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A Hoosier Family Gets Some New Status

By **BEN MAIDENBURG**

It has been a long time since I was a society reporter.

Yes, Matilda, I was: Back in my early days—when I was learning the journalism ropes on the home town paper of Marion, Ind.

The society editor up and eloped, and the boss of the three-man staff ordered me to take over.

At that time I was receiving \$18 a week.

What I lacked in the pay envelope, I made up in titles. I was Sports Editor, Courthouse Reporter, Mayor's Court Reporter, Editor of the County News, Agriculture Writer and Religion Editor.

That made each title worth \$3 a week.

Before becoming Society Editor, a job I didn't hold too long, I didn't know the difference between a bustle and a flounce.

IF I SOUND today as if I'd returned to the social-writing whirl it is only because last weekend I was involved in a merry-go-round in which my niece was married.

She chose well. She moved the family's social structure to a new

high; lifted us to the summit, as I shall explain.

Up till now our family had had few high points.

For a while we were known in Marion as the only family who'd had anyone stay at a fancy and expensive resort at Lake Louise, Canada.

Later we got more fame because my eldest brother was grand marshal

of the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City.

The Macy - marshal - brother was never nimble on his feet. He got the Thanksgiving Day honors because he was the tallest clerk in the store.

THIS IS THE SAME brother who was involved, during the late war, with Mom's prayers.

Two of us already were in the Service, and Eldest Brother got itchy. At an age when he should have been at home with his wife, he enlisted.

Mom was distraught at the thought of **THREE** brothers being in the Service at the same time—as any Mom would be.

When Eldest Brother was leaving for Ft. Belvoir, Mom—who is a great believer in prayer—lifted her eyes to the Heavens and prayed, "He should break a leg before he gets into the fighting at his age."

Shortly before Eldest Brother's engineer outfit was to go overseas, Eldest Brother was indulging in bayonet practice, stepped into a gopher-hole and **BROKE** the leg!

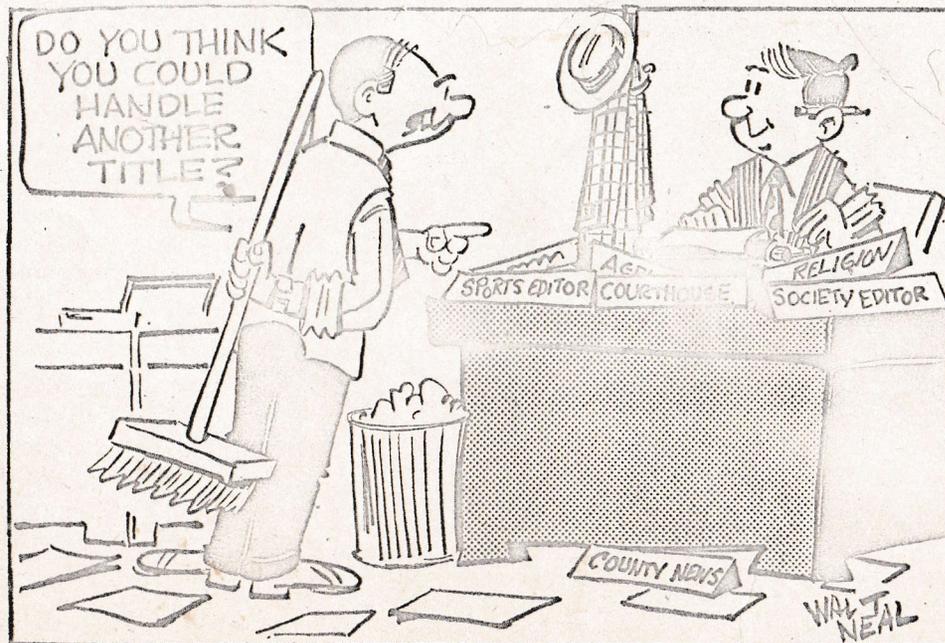
Mom always has cited this as proof of the positiveness of prayer.

BUT TO GET BACK to the wedding.

I hope you dear readers understand I'm not using my column space to just publicize the family.

From my experience as Society Editor of the Marion, Ind., Chronicle, I sense most people like to read of

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weddings and stuff. That is the only reason for this column.

I repeat. The wedding of Toby, my niece, has raised the family to a highest pinnacle.

THERE HAVE BEEN other weddings in the family. I married a girl from England—but now the British Empire has gone to smithereens, that is no longer a talking point.

A second brother is married to a girl from Lisbon, O., and where is Lisbon?

A third married the girl next door—it happens every day.

A fourth married another Hoosier.

A brother-in-law picked a bride from the banks of the Gowanus Canal—Brooklyn. And we'd rather just keep that quiet.

More jokes have been told about Brooklyn than Kokomo.

NOW TOBY marched onto the scene with a nice, handsome lad from Boston—yes, Boston, Massachusetts! Boston, the cradle of liberty; the Boston of Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill; of baked beans, censored books and movies.

The Boston where the Lodges talk only to Cabots and the Cabots talk only to God.

The city where when someone asked a snooty lady if her forebears had come over on the Mayflower, she answered haughtily: "Of course not; they sent their servants ahead on THAT boat."

The Boston of Tea Party fame... the center of America's snootiest intellectualism.

SO YOU WILL understand when I say that our family has struck it rich; hit the Mt. Everest of social achievement.

Not only that—there's more. Toby's mother-in-law is a real honest-to-God film actress, or was.

She said her last film was the epic "San Francisco" in which Clark Gable played the lead role.

I know someone back home will say that I dredged up the movie's name to indirectly hint at the lady's age. No such thing!

I DON'T KNOW her age; but she looks quite young and she's full of verve.

I mention "San Francisco" because our daughter fell in love with Clark Gable at the age of 3 or 4, and has never gotten over it.

You know how television operates with films, don't you? And if you do, you know that "San Francisco" has been on teevy 40 or 50 times in the last several years, always being ad-



vertised as the "first showing"—(that week).

WELL OUR DAUGHTER not only insisted on seeing "San Francisco" EVERY time, but I'm told that pursuing her great love for the late Mr. Gable (who used to be an Akron rubberworker, by the way) she has a huge photo of the jug-eared Romeo over her bed at Indiana University.

Anyway, Toby's new mother-in-law was in that film, which was about a hi-de-ho gambler and an earthquake.

I'VE ATTENDED weddings before, but I've never been involved in one in which there was so much eating.

From the moment we arrived back home in Indiana we ate and talked; and talked and ate.

The conversation was all fine until Toby's new father-in-law asked me with a straight face, "Is there a river named the Wabash?"

FOR MY MOM the wedding festivities were a combination of great pleasure and a portion of deep unhappiness.

The pleasure was obvious — the first granddaughter to get a husband.

If you know Mom well, the unhappiness was obvious, too.

For those who don't know her let me explain, again, that Mom's real life is as a kitchen mechanic. She loves to cook.

Some weeks ago, before the wedding, I asked if she planned to cook and bake up a storm for the parties, too.

She looked at me as if I'd suddenly lost my mind and replied, with asperity, "Why of course."

BUT THOSE INVOLVED in the

wedding planning had other ideas—such as caterers.

When I arrived home two nights before we started eating our way through the wedding, I went over to Mom's.

She was sitting there looking glum.

"Well, Mom," I asked, "what did you cook and bake for the wedding?"

Her eyes fell. She answered in a most aggrieved tone: "Nothing."

Then her face brightened for a fraction of a second: "But I baked you some rolls to take home."

After which, the grievous expression returned.

LIKE ALL PARENTS, my Mom has had certain positive aims in life. Aim No. 1 was to see all her sons married.

Aim 2: A lot of grandchildren.

Aim 3: To see the grandchildren get married.

Aim 4: To get a great-grandchild.

Those things having been largely achieved, Mom has a new current target.

She wants to be around to see her granddaughter, Jill, get married. Jill isn't in her teens, yet.

NOW THAT I'VE written so much about how the family has been lifted into the stratosphere of society by getting a real, honest-to-Henry Cabot Lodge Bostonian in the family, I am stricken with a horrible thought.

I never did ask whether Toby's husband is a real Bostonian, or just an immigrant.

Suppose I find out, now, that he was born in Wishing Well, Iowa, or even some ordinary place like Los Angeles or Chicago!