on the beach in the sunshine."

"I guess the most exciting moment in my life," he said, "was when I decided to come to London. I was doing very well in Hollywood. Then Dorothy Mackaill, the film star, got me a job for a few weeks at the Café de Paris in London. So I threw up my work in Hollywood, said good-bye to all my friends, and took a gamble on the future."

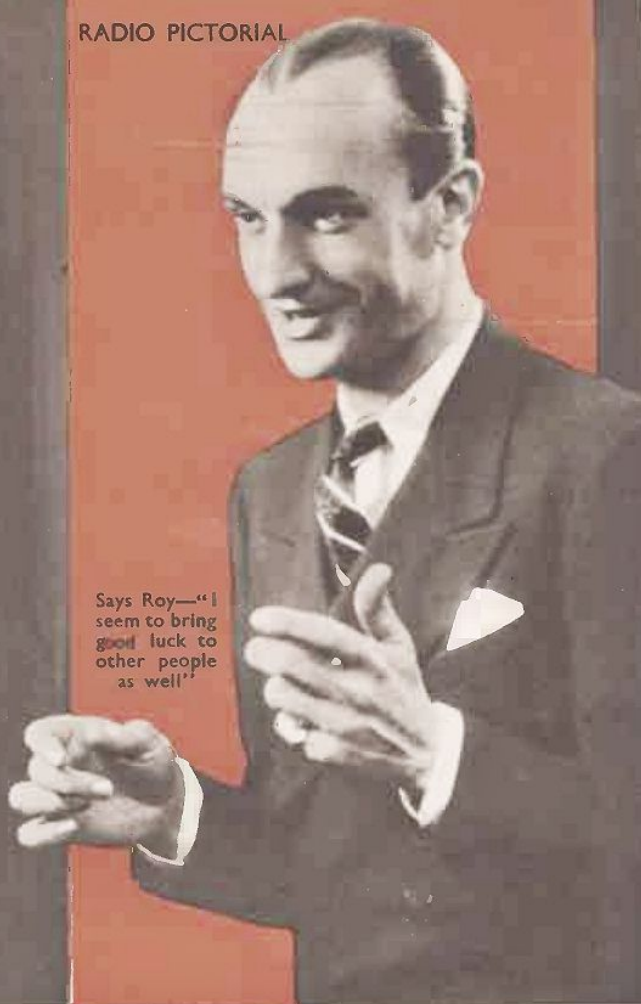
"People said I was crazy, taking such a risk. Just to come to London for a few weeks! But I was right, wasn't I?"

"Since I came to London, nine years ago, everything has been just marvellous. It seems I just can't help being lucky. I was born under a lucky star, or something. First I was working with my band in London, then I started touring, then I made some films. Not to mention broadcasting and recording. My films include 'Radio Parade,' 'On the Air,' and 'Radio Pirates.'"

"I seem to bring good luck to other people as well. Do you know, I have discovered six well-known vocalists? They are all famous now, and three of them are making a lot of money in the States. Their names? Ella Logan, Al Bowlly, Peggy

Whenever Roy Fox has a free moment he goes off to have a look at his greyhounds. And now he owns a racehorse!

Says Roy—"I seem to bring good luck to other people as well!"



Dell, Denny Dennis, Bobby Joy, and Mary Lee.

"I'm such a lucky sort of guy, and my life has been so full of happy moments, but one thing I do know, nothing gives me more happiness than my work! But maybe the happiest moment in my life was when I discovered little Mary Lee, the new vocalist!"

"You know, I got a real thrill when I first discovered that little girl. I found her in Glasgow—by arranging a competition for local talent. She's only fourteen. When I heard her sing she was only thirteen—and I had to wait six months before I could employ her without breaking the law."

"It's hard to explain, but that little girl is the best vocalist I ever heard, whether in this country or the States."

Some day I shall take her to America and then she's going to make a sensation.

"I guess," Roy Fox finally said, "that you think I'm a funny sort of guy. Always thinking about my work. Typically American."

"But I hope I've given you some idea of the happy moments in a band-leader's life. Maybe I ought to tell you what I do when I'm not working. Well, I spend a lot of time at the kennels playing around with my greyhounds. That's a thing I love to do. As soon as I get a free moment I go right round to see my dogs."

"Oh yes, and the latest excitement is my new race-horse. The name is 'Pinfire.'"

"But I guess, really, I'm a serious sort of guy. I rarely go to parties and I rarely go to a night-club or a restaurant unless I go there to work."

"I guess it all sounds crazy to you. Does it? I wonder what you think of a guy like me?"

N.S.

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