RODDY McDOWALL -- The Eternal Boy

It would not embarrass Roddy McDowall to admit that he is probably the oldest of all the teen favorites — in fact, he would be proud of the honor. For Roddy is ageless, and though other idols may come and go, Roddy has been around a long time, and he isn’t going anywhere but up!

This fall, he has embarked on another first in his extraordinary career — his first regular role in a TV series. But how could it be otherwise, for “Planet Of The Apes” without Roddy McDowall would be an empty planet indeed! And after appearing in four of the five 20th Century-Fox “Apes” movies, Roddy stars again in the TV series, this time as Galen, the ape friendly to astronauts Ron Harper and James Naughton.

“I would have been in all five of the ‘Apes’ pictures if I hadn’t been directing a movie in London at the time the second (Beneath The Planet Of The Apes) was in production,” Roddy said.

Roddy is five feet, ten inches tall, weighs 150 pounds and has brown hair and brown eyes. He was born in London, England, on September 17, some 40-odd years ago, and received his earliest education at St. Joseph’s school.

He attracted attention at an early age because of his large, winsome eyes, and his shy, engaging smile. At the age of five he was already a professional. He modeled children’s clothing, both for photographers and in fashion shows, and for two years was the most highly paid and sought-after children’s model in all of London. Even then, his adorable looks were familiar to millions!

Soon he was being sought after by film producers, and at the age of eight he made his film debut in Murder In The Family, by the time he was twelve he has appeared in several other major British films, including You Will Remember, The Outsider and This England.

Impressed by Roddy’s acting ability and his already considerable professional experience, the famous producer, Daryl Zanuck, brought Roddy to the United States and offered him a contract at 20th Century-Fox. His first film for Fox was Man Hunt, but he became a star when he played the little crippled lad in How Green Was My Valley, a great classic which won the Academy Award as Best Picture Of The Year. Roddy has since appeared in 80 motion pictures.

“When I was a child actor,” Roddy recalls, “I worked in as many as three pictures at one time.” Among his earlier pictures were Confirm or Deny, Son of Fury, On The Sunny Side Of The Street, The Pied Piper, My Friend Flicka, Lassie Come Home and The White Cliffs Of Dover. Today, many of these films are shown frequently on television, and thus you have an opportunity to see why Roddy was so appealing and successful as a child star.

There was no one particular moment when Roddy stopped being a child star and began to portray a young man. “Because when I was young,” he says, “I often played older parts, just as I portrayed younger men when I grew older.”

The next phase of Roddy’s career was as an associate producer of such films as Rocky, Kidnapped and Steel Fist. “Moving to the other side of the camera was as easy for Roddy as crossing the street,” says a Hollywood veteran who has followed Roddy’s career over the years.

In 1953 Roddy left Hollywood for the East Coast and the stage. Following his first appearance in “Young Woodley” at the Westport Playhouse in Connecticut, he was signed for the New York City Center Theater revival of George Bernard Shaw’s Misalliance. His role as the spoiled upset opened a new career for him, and many choice parts in the theater soon came his way.

Then he received an invitation to perform with the American Shakespeare Festival, and he played the role of Octavius in Julius Caesar. Several years later, he again portrayed the same Roman emperor, this time in the film Cleopatra with Elizabeth Taylor.

Roddy returned to Hollywood, made about twenty more movies, and then began to appear frequently on television. He won an Emmy award as best supporting actor for his part as Alexander Hamilton’s son in “Not Without Honor.” He also received a nomination as best actor for his work on ABC’s “Arrest And Trial” series.

All was not constant success in Roddy’s life, however. There came a period in the late 1940’s when he found himself between careers. He was no longer hot in Hollywood, and he had not yet established himself as an actor on the legitimate stage. But Roddy was undaunted and was determined to stick with show business no matter what happened. He tided himself over during these difficult years by doing vaudeville. In Boston, he actually did five shows a day with Shep Fields and his Rippling Rhythm boys. But fortunately, this period did not last very long.

In later years, Roddy sang in the Broadway smash “Camelot” and starred in such big films as Midnight Lace, The Longest Day and The Loved One.

Besides acting, Roddy has always had a thriving career as a photographer. He is well known especially for his photographs of other celebrities, and his work has appeared in leading magazines throughout the United States and Europe. And he even had his own book of photographs published. Entitled Double Exposure, it has been extremely successful and has gone through several editions. An editor of Life magazine once said of Roddy that if for any reason he had to give up show business, he easily could have been a professional photographer.

Roddy is equally at home in the three show-business capitals of the English speaking world — Los Angeles, New York and London. He is also a full-fledged member of the international Jet Set. Roddy is particularly close with many of the most famous, beautiful, wealthy and accomplished women in the world, including Jackie Onassis, Margot Fonteyn, the Baroness Pauline de Rothschild, Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, “Babe” Paley, Princess Grace of Monaco, Anita Loos, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Agatha Christie, and many others.

A confirmed bachelor, Roddy has preferred escorting many different women rather than settling down with any one in particular. But who knows — the right girl may come along at any time. “I never give up — on anything,” Roddy says. How true!