

ESME OF PARIS by Esme Davis

Esme Davis Maki; Distributed by NEA

I wasn't born precisely in the traditional dressing room trunk, it was the next best thing, for I spent the first years of my life in theater and circus dressing rooms in many lands, playing between wardrobe trunks and slumbering in an atmosphere of greasepaint with the distant throb of the orchestra as my lullaby.

Grandmother often told me that I had been inconsiderate enough to arrive in the world feet first. But perhaps I should begin at the beginning...

I was born on January 18, 1906, in Wheeling, West Virginia, during one of the wildest storms and coldest winters ever known in that region. Mother was visiting my grandmother, who was assembling her company for the southern tour of the Sells-Floto Circus. Wheeling being in those days a sort of taking-off point for acts going south for the winter circus dates. My father was in Canada, and mother had intended joining him for the "blessed event," but I was born three weeks prematurely, the result of an accident mother experienced while out driving with grandama, in which she broke her wrist. The shock not only precipitated my birth but caused complications which nearly cost mother her life.

My mother, Sofia Oswald, was an exceedingly beautiful woman, with a dead-white skin and copper-colored hair that contrasted strangely with her vividly green eyes. She was very tiny, with exquisite little feet but ugly hands of which she was morbidly ashamed, especially when this defect was reproduced in me.

Grandma used to say that mother was a seventh child of a seventh child and as a result had second sight. I don't know just how true this is, but mother insisted that she encountered ghosts almost everywhere we went, often announcing she had just seen "Tio Enrique," a favorite uncle, or some other defunct relative who sent his regards to everybody. This happened so frequently we eventually took it as a matter of course.

In addition to her beauty, mother had a magnificent soprano voice and was a finished musician. She played both piano and guitar perfectly and had a vast knowledge of music. She had made a considerable reputation for herself as a concert and grand opera singer, under the stage name of Maria de Lisle, both in Europe and in the Americas. She had a childish disregard for the practical things in life, living only for music, yet she was devoted to me, and looking back, I have a feeling of intense admiration for her and the things for which she stood.

In appearance she was totally different from my grandmother, who was also very tiny but with a dark, almost oriental beauty frequently seen in the Andalusian gypsies, lovely feet and hands, and jet-black hair so long she could almost stand on it. She smoked black Cuban cigars incessantly, loved to gamble, and, like all gypsies, preferred to "borrow" rather than buy anything she wanted.

GRANDMOTHER married very young, in the Spanish custom, and couldn't have been more than 16 when she was already a famous flamenco dancer known through-



(Illustrated by George Scarbo) In Spain a woman in her early thirties is considered too old to dance professionally, so Grandama decided to turn her uncanny gift of snake-charming to account. With this talent and her great beauty, she created her famous act, "A Night in India."

out Spain as "La Maravilla" (the Marvel). Her diminutive green satin slippers are still preserved in a glass case in the Posada de la Sangre, an ancient hangout of bullfighters in the gypsy quarter of Seville, where the autographed dancing slippers of many great dancers of Spain are reverently kept, together with the glowing black heads of famous bulls.

Grandama's maiden name was Lolita Bazil de Delgado, and her husband, my grandfather, was Guillermo Oswald. He must have been very handsome, to judge from the little faded photograph grandama always carried. His family had been owners for three or four generations of a fleet of small freighters that plied in and out of the Port of Cadiz with cargoes of fruit. Grandfather was also an "abogado," as lawyers are called in Spain, and he died rather young to have had such a large family, for grandama managed to have 14 children—and keep her figure.

She was very slender as I first knew her, and as she got older, she seemed to shrink till there was nothing left but her great black eyes. After grandfather's death she found herself obliged to return to the stage, for he had left very little money. As far as her own people were concerned she could look for no assistance whatsoever, having married out of the gypsy race, and thus, in their eyes, automatically forfeited her right to make any call on them.

In Spain a woman in her early thirties is considered almost decrepit and far too old to dance professionally, so after months of struggling to make a "come-back," grandama conceived the idea of turning to account her gift of snake-charming which she had learned from her infancy and for which she had an uncanny talent.

playing specially written music on naive instruments, with marvelous drum effects, and wore vividly colored Indian costume. All this, together with her ability as a dancer, produced a sensational artistic triumph.

Her power over snakes was fantastic; she bought them wild and trained them herself and could handle any poisonous reptile without getting bitten, often demonstrating this ability to directors of zoological societies and scientists. She said it was because snake-charming was done not by force but through the eyes and with the mind.

Snakes have to be washed daily, and this was one of my duties. I would put them in a bathtub of tepid water, stir them around for a while, then take them out and dry them carefully, after which I rubbed them with warm olive oil. Snakes love to be oiled because it helps them to slide. Some big ones (like the boa I later kept for years in my apartment in Paris) lubricate themselves by spitting out something that looks like whipped cream. This has an awful effect on servants, especially if they happen to suspect where it came from.

The business of "milking" poisonous snakes was a more serious proceeding. Grandama used to put a piece of absorbent cotton in a wine glass and cover it with antiseptic gauze; then she took the glass in her left hand and the snake in her right, and with a gentle pressure of her fingers forced its mouth open and pushed the fangs into the soft gauze. The infuriated reptile would eject his venom where it would drop harmlessly on to the cotton.

She took the greatest care of her snakes, holding them in deep respect, and I can still recall her when some momentous decision was to be made, consulting with them in the middle of the night, by the light of a small lamp. The greatest benefit I ever derived from them was their usefulness in getting unwanted guests out of the house in a hurry and in negotiating the customs when traveling.

(To Be Continued)

Our Boarding House

With Major Hoople

Out Our Way

J. R. Williams



EGAD! DON'T YOU NETTLEHEADS REALIZE THAT A SUDDEN DEFICIENCY IN PIGMENT BRINGS PREMATURE GRAY HAIR TO A MAN IN HIS PRIME? — BUT, BAH! WHY SHOULD I FLING KERNELS OF WISDOM INTO THE ABYSS OF YOUR IGNORANCE!

Boots and Her Buddies



I HAVE TO PINCH MYSELF TO REALIZE THAT ALL THIS IS TRUE! A HOUSE OF MY OWN — AND A HUSBAND DITTO!



NOW I WONDER WHAT I SHOULD DO ABOUT THE NEIGHBORS? SHOULD I MAKE THE FIRST MOVE — OR WAIT FOR THEM??

Freckles and His Friends



CAPTAIN COOK, WE NEED A MAN LIKE YOU IN THE SKITT CLUB!



ME? IN THE SKITT CLUB? ARE YOU CRAZY?

Red Ryder



JOSE, WHY DO YOU NOT COME HOME?



I HIDE, PAPA! I AM ACCUSED FOR MURDER! EET HAPPEN WHEN I PLAY CARDS WEETH SENOR BLACK TOM AND TOBY...

Wash Tubbs



EASY! THERE'S SOMEBODY IN THAT BRUSH SPYING ON US! I SAW THE BRANCHES MOVE!



ARE YOU SURE? I'LL TAKE A LOOK—

Alley Oop



I SURE HOPE YOUR HAIR CUTS EASIER THAN YOUR WHISKERS... WOW! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE EM!



YOU'RE THE FASTEST THING IN THE WATER I EVER SAW... GEE! WHERE'D YOU LEARN TO SWIM LIKE THAT?



MY WIFE AIN'T HOME AND I'M BUSY GETTIN' READY TO GO HUNTIN'



R-R-R R-R-R



GEE! THAT'S ONE OF THEM NOW, I'LL BET! HOW NICE!

Boots and Her Buddies



WHY DO YOU WANT ME IN YOUR CLUB?



TO ACT AS LEGAL ADVISER!

Red Ryder



I DRAW GUN, BUT I DO NOT SHOOT! SOME WAN ELSE. HEEM SHOOT FIRST! SENOR TOBY DIE! PRONDI RUN AWAY!



YOU SEE, IF WE GET INTO ANY DIFFICULTIES WITH THE COPS, WE'LL WANT SOMEONE ON OUR SIDE WHO HAS INFLUENCE!

Wash Tubbs



PLEASED TO OFFER HONORABLE SELF IN FORMAL SURRENDER TO YANKEE SOLDIERS!



OH, IT JUST CAME NATURALLY, I GUESS!

Alley Oop

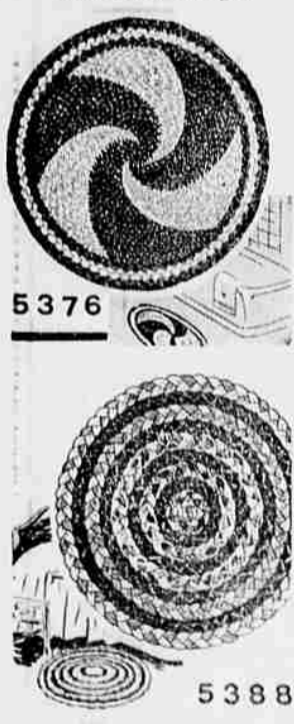


YEH, WE SAW HER TAKE YOU, BUTCH... KNOCK US DOWN, WILL YUH?



OOOLA, THESE THINGS ARE JOE, SAM, RED, SCOOP, AND LAUGHING BOY THERE IS

Colorful Rugs



By MRS. ANNE CABOT

The "spiral" rug is one you'll never tire of—crochet it in two attractive contrasting colors. It takes 4 balls of cotton rug yarn in a dark shade, 4 of light color. Rug measures 33 inches in diameter. The rug in lower illustration is one of those old-fashioned, colorful, hand-made braided beauties!

To obtain complete instructions for the rugs—Crocheted Rug (Pattern No. 5376) and the Braided Rug (Pattern No. 5388) send 15 cents in COIN for EACH, plus 1 cent postage to reach pattern. YOUR NAME, ADDRESS and the PATTERN NUMBER to Anne Cabot, La Grande Evening Ob-

Behind the Scenes In Washington

(Continued From Page 2)

nel from San Antonio to Mexico, taking in many more remote, colorful villages than would be seen traveling by train. Another 14-day trip will take tourists through Virginia, the Carolinas and the Smoky Mountain National park.

To the north, there's an eight-day trip planned from New York to Montreal by train, then a steamer to Quebec and a motor trip through the Gaspé Peninsula. And now that "Is This Trip Necessary?" signs are coming down, you can go ahead and plan that pleasure trip with no conscience pangs.

Official Records

Water turned off, October 9:
A. A. Fuhrer, 1407 J. Herson avenue; Mrs. Paul Gerstel, 2207 Cedar street; Mrs. Helmer Johnson, 1208 Y avenue.

Water turned on:
F. C. Willenburg, 407 M avenue; Mrs. Lulu B. Clarkson, 2710 Third Street; A. O. Davenport, 1608 Z avenue; Nena V. Hall, 1308 Oak street.

Building Permits

W. Kiedler, alter and repair one-story brick building, 1306 1/2 Adams avenue, \$1000.

More than 70,000,000,000 eggs are consumed in the United States in a normal year.

Buyer, 700 Mission street, San Francisco, Calif.

Home Frock



By SUE BURNETT

Here is a simple home frock with side buttoning, figure-slimming lines and a neat and efficient air. I think you'll like it.

Pattern No. 8928 is designed for sizes 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46 and 48. Size 36 requires 4 1/2 yards of 35 or 39-inch material.

For this pattern, send 20 cents, in COINS, your name, address, size desired and the PATTERN NUMBER and Sue Burnett, La Grande Evening Observer, 709 Mission street, San Francisco, Calif.

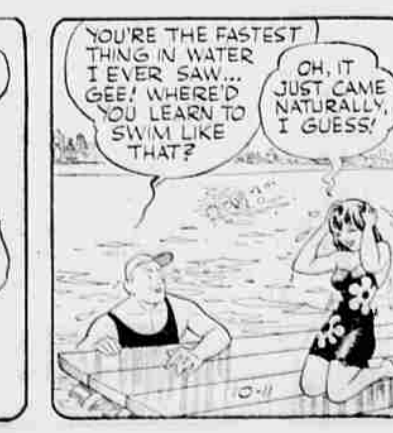
Send for your copy of the new spring issue of Fashion—just off the press. Book full of smart, up-to-the-minute styles. 15 cents.

Alley Oop



BUY VICTOR BONDS

Alley Oop



OH, IT JUST CAME NATURALLY, I GUESS!

Alley Oop



YEH, WE SAW HER TAKE YOU, BUTCH... KNOCK US DOWN, WILL YUH?

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