

Five Little Peppers and How They Grew

US : 1939 : dir. Charles Barton : Columbia : 58 min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
Edith Fellows; Ronald Sinclair; Tommy Bond; Charles Peck; Jimmy Leake
 Clarence Kolb; Dorothy Peterson

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*From here to TV's "The Wonder Years" how little has changed, it seems. Ronald Sinclair catches the sex bug which, in the bygone 1930s, only struck home well **after** puberty.*
 Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"While Mrs Pepper is out working, eldest daughter Polly must take care of the other children. Sentimental second feature which quickly spawned two others: "FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS AT HOME" and "FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS IN TROUBLE"."

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Sinclair:

"The aristocratic Sinclair had a New Zealand father and a British mother; his real name was Richard Arthur Hould. Having made a modest four-year old stage debut as an elf, he found himself in 1933 acting with Sybil Thorndike at a Dunedin theatre.

Billed as "Ra Hould", he had the main child part in "**DOWN ON THE FARM**", New Zealand's first talkie. Then, on Miss Thorndike's advice, his parents took him not to England (their original idea) to further his movie ambitions, but to Hollywood. It worked, and he got a part in "**BELOVED ENEMY**".

At the end of 1937, for "**THOROUGH-BREDS DON'T CRY**" (a film with Rooney and Judy Garland) he changed his performing name from Ra Hould to Ronald Sinclair. It did no harm. Nor did playing young Scrooge in "**A CHRISTMAS CAROL**". The out-rageously handsome youth continued to thrive.

Three more "**Little Peppers**" films absorbed Sinclair's energies in 1940; he was also in "**THAT HAMILTON WOMAN**" (41) and "**DESPERATE JOURNEY**" (42). The other Pepper boys were Charles Peck (the rich boy in "**DEAD END**"), Tommy Bond ("Butch" from **Our Gang**) and Jimmy Leake.

After World War Two Ronald Sinclair abandoned acting and learnt the craft of film editor, which he practised for the next 25 years. Films he worked on included - for Roger Corman - "**THE PREMATURE BURIAL**", "**THE RAVEN**" and, oddly enough, another "**TOWER OF LONDON**".

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Bond:

"It was strange that such a chubby, good-natured creature should have first won fame as a menacing heavy: but so it was with Tommy Bond, the bully "Butch" in "**Our Gang**" comedies between 1932 and 1940. In fact, after a two-year lay-off, he didn't become "Butch" until "**GLOVE TAPS**" (February 1937), in which he's a tough kid who moves into the gang's neighbourhood, accompanied by a baleful-looking henchman called "The Woim" (Sidney Kibrick). For the next three years he remained an oppressor, extortionist and general pain.

Outside the Gang, Tommy - first featured as a warbling tot on radio - was much in demand in the comedy shorts of Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chase, Andy Clyde and Thelma Todd. He could scowl and rage like the best of brats, but he could also be the jolly, companionable friend-and-buddy. In 1939-40 he was one of the "**FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS**" in the film series.

After 1941 Tommy Bond acted for a further decade, in films like "**THIS LAND IS MINE**" (43), "**THE MAN FROM FRISCO**" (44) and "**THE BEAUTIFUL CHEAT**" (45). With "Alfalfa" Switzer he was in the **GAS HOUSE KIDS** movies (47), and he played Jimmy Olsen in the second "**SUPERMAN**" serial (48) and in the next one, "**ATOM MAN vs SUPER-MAN**" (50). In 1951 he ended with "**BEDTIME FOR BONZO**" and "**CALL ME MISTER**".

That year he graduated in theatre arts at Los Angeles State College, and went to work as property master at KTTV, and later as stage manager at Channel 30 in Fresno."

No further information available, and none whatsoever on the other titles. It is of course a proto-soap, as were the **BLONDIE** films, for example. The sequels were, for the record - "**FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS AT HOME**", "**FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS AT SCHOOL**" and "**OUT WEST WITH THE PEPPERS**", all in 1940.

Ronald Sinclair was 15 and Tommy Bond 12. Charles Peck (age unknown) was previously in "**DEAD END**" (37) and "**MAD ABOUT MUSIC**" (38). Nothing else is known of Jimmy Leake.

See subject index (provisionally) under **COMEDY** and **SIBLING HOUSEHOLDS**.