



Kicking "lame" leg high, Dennis Weaver shows neighborhood children in his playroom "how people used to dance." Wife Gerry holds two-year-old Rusty Weaver.

THE BEST LIMP IN THE WEST IS A FAKE, BUT IT'S THE TRADE-MARK OF



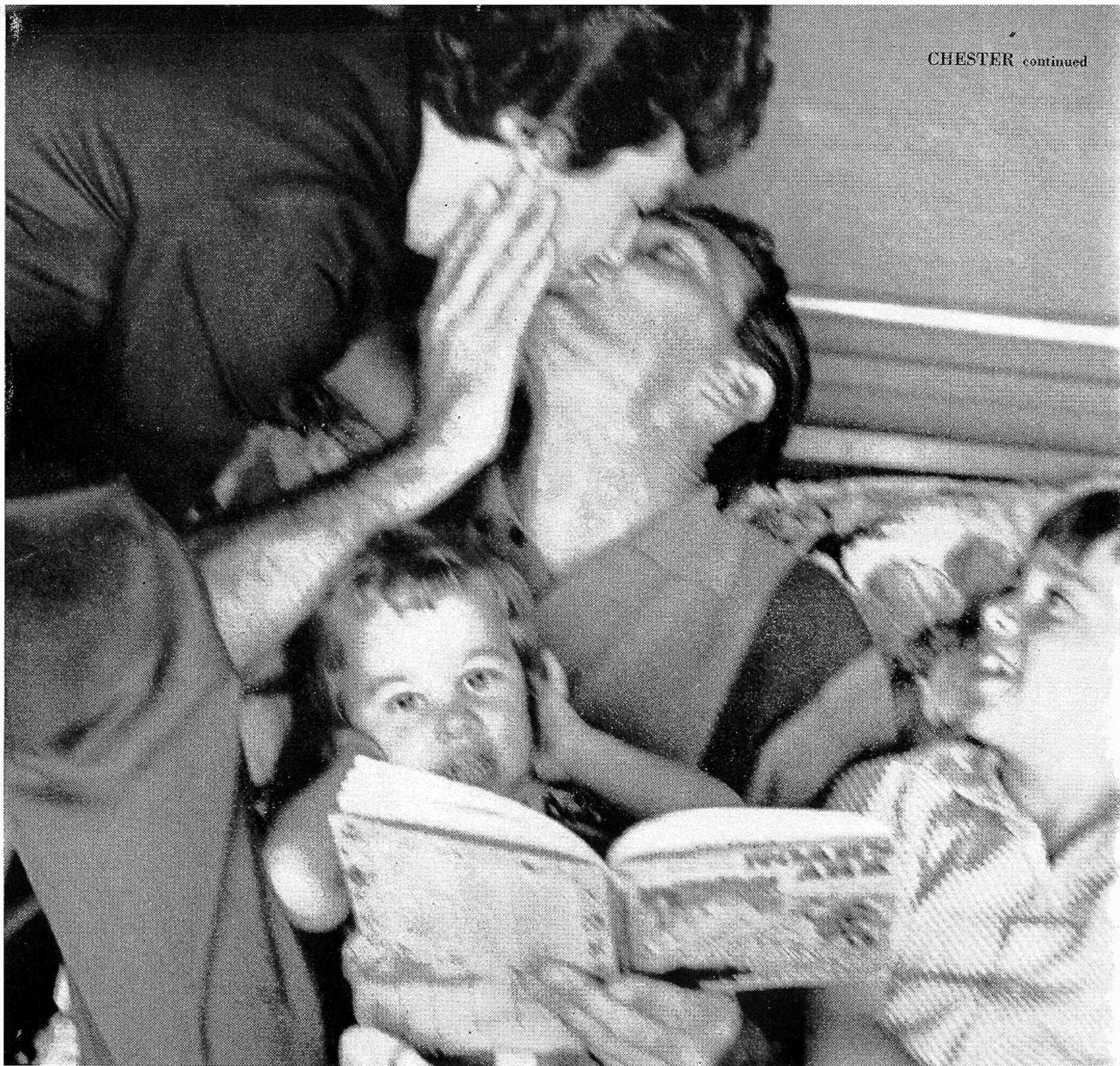
“Gunsmoke’s” Chester

TO THE TV Western set, a stiff-kneed limp and a plaintive “Hey, Mr. Dillon!” mean just one thing: Chester, the lovable, bumbling deputy of *Gunsmoke*. But off camera, Chester is another man entirely—namely, Dennis Weaver, an agile and robust 37-year-old actor who walks without even a trace of a limp.

Gunsmoke’s people—Chester, Doc, Kitty and Marshal Dillon—are more important than its plots.

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CHESTER *continued*



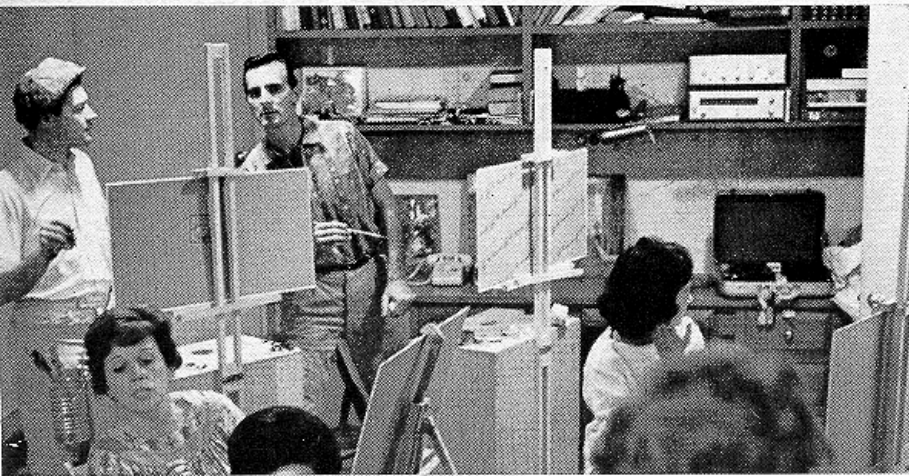
Gerry Weaver plants a wifely kiss on Dennis as he reads to two of their three sons. To their delight, he hams it up. Weaver has played Chester for six years.

Shakespeare, Coward and the Greeks led to "Gunsmoke"

Dennis Weaver is a handsome former college athlete and Navy flier who started acting in Joplin, Mo., when he was still a boy.

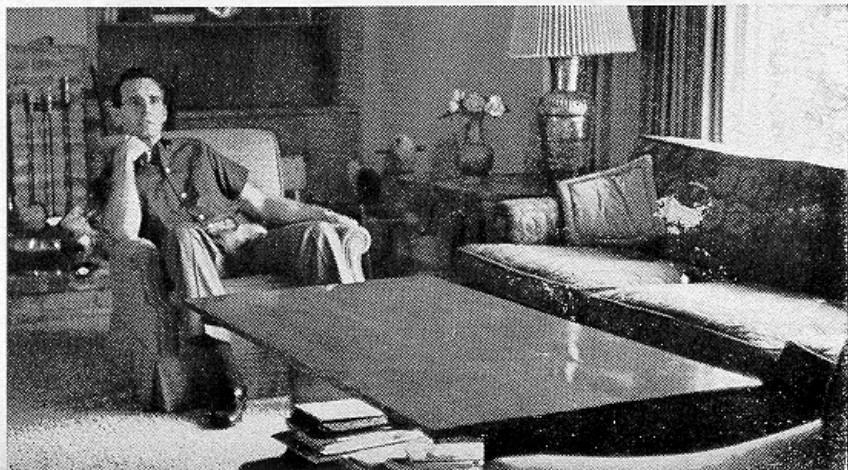
"People who watch *Gunsmoke* won't believe it," he says, "but I've played everything from Shakespeare to Noel Coward, with a few Greek dramas thrown in." This season, besides acting, he will direct at least six of the new hour-long *Gunsmoke* episodes. Weaver, who does Chester's limp so convincingly that many parents of handicapped children have asked him for advice, is proud that one crippled boy to whom he wrote is now a champion swimmer.

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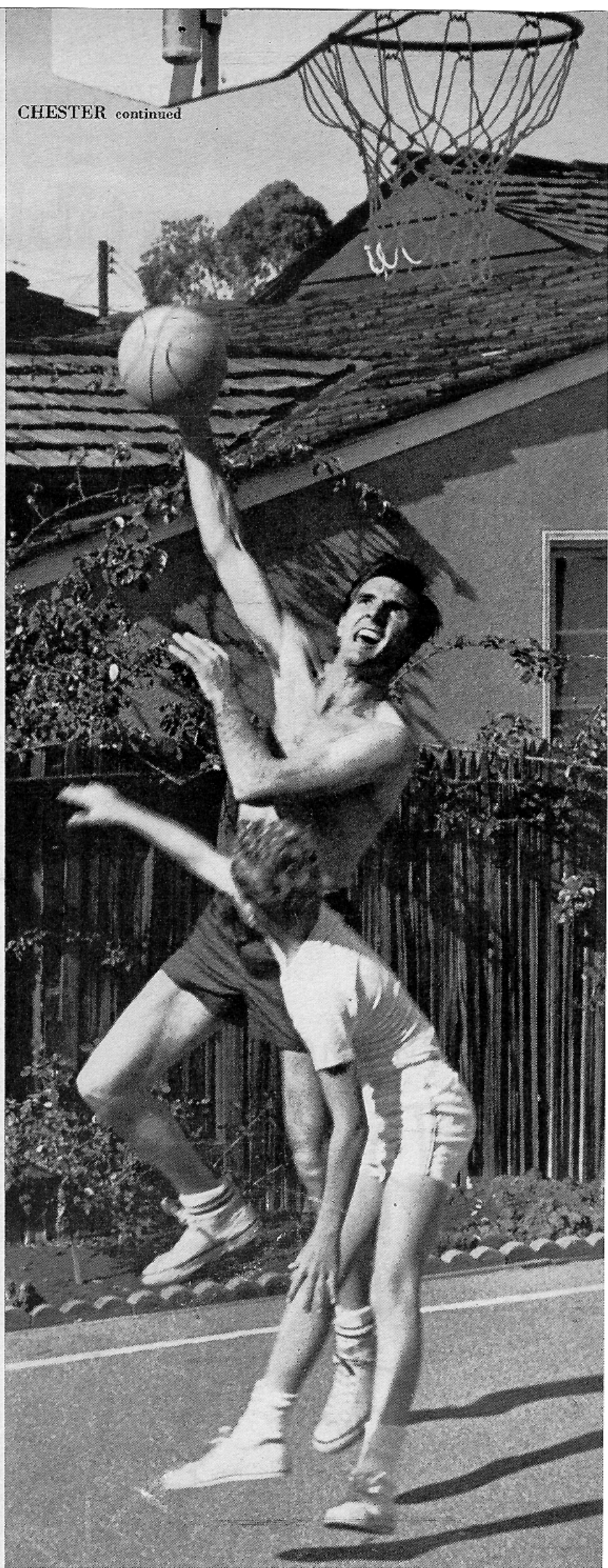


The Weavers' Encino, Calif., home is also a neighborhood art center (above). At right, Dennis relaxes awhile in his living room.

PRODUCED BY STANLEY GORDON PHOTOGRAPHED BY EARL THEISEN



CHESTER continued



A devotee of health foods, Weaver uncorks some energy in a fast basketball game with his oldest son, 12-year-old Rick.



Clowning here for neighborhood kids, Dennis and Gerry were college sweethearts.

He will stay as Chester, but wants to try Lincoln

A thoughtful citizen, Weaver is concerned about world problems. He is a member of the Hollywood-for-SANE group, which advocates a ban on nuclear testing. He also reads metaphysical books and takes the family to a nonsectarian church in Hollywood. In his career, he is happy for now to continue playing Chester, though he does not ex-

pect to go on limping for the rest of his life. With nothing specific in mind right now, he says, "One thing I want to do sometime is play Abraham Lincoln." His wife wants him to do a musical, singing and dancing and playing a character "as suave and debonair as he really is." Weaver may do it. If he does, it sure will seem strange to Chester.



The Weaver family joins in a rendition of The Boll Weevil Song. Dennis says he learned to play the guitar on movie sets.