

Meet the 'new' man about town

□ Film financier Allen Schwalb has been here since 1969, but he has only recently become a major player on the charity and social scene.

By Rosemary Banks-Harris

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

His Winter Park company is the largest independent financier of major motion pictures in the country, the money muscle for a slew of box office hits, including *Rain Man*, *Thelma and Louise*, *A Fish Called Wanda* and *The Color Purple*.

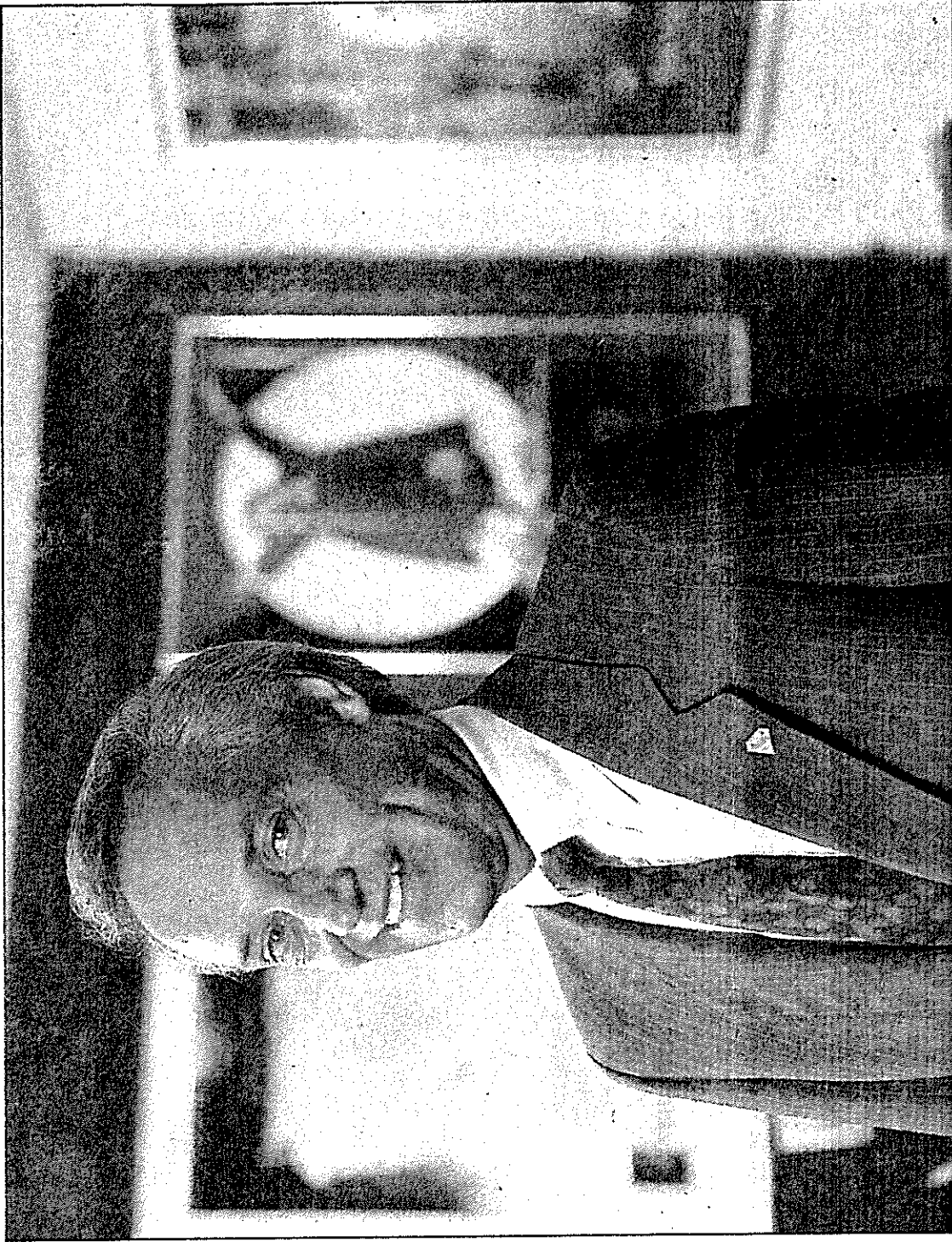
But chances are you haven't heard of Allen Schwalb, who likes to say that Wall Street married Hollywood in Winter Park long before Central Florida started calling itself "Hollywood East."

In the past two years Schwalb has become a key player in Central Florida's charity and social scene.

Since Labor Day, when this year's social season began, Allen Schwalb has been seen at charity events major and minor — the Children's Wish Foundation Tennis Classic Gala (which he attended with friend/actress Jo Ann Pflug), the heart association's Bal de Coeur black-tie ball, the Haddassah Annual Home Tour Patron's Party, the Orlando Claims Association Casino Night.

Last month, he persuaded friend Melanie, the singer best known for her 1971 hit "Brand New Key," to come to Winter Park's Club R and record a music video as a benefit for Affairs of the Heart, the young professionals arm of the American Heart Association.

He was recently named to the board of governors of the National Council of Christians and Jews as well as to the board of directors of the Orlando Science Center.



TOM BURTON/SENTINEL

If it's a major or minor charity event, movie financier Allen Schwalb is likely to make an appearance.

And in the Central Florida chapter of the Variety Club — an entertainment-industry charity that benefits children's groups — he is "assistant chief banker," the equivalent of vice president. The once-anonymous Schwalb has become quite the man about town.

At more than 6 feet tall, enviously trim, youthful at 50-plus and sporting a head of distinguished silver hair, Schwalb cuts quite a figure in his elegant moire tuxedos and tailored business suits.

He likes to wear a gold replica of the *Superman* emblem on his lapel, partly because he financed the movie series, partly because the "S" is the first initial of his last name, partly because he considers himself a super man of both films and fund-raising efforts.

Most seem to agree. "He just plain looks good standing around the hors d'oeuvres table," one social set planner said, begging anonymity. "Besides that, you can boast that Allen Schwalb was there and people who know him — and those who don't — end up being impressed."

on the invitation list, and organizers will admit to lobbying him to attend events just to get his expertise on how those events might be done better in the future.

"He has become a major player in helping charitable groups make their functions extra special," said Jennifer Marks, the Orlando Marriott World Center promotions director who organized the Melanie video recording event. "We never could have gotten Melanie without his intervention."

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