



WALTER BURRELL

Hollywood Happenings

SHOW BUSINESS marriages are notorious for being somewhat less than the most stable of unions. Indeed, the stereotype of Hollywood romances is one of fickleness and promiscuity.

Of course, there are always exceptions and one of the most notable is personified by actor Rockne Tarkington and his actress-wife, Shary Marshall. Rockne is cast as a Bahamian policeman in the sex-filled detective drama, "New Face In Hell," and Shary is a regular on the daytime series, "Morning Star."

Rockne's and Shary's marriage has been confronted with the usual problems: rearing children in a home where both parents are involved in demanding acting careers, worries over whether there'll be enough film assignments to keep the family going financially, and other problems peculiar to show biz families.

However, Rockne and Shary have another problem with which few other Hollywood couples have to concern themselves: He is a Negro and she is Caucasian.

Today finds them living in a comfortable West Los Angeles home with their two children, nine-year-old Keith and seven-year-old Christine. Though they feel the future at last looks bright, the nightmare which has crept through the ten years they've been married will never be forgotten.

THAT NIGHTMARE began innocently enough with two bright, young people very much in love. The problem was that Shary's father was the mayor of the small mid-western city where both she and Rockne were born and grew up. The white father didn't take too kindly to the idea of his daughter marrying a Negro.

Though many men in this white man's position would perhaps have gone on the warpath, he (and for obvious reasons his name will remain deleted) decided to take another approach. He offered young Tarkington a large sum of money (in the five figure bracket) to leave town and never return.

Of course, when Shary heard about this she was furious and was ready to really give her father a piece of her mind, but Rockne bade her restrain herself while he employed a little of the irate father's craftiness himself.

Realizing that love alone wasn't going to put any bread on the table and also realizing that the old man wasn't about to change his mind, Rockne figured a way to have his cake and eat it too. He accepted the money, left town, had Shary join him later and the two of them struck out for California--with a sizeable sum to start off their marriage.

HOWEVER, the day they were married started them down a road which Rockne frankly admits he'd have second thoughts about if he had it to do over again.

They both wanted to act and they were good at their craft, having studied and performed back home. However, as Rockne puts it, "Hollywood just wasn't ready for us. When either of us would audition for a role, things would go fine until the producer or casting director found out either I was married to a white girl or vice versa."

"The acting assignments kept getting sparser and the intimidation, which came from the industry, our neighborhood and just about everywhere we turned, seemed unending. Finally, about two years ago, we just couldn't stand it anymore. We decided we simply had to get a divorce and pursue our lives and careers separately."

"That was when Shary was up for a continual role in a series and was given the same ultimatum we'd heard so often before: 'we'd like to have you in the show, but we're afraid your marriage will do the show some harm'. This was the proverbial straw which broke the

NOT DR. LIVINGSTONE



Rockne Tarkington and George Peppard meet in a Bahamian jungle in this scene from their new movie, "New Face In Hell." Peppard is cast as a private eye, while Tarkington plays a Bahamian cop. (See Hollywood Happenings)

Florida Legislature's First Negro Page Boy

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - (NPI)--At 13, Lofton Moncur remembers jim crow at a Miami hamburger stand but as the first Negro on the floor of the Florida legislature he's looking to what's ahead.

"Remember what Martin Luther King said. By the time my generation grows up, maybe we will have a Negro President," said Lofton. He says it may be him.

"They may see me sitting in those seats soon," he said, waving at the seats of the Florida House. I want to go all the way up to President of the United States if possible."

THE BOY put in his first day recently as a page in the House, the first in the history of the Legislature. There are some Negroes working on the staffs of senators, but Lofton is the first to take the floor of a legislature chamber in Florida since nearly a century ago.

Appointed by Rep. Kenneth Myers, Miami Democrat, Lofton is a seventh grader at Miami's all-Negro Brownsville school and the son of a musician.

"I remember when I could walk into this hamburger place and they would sell me a doughnut and I would sit down at the counter and the lady would say, 'I'm sorry'", said the boy.

As a page boy he makes \$96 every two weeks. He lives with a Florida A&M University teacher and plans to stay in the city to get a job if the Legislature closes before he has to return to school.

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camel's back and we just gave up."

However, you don't just stop caring for someone simply because times have been rough and Rockne and Shary were destined to get back together. They'd spent eight terrible, but unifying, years together and their lives were too entwined.

DURING THOSE few months they were apart their careers began a turn for the better. Shary got her role in the series and Rockne was getting good film breaks. It was during his assignment on "Major Dundee" in Mexico that he and Shary were married--for the second time.

"I suppose we knew when we left each other that we'd been through too much to just walk away and never look back," says Rockne. "Anyway, the second wedding was an event to remember. I had four best men--Charlton Heston, Brock Peters, James Hutton and Jim Coburn--and the reception lasted for hours."

That was two years ago and today things seem infinitely better. Shary starred in a film, "Tell Me In the Sun Light," in which Rockne was featured. Their careers are on an upward swing.

And what about Shary's father? "He finally came around," smiles Rockne. "He's so proud of his grandchildren he spoils them rotten. The kids feel the same way about him, too. The house is in a state of chaos when they know grandpa's going to pay us a visit."

Probe Hunger Situation Of Mississippi Negroes

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People will send investigators into the Delta counties of Mississippi to make an on-the-spot probe of widespread charges of hunger and malnutrition among Negroes, NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins announced here this week.

The two-week investigation, Mr. Wilkins said, will be headed by veteran social workers Alex Waites and Rollie Eubanks, president and secretary, respectively, of the NAACP's Department of Welfare Branch in New York City.

The NAACP representatives are scheduled to meet with Department of Agriculture officials in Washington and confer with Mississippi NAACP state officers prior to launching their investigation on June 10.

EARLIER THIS year thousands of Mississippi Negroes were eliminated from a Federal food assistance program that had helped sustain more than 400,000 of the state's poor. Local officials in a number of counties have ended free distribution of surplus food to the poor and have turned instead to the sale of Federal food stamps.

The Senate voted May 31 to extend for three years and expand the Federal food stamp program. Families with the lowest incomes pay about \$2 for coupons worth \$10 a person.

Most of the poverty-stricken families, however, are unable to pay for the food coupons.

A Senate subcommittee headed by Senator Joseph S. Clark (Dem.-Pa.) held a series of hearings in Jackson, Mississippi, in April and reported "substantial evidence of malnutrition and hunger."

Kenneth Dean, director of the Mississippi Council on Human Relations, filed a report with the subcommittee in which he described "a widespread problem of poverty that could, at any given moment, turn into acute hunger or a slow starvation if Federal programs are not upgraded."

THE SENATE subcommittee, in its report to the White House, said some of the Mississippi Negro families "subsist on grits, rice, soybeans and whatever is donated, with a serving of chicken or other meat about once a month."

The Office of Economic Opportunity turned down the subcommittee's appeal for emergency action to provide food for the families, declaring that "It is unlawful for the Department of Agriculture to issue food stamps without cost to the recipients."

It is known, however, that the Mississippi delegation in Congress has refused to acknowledge that a hunger situation exists in the state, and some of the Congressmen have worked actively to halt antipoverty funds for the poor.

The NAACP investigators, who will report their findings to the Association's National Office here in New York City on June 24, are going into the Delta area "to ascertain the needs of the people and to develop a program whereby the NAACP can be of service in the State of Mississippi and other places where hunger and malnutrition exist," Mr. Wilkins said.

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