

Womanless Wedding

1949: With 'Carmen Miranda'

by Terry Bonifanti

(Editor's note: This historical series on the Back Mountain is written from the memories of those now living who made or remember the interesting incidents of the area. Anyone wishing to share memories or anecdotes of Back Mountain life in the past is asked to call the Post at 675-5211.

It was a lovely night in November 1949, the 18th to be exact, when six foot "bride" Don Finney first married his five foot "groom" Walt Phillips. The couple was to repeat their "uproariously funny wedding" some 30 times over the next few months in a vehicle called "Womanless Wedding", "a mock wedding with a lot of side effects" sponsored by the men's club of the Trucksville Methodist Church, Kingston Township High School, Nov. 18 and 19, 1949.

The production, described by Vern Pritchard as "one big laugh from beginning to end," was open to all males in the community and employed about 50 all together. There was the bride and groom, the bridesmaids, cigar-smoking Clyde Birth and "hairy" Luther Brown, visiting dignitaries-bermuda-shorted "Daniel Flood and Mrs. Flood", Bill Clewell and Sherry Harter; "Mr. and Mrs. Harry Truman", Clifford and Bobby Johnson and Byron Schwartz

as "Digger" O'Dell. Entertainment was provided by Rockettes Vern Pritchard, Clifford Zimmerman and Willard Bullock; and Burt "Carmen Miranda" Fennell and his helper, ladder-sitting Vought Long.

The production was written by whoever happened to be on stage at the time you were watching. "The performances were crazy. We had no practice. All we followed was the set procedure for the wedding," Pritchard remembered.

He explained, "We wanted to make money. Minstrel shows had 12 weeks of practice for one or two nights. We decided on the wedding and after we sat down and decided what costumes, procedure and whatever, that was it."

In total, the production grossed over \$2,500, "a lot of money for 1949", and played in over 30 different houses from "every church in the Valley to Hunting Mills and Plymouth High Schools to the old Noxen Theatre.

The group was invited all over on a 50-50 basis. The sponsoring group furnished the audience, the men furnished the fun and the ladies came along to apply make-up. And apply make-up they did. "We looked like the 'Happy Hooker'," Pritchard remembers. And the Nov. 4, 1949 issue of the Dallas Post bills the upcoming production as "The Womanless Wedding" or "The Ideal Fashion Show."

The production itself, though changing with each performance, took the wedding through ceremony, reception, "we had the whole gimmick" with side ventures into skits with "Carmen Miranda", a big baby being "powdered" by a flour sifter and constant jeering by the "three bad boys," Louis Wilcox, Harold Croomb and Dick Mathers. If Luther Brown coming up the aisle in an evening gown followed by cigar smoking Clyde Birth didn't make you laugh, "the bad boys would."

It's no wonder that the play was "held over for its original production and then went on to Valley-wide fame. "Womanless Wedding" is credited with picking up a fast \$100 for several churches and organizations in the area thanks to the wit and talent of its cast.

The original production, strongly encouraged by Trucksville Methodist's pastor at the time, the Rev. R. Webster, included in its cast along with Pritchard, Clewell and the others, Morris Loyd, William Hewitt, William Lohman, Sam Davis, Elmer Davis, James Trebilcock, Tom Cleasby, Sam Dilcer, Eugene Platt, Asher Weiss, Clifford Johnson, Simms Hemmingway, Don Finney, Jake Harrison, Fred Case, David Davis, Ted Bennett and Norm Stoiky and everyone of them loved every minute of their long-running production.



BLUSHING GROOMS-The reception of the marriage of Don Finney and Walt Phillips was held on stage. Flower girl Elmer Jones (left) is flanked by bridesmaids Walter Brown, Ed Fielding, Clyde Birth, flower girl Doug Clewell, bad boy Louis Wilcox and the blushing bride, Mr. Finney. It happened in 1949 in a vehicle called "Womanless Wedding." Photo is courtesy of Bill Clewell.

Only yesterday

Blizzard closes highways

10 years ago, November 22, 1935

Main traffic arteries were cleared by Monday, but secondary highways such as the Idetown-Kunkle Road remained impassable today following a blizzard Sunday night.

Fulfilling the highly idealistic principals which are the keystones of Rotarianism, members of the Greater Dallas Rotary Club have agreed to devote certain meetings during the next two months to general discussions of pertinent problems that face the world today.

The climax of this sections interscholastic football season will be reached Thanksgiving morning when Lehman Township football team tries to end Kingston Township's long string of victories. Coach Walter Hicks' Kingston Township team is favored, however.

Alterations and improvements which have been underway at the Dallas ME Church on Church Street for the last three months are completed and will be open for inspection after special services on Sunday.

To the traditions that insist "the mail must go through" and "the show must go on" add "the pumps must be inspected", Dallas Water Company Phil Anderson and Walt Covert completed their inspection tour last week on skis.

Deaths-Almira Kocher, Dallas; John Kessler, Hunlock Creek; Jacob Conden, Alderson; Anna Muhalla, Hunlock Creek.

You could get-Lard, two pounds, 29 cents; lima beans, five cents a pound can; rolled oats, two packages, 21 cents; chocolate cream drops, 10 cents a pound and fresh cruellers, 10 cents a half dozen.

30 years ago, November 23, 1945

As a memorial to the men and women of Kunkle Methodist Church who have given their lives in the service of their country, Silver Leaf Club of Kunkle this week gave the Back Mountain Memorial Library a complete set of the latest edition of the Encyclopedia Americana.

William Burnafor, Shavertown, will direct the Dallas Junior Woman's

Club in their production of "The Dixie Jamboree", Nov. 28 at the Knigston Township High School.

Continuing on their regular Thursday night schedule, robbers returned to the Back Mountain region for the third consecutive time and this time entered Lehman Township High School.

Discharged from the Navy today under the point system: Lt. Jg. Jean I. Williams, Dallas.

D. H. Hontz has made application for a charter to establish a bus line between Tunkhannock and Wilkes-Barre through Noxen.

Engaged-Natalie Louise Kresge to Lt. Lawrence M. Isaacs.

Deaths-Lt. John Reese, Shavertown; Cora Nulton, Beaumont.

Playing at local theatres-"Crime, Inc." with Leo Carrillo and Tom Neal. You could get-Square circulating heaters, \$54 and up; slab stove wood, \$1 per cord; complete lunch 25 cents.

20 years ago, November 22, 1955

An order for a LaFrance Crusader pumper was placed last Monday for delivery to Daniel C. Roberts Fire Company, April 15.

Sixty-nine taxpayers have petitioned the Lake Township supervisors to close all dumping grounds not maintained as public dumps operated under the supervision of the municipality.

The possibility that a Giant or and A&P supermarket will locate along the Luzerne-Dallas Highway in Luzerne was revealed this week by John Connolly, Luzerne Building contractor.

A 500 pound safe stolen from the Turrell Motor Company 16 months ago was found by a rabbit hunter near Harveys Lake this week.

Atty. James L. Brown will be honored at a testimonial dinner tendered him by the Back Mountain Protective Association, Dec. 15.

Engaged-Nancy Dymond to Richard V. Bartlebaugh.

Playing at local theatres-"Rebel Without a Cause" with James Dean. You could get-Cocktail napkins, 120 for 19 cents; 50 aspirins, 69 cents; Stell

wagons, \$1.98 to \$14.98; olive oil, eight ounces, 33 cents and baby food, six jars, 59 cents.

10 years ago, November 23, 1965

Don Peterson, representing Dallas Rotary this week presented Dallas coach Edward Brominski with the traditional "old shoe" award for winning the Lake-Lehman-Dallas game.

Open house for residents of the Back Mountain is scheduled Saturday at Hayfield Farm, the newest Commonwealth Campus of The Pennsylvania State University.

On Friday night, a citizen's committee headed by William Purcell will present the Lake Township supervisors with a petition signed by those "exceptions" to the proposed borough establishment.

As estimated 1000 new Christmas lights have replaced old ones in Dallas Borough, contributions are being accepted from Dallas businessmen. The wires for the lights were donated by Kingston Borough.

If things go as scheduled, the Dallas Post Office will not be ready by Christmas for the rush.

Engaged-Cindy Dymond to Norman Weaver; Carol Pope to James R. Martin; Susan Elaine Spencer to Glen Lee Johnson, Barbara Hurtt to Joseph Walton, Jr.

Deaths-Gertrude Lindsley, Dallas; Leroy Gowen Hess, Noxen.

PG & W gas supply increased

Pennsylvania Gas and Water Company will have more natural gas for its firm industrial customers this winter than it did last year when the utility suffered a cutback of 51 percent.

According to David F. Hansen, Pennsylvania Gas and Water Company president, its pipeline suppliers will be in a position this year to make available additional supplies of natural gas to the utility that were not available last year.

Hansen said that last year the 34 firm industrial customers suffered a 51 percent cutback; this year, he has revealed, the cutback has been reduced to 40 percent. This gives Pennsylvania Gas and Water Company approximately 11 percent more of natural gas supplies for these

customers than it received last winter.

While the additional gas will be made available to PG&W's firm industrial customers, the easing of the regulations, however, do not as yet make it possible to serve interruptible industrial customers. These customers, it was explained, have standby fuel available which they will continue to use.

Hansen emphasized that residential and commercial customers have not been affected by the natural gas curtailments, nor is it expected that they will be curtailed. He did stress, however, that it is essential that residential and commercial customers continue the practice of conserving energy in every way possible so as to make as much natural gas available to industrial customers as it is possible to do so.

Pennsylvania Gas and Water Company's president commented that the natural gas flow to industrial customers could change slightly, dependent on the mildness or severity of the impending winter season.

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SEEDS FROM THE SOWER
By Michael A. Guido



An atheist wrote this on a blackboard, "God is no where!" But his little niece said, "Uncle, you've made a mistake." She moved the letter "w", and made the sentence to read "God is now here!"

Wherever we are, God is here. There is no place, there can be no place, where He is not.

Seven billion people standing at seven billion different places can say with equal certainty, God is now here. No one is in distance any nearer to or any further from God than any other person.

God sent Jonah east to Nineveh. But Jonah went west

to Tarshish. He crossed half a world to get away from God - and found God still waiting for him.

A king found there was no escape from God. He said in Living Psalms 139:8-11, "If I go up to heaven You are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, You are there. If I ride the morning winds to the farthest oceans, even there Your hand will guide me, Your strength will support me."

Wherever we are - high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean - nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus!

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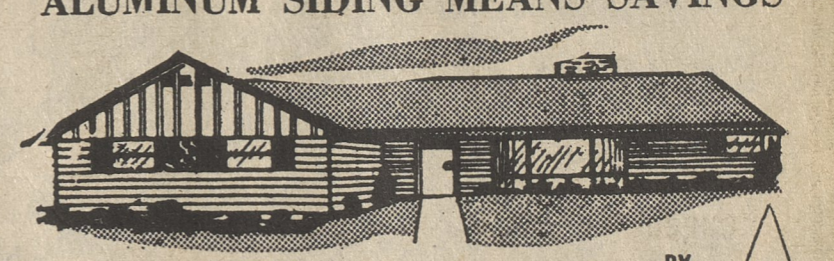
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