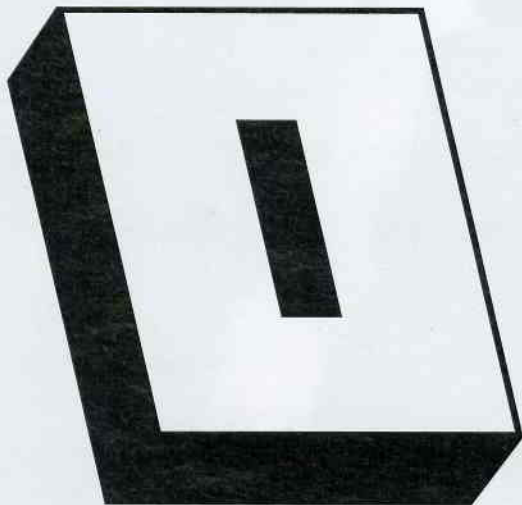
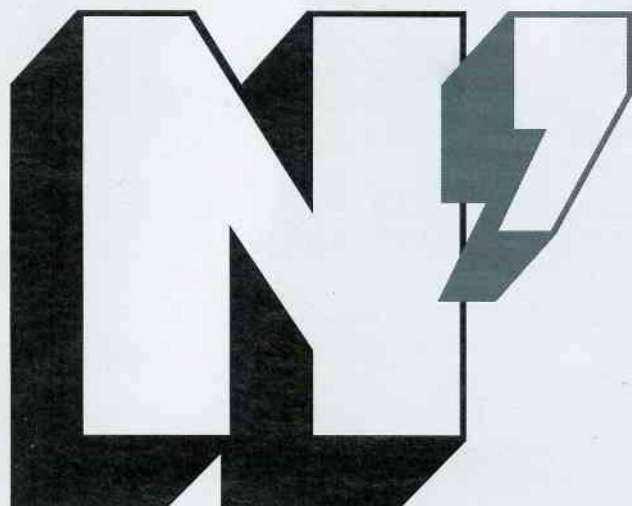
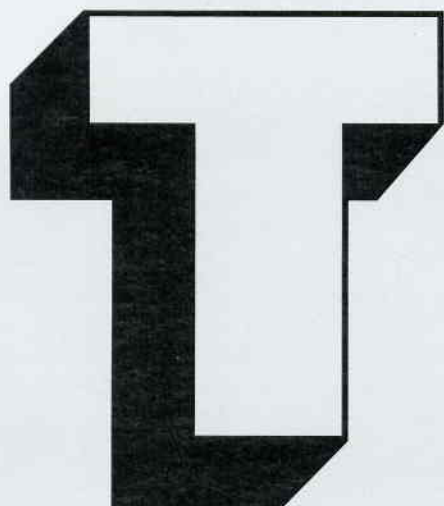
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EXPECT TO SEE **HILARYSWANK** CHECKING HERSELF IN AT PROMISES ANY TIME SOON, BUT THE ACTRESS DOES SEEM TO HAVE A BIT OF A PILL PROBLEM.

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Sitting in a white terrycloth robe at her *W* photo shoot, her eyelids caked with smoky shadow and her hair volumized to the hilt, she's rummaging through a sandwich-size plastic bag of tablets with the focus of a junkie preparing for her next hit. "This is my Aloe C, which I dissolve in water," she says, brandishing a giant orange pill. "Here's my flax. This one's for my immune system, and this one is my BrainWave—it's great, like if I have a lot of lines to memorize." Swank takes nearly 45 supplements a day, tossing them into her mile-wide maw at various hours according to a carefully determined schedule. "I just took my most important ones, which are my Oz Garcia Longevity Pak," she continues, rattling the empty green packet. "I shoved them in my mouth right before I met you, which I actually shouldn't do, because I choked on my vitamins once before."

A devotee of celebrity nutritionist Oz Garcia for the past seven years, Swank sees her regimen as one of the secrets to her success. "Oz has changed my life. The Longevity Pak is so *awesome*," she says, eyes shining. (And later, as if the sack of supplements wasn't enough, she excuses herself so that a visiting nurse can give her a vitamin injection.)

Whether it's truly the vitamins or just genetics, Swank, 33, certainly looks good these days. Her bulging *Million Dollar Baby* guns long gone, the actress is strikingly feminine in person, with an ultralean yet curvaceous physique that shimmies easily into the Calvin Klein dress she dons for the *W* cover. Her newly shorn hair (cut just two weeks ago on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to promote a charity effort) looks sexy and chic, and her skin seems to radiate health.

"I have a really high metabolism," Swank says, almost apologetically, as she takes a giant bite out of a chocolate croissant. (It's her second pastry of the morning.) "Exercise is also really important to me. I think it gives me more energy. I would rather sleep six hours and get an hour workout than sleep seven hours." Twice a week she lifts weights. Other days she hikes, does Power Pilates or practices Krav Maga, an Israeli hand-to-hand self-defense technique she's lately become obsessed with. "You punch, you kick, you also learn how to get out of a choke hold. *I love, love it*," she says.

All of this might sound like excellent training for another of Swank's highly physical film roles, but her next project is about loving, not fighting. Titled *P.S. I Love You*, it marks the actress's first attempt at romantic comedy. "It's a movie that I loved as soon as I read it. I just *loved it*," says Swank, who has an effusive, Rachael Ray way of speaking. She *loves, loves* things. People are *awesome*. And situations are *bub-larious*.

Swank plays Holly, a thirtysomething New Yorker whose charismatic Irish husband (Gerard Butler, wearing an excess of leather jewelry) dies young. Soon thereafter, Holly starts receiving a mysterious series of letters that her husband wrote to her before his death—letters encouraging her to find a new life and, presumably, a new love. Gina Gershon and Lisa Kudrow play her two wisecracking best friends, and Harry Connick Jr. is a potential suitor. "It's romantic but comedic," says Swank. "Someone who saw it said to me that it's one of

those movies where you laugh through your tears.”

The film is directed by Richard LaGravenese, who directed Swank in last year's *Freedom Writers*, about an idealistic inner-city teacher. The two projects were shot back-to-back. “When we were doing *Freedom Writers*, Richard kept saying to me, ‘You gotta do something romantic and funny. There’s a whole side of you people haven’t seen,’” Swank says.

The million-dollar question: Will audiences actually go see Swank in a chick flick? She can take all the vitamins in the world, but as everybody knows, there’s no Longevity Pak for a Hollywood career. Although Swank is clearly one of the most talented actresses of her generation, and a winner of two best actress Oscars (which puts her in an elite club that also includes Elizabeth Taylor and Jodie Foster), Swank is now in the difficult position of trying to turn around a string of commercial disappointments. Since 2004’s Oscar-winning *Million Dollar Baby*, she has made *The Black Dahlia* (2006), the widely panned neo-noir from Brian De Palma in which she played a society temptress; *Freedom Writers* (2007), which got decent reviews but delivered dismally at the box office; and the much mocked supernatural horror flick *The Reaping* (2007), which *The New York Times* called a “schlock-o-rama.”

In fact, even including her two Oscar films (the first, of course, was 1999’s *Boys Don’t Cry*), Swank has had more duds than winners, and in nearly all genres, from the 18th-century costume drama *The Affair of the Necklace* to the sci-fi disaster film *The Core*.

The latest industry intrigue coming out of Warner Bros., the studio behind both *The Reaping* and *P.S. I Love You*, can only be adding to the pressure. As first reported by Nikki Finke in her blog *Deadline Hollywood Daily* this past October, the company’s president of production, Jeff Robinov, allegedly told three different producers that the company would no longer be doing movies with female leads. (This on the heels of a series of big-budget disappointments for the studio, including Foster’s *The Brave One* and Nicole Kidman’s *The Invasion*.) Although Robinov has flatly denied ever issuing such an edict, the gossip was discussed and dissected all over town.

“Who knows if Jeff really said that or not,” opines Swank, toeing a careful line. “I think that’s still up for debate. He says he didn’t say it, and I know that people attribute things to me that I didn’t say. But speaking in general, I think it’s really naive to say, ‘Oh, a woman’s vehicle is not successful,’ because men’s movies have failed at the box office too. Look, I don’t want to name names, but there’s been lots of movies starring men—with big names!—that didn’t do well.”

When the topic turns to the fizzle of her last three films, you can practically see Swank slip on her boxing gloves. “It’s the business of a lottery, for lack of a better word. All you have control over is how hard you choose to work,” she says. “After that, you do your press, and then you let it go. Of course you want something you’ve given birth to to do well. But why sit there and lament over what you don’t have control over?”

Letting go and moving on is exactly what she’s done in her personal life. Nearly two years after filing for divorce from actor Chad Lowe, her husband of eight years, Swank is dating her former agent, John Campisi. The two were first outed in the summer of 2006 on vacation in Italy, where they stayed at Donatella Versace’s house on Lake Como and then in Rome. (Campisi, a 40-year-old divorced father of one, was her CAA agent at the time; he’s still with the agency but no longer one of her official reps.)

Over the past year, the couple has been increasingly open about their relationship. Campisi accompanied Swank when she received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame last January, and more recently, he’s tagged along at events as run-of-the-mill (for A-listers, anyway) as an Escada store opening, a press event for Pantene and a lunch at the Hotel Bel-Air she hosted for Guerlain.

About six months ago, Swank—who lived in Manhattan for eight

years and was considered something of a celebrity fixture in the West Village—made the move to the West Coast, where Campisi is based, plunking down a reported \$5.8 million for a house in the Pacific Palisades. While she won’t say she moved to L.A. to be close to Campisi, it’s hard not to assume he’s part of the equation—especially since the reasons she does give for abandoning the Big Apple are far from convincing. “I looked and looked and looked for a place in New York. I just didn’t find anything,” she insists. “Prices have just skyrocketed!” (For the record, she and Lowe sold their four-floor town house on Charles Street for \$7.5 million last January.)

Though she’s reluctant to offer many details about the relationship, Swank isn’t shy about referring to Campisi as her “boyfriend,” even showing off a photo of herself and his father on a trip to China the two took together a week prior, without Campisi. So, is she in love? “Of course I’m in love,” she says somewhat curtly. “Or I wouldn’t be in this relationship for as long as I’ve been. He’s a great guy.”

Her friends seem to agree. “It was a long relationship she had with Chad,” says close pal Mariska Hargitay, “and it’s a big deal for her to be in a new one. You know, [John’s] a very different kind of guy. This guy has a job and he’s busy. I think she needs somebody who has a type A personality like herself. The thing is, Hilary can come off as superhuman, but that doesn’t mean she doesn’t need anything. It’s important for someone to take care of her too.”

LaGravenese echoes the sentiment. “She went through a tough period,” says the director, perhaps referencing Lowe’s reported substance abuse problems, which Swank discussed openly in a controversial 2006 *Vanity Fair* interview. “But she seems incredibly happy these days. She’s learning how to take care of her needs as well as the needs of others without feeling badly about it.”

Swank’s rags-to-riches story is by now well known, but no less moving. After her father left the family when she was six, she ended up, along with her mother and older brother, living in a trailer park in Bellingham, Washington. At age 15 the aspiring actress persuaded her mom to move to L.A., where they lived out of their Oldsmobile for a time. She had a role on *Beverly Hills 90210*, but when she was fired after 16 episodes, she nearly quit the business. The next year she filmed *Boys Don’t Cry*.

Robert Duffy, a friend of Swank’s for almost a decade, says she “has never forgotten where she came from.” Duffy, who is Marc Jacobs’s business partner, says that this humility has made her the “generous, kind and charitable” person she is today. “She’s the one who got me involved with Hetrick-Martin,” he says, referring to the New York-based nonprofit serving gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth. “When the Harvey Milk High School [founded by the Hetrick-Martin Institute] was opening and people were picketing it, she was outraged. She was spending nights on the computer, writing letters.”

Swank’s other close fashion-world pal, Versace, says she admires her personal strength. “She knows what she wants, she makes her decisions quickly, and she sticks with them,” Versace says. “I love her determination.”

Swank, clearly, has never been one to shy away from a challenge, and it’s her ambition and fearlessness that make her next film role, as Amelia Earhart in a Phillip Noyce-directed biopic (set to start shooting later this year), such an apt one. She even looks uncannily like the aviator. “Phillip has our photos next to each other and talks about how much we resemble each other,” she says, laughing. “I don’t see it much myself.”

Although Swank says she hasn’t been able to start her research yet, she’s certainly logging plenty of flight hours. “In the past four and a half weeks, I’ve been to London, Texas, Chicago, China, New York, L.A. and New York again,” she says. “You know, it’s tiring, but I can’t complain, because I’m getting to do what I love.” And if she feels exhaustion rearing its head, she can always down another Longevity Pak. ●