

Mr. Softie

BY SHERYL KAHN

The Terminator, tender? **Believe it!** In an exclusive interview, Hollywood muscleman **Arnold Schwarzenegger** talks about why there's no place like home with his wife, Maria Shriver, for the holidays.

He's a doting dad (with daughter Katherine in 1991) as well as a tough-as-nails action hero, below.

No one, but no one, messes with Arnold Schwarzenegger. Even in health-crazed Los Angeles, where "No Smoking" signs are as common as traffic jams, nobody would dare demand that the 6-foot-2-inch actor and former bodybuilder put out his cigar on the set. Maybe people are a little intimidated by his action-hero image from such movies as *The Terminator* and *Total Recall*—muscles rippling, nostrils flaring, fists clenched. Or maybe it's the way he speaks, in his trademark Austrian staccato,

that makes everyone from parking-lot attendants to members of the press snap to attention.

"People think he's a tough customer," says his *Eraser* costar Vanessa Williams. "But he's a big teddy bear, a real gentle man who has a soft spot for kids."

Schwarzenegger, 49, is more than happy to let you in on this little secret. "I am a father first, an actor second," he insists. "I used to go all over making movies—Spain, Germany, Mexico. But now I want to be home as much as I can. My children are the most important part of my



TOP TO BOTTOM: TRIPPETT/SIPA PRESS; THE KOBAL COLLECTION

life. They don't know me as anything but their dad, who takes them bicycle riding or tucks them in at night."

Katherine, seven, Christina, five, and Patrick, three, have never seen their dad duking it out on the big screen. "They are too young, and the movies are too violent," he says, referring



Kidding around with costar Jake Lloyd in *Jingle All the Way*.

get the best of both worlds—an Austrian Christmas and an American one."

You won't find any fruitcake or popcorn balls in the family's Los Angeles home on Christmas Eve. "We have what I had as a child," Schwarzenegger says. "Cold cuts and potato salad." After dinner the family gathers to sing Christmas carols.



I do, I do: marrying Maria Shriver in 1986.

don't do enough the rest of the year and this is your chance to prove how much you love them? I think it's something we can all relate to. Everyone wants to be the best mother or father in the world."

For that job, Schwarzenegger had two good role models: his own parents, Gustav and Aurelia, who raised him and his older brother, Meinhard, in Thal, Austria. "I had a very strict upbringing," he points out. "We were taught to appreciate what we had. I grew up right after the Second World War, so there was little money for toys, and we had to make our own. I carved whistles and built kites. I bought my first bicycle with money I had

"Later I sneak away as my father used to do," he says, relishing the thought. "Ha! I remember he would just disappear into the bedroom, and suddenly we'd hear a bell. We'd go racing in, and there was a Christmas tree in the room all lit up with candles and with presents below. In Austria we believe a female angel brings the gifts, not Santa. So this is what I do with my children. I play the angel."

On Christmas Day his family follows the traditional American celebration. "We go to our other home, in Sun Valley, and have our second Christmas there, with the traditions Maria had when she was a child—stockings, colored lights and balls on the tree."

But no matter how they celebrate, one part of the holiday is the same in any culture. "There is a feeling of closeness," he says. "I grew up in a small home with few rooms, and my family was together all the time—that gave me a feeling of security. I knew my parents would always be there for me. Being a parent is a

With Shriver, daughter Christina and mother-in-law Eunice in 1992.

learning process, and you will make mistakes. But you can't go too wrong if you fill your children's lives with love." ■

to the majority of his films. "I try to balance the action movies with comedies like *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop*." These days he's maintaining that balance by starring in a family picture his kids could go see, this month's *Jingle All the Way*. In it, he plays Howard Langston, a busy dad who has promised to buy his son a Turbo Man, the hottest action figure on the market, for Christmas.

"He will stop at nothing to get this toy," Schwarzenegger explains. "He never has enough time for his kid, and he often breaks his promises to him. But this is a promise he will keep no matter what." His character's efforts turn more comical—and kamikaze—as Christmas Eve nears. (In one memorable scene, Schwarzenegger makes a flying tackle for the last box on a shelf at Toys 'R' Us.)

"What parent hasn't felt this way at one time?" he asks. "That you would do anything to make your kids happy? That maybe you

saved from working after school. My parents were tough, but they were also very loving."

In his own home, Schwarzenegger is the disciplinarian, while his wife, television journalist Maria Shriver, "provides that unconditional mother love."

"We've created a good balance," he continues. "We want to be able to give our children things, but we also want to teach them never to take anything for granted. It's important to instill good values in them early."

The holidays, says Schwarzenegger, are the perfect time to teach kids about their heritage. "I believe you must always know where you come from before you can know where you are going," he reflects. "My kids are lucky because they

