

The Happy Years

US : 1950 : dir. William Wellman : M.G.M : 110 min
prod: Carey Wilson : scr: Harry Ruskin : dir.ph.: Paul C Vogel
[Dean Stockwell](#)
Leo G Carroll; Margalo Gillmore; Leon Ames; Scotty Beckett; Darryl Hickman; Robert Wagner

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Off to school with him ! And may the lord have mercy on his soul !

Source: indeterminate website



*M.G.M cherub-in-chief Dean Stockwell does his mischievous prankster schtick. If it had been a **British** boarding school, mind you, he'd have got plenty of schtick in return. Ah, but not here... Source: indeterminate website*

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"High-spirited boy in a turn-of-the-century prep school finds he has trouble fitting in. Familiar comedy-drama, adapted from Owen Johnson's "Lawrenceville Stories", is hardly typical Wellman fare, but well enough done. Robert Wagner makes his film debut. *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Owen Johnson's "Lawrenceville Stories" served as the basis for this account of a jolly young man who discovers new values at preparatory school. *** "

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"The taming of an unruly pupil at a turn-of-the-century American school. A curiously unrealised piece of Americana with only moments to suggest what was being aimed at. Writer: Harry Ruskin, from the novel "The Lawrenceville School Stories" by Owen Johnson."

The M.G.M. Story review:

"Carey Wilson had been eager to film Owen Johnson's old "Lawrenceville School" stories ever since he read them in the Saturday Evening Post, but was short of a script until Harry Ruskin came up with "**THE HAPPY YEARS**". William Wellman, also in nostalgic mood, directed before they all got on with more important things. It scored B-minus for box office appeal. Enacting the juvenile reminiscences were Dean Stockwell and Leo G Carroll, Darryl Hickman, Scotty Beckett, Leon Ames, Margalo Gillmore."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"Delightful tale of a mischievous boy and his adventures at a boys' school in the 1890s. Often hilariously funny, with Stockwell giving a superb performance. Fine fare for the entire family. *** "

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"A boys' school in the 1890s. Dean Stockwell is naughty but nice pupil, becoming even more



Leo G Carroll shows Stockwell an obscure amendment to the US constitution which says that unruly schoolboys may be summarily put to death.
Source: Films & Filming

aggressive at establishment meant to tame the unruly. William Wellman directed. 3"

Films & Filming - April '73 - note:

"... Surprisingly, **"THE HAPPY YEARS"** (1950) played the lower half of double bills in Britain, but it is undoubtedly Wellman's gentlest film. Drawing on his own childhood memories as well as "The Lawrenceville School Stories" by Owen Johnson, it featured the remarkable child actor Dean Stockwell whose love-hate relationship with a gruff, but kindly old schoolmaster (the excellent Leo G Carroll) made this an endearing, nostalgic little film with its feet firmly on the ground.

The film begins with a very amusing scene in which Stockwell twits an old gentleman, smokes and causes trouble on the streetcar, not knowing that he will be meeting the old chap in class the very same day. The whole film is like this - a plea for retention of the myth that schooldays are the happiest days of your life. They aren't, of course, but distance lends enchantment. As usual, Wellman treats his juvenile cast as human beings rather than children, a gift which affords many of his films - **"WILD BOYS"**, **"GOODBYE, MY LADY"** - an added dimension of truth."

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times note:

"The tale of a young tearaway who is sent to a strict prep school where he struggles to come to terms with the tough regime."

TV guide note:

"Comedy drama starring Dean Stockwell as a young tearaway who causes havoc in a turn-of-the-century school. ***"



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"THE HAPPY YEARS"
 A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture

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 azine reproduction. Made in U. S. A.

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*Cramming may be painful, but at least the comfortable surroundings would be the envy of most day-school children.
 His fellow inmate is unidentified.*

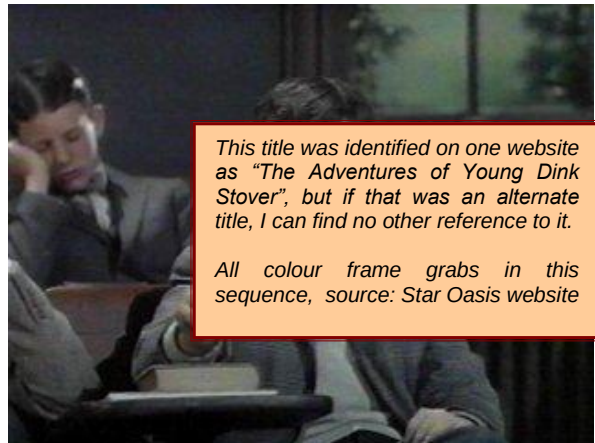
Source: indeterminate website

[Dean Stockwell](#) was 14, the same year that he starred as "KIM", in which again he is sent under protest to a boarding school where he has some difficulty fitting in ("We don't do *that* at St Xavier's, O'Connor!"). At this age, and in this film above all, his screen persona was bluff, conceited and supremely full of himself, with just the necessary hint of huggable vulnerability to make the arrogance acceptable. Reading between the lines of his biographical details, the real Dean was altogether less confident. He was kept so busy by the studio that he had very few friends his own age, and was wary of his peer group, expecting them to regard him as the pompous film star. Scratch a glamorous boy actor and you find an edgy boy inside.

He's supported here by two over-the-hill boy stars: Darryl Hickman ("THE GRAPES OF WRATH", "BOYS' RANCH", "DANGEROUS YEARS") was 19, while Scotty Beckett ("ANTHONY ADVERSE", "THE BLUE BIRD", "ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES") was now a sad old 21. Both a bit long in the tooth for a prep school, you may be thinking, and who am I to argue?

See subject index under [BOARDING SCHOOL / PUBLIC SCHOOL](#), **RASCALS & SCALAWAGS** and **DIRECTORS** for more of Wellman's work.





This title was identified on one website as "The Adventures of Young Dink Stover", but if that was an alternate title, I can find no other reference to it.

All colour frame grabs in this sequence, source: Star Oasis website







Not so much a schoolboy, more an Atlantic City high-roller

Source: indeterminate website