



Edie embraces Kippie (left) and Bette after custody fight.

custody battle, resumed a career, life "leveling off" again

piling up, and I had to do something. So one day I opened the door and walked in.

"It was a man's room. Paneled walls, armor, heavy furniture. I didn't want it changed, but I couldn't take that oppressiveness. I had a white piano moved in. It looked silly there, so I moved in some other frilly things. Then I could get down to work."

Edie was not alone, however. Her mother, Ada Enke, closed her home in Tenafly, N. J., and flew to Los Angeles to help with the children. And the latter, in Edie's words, "were simply wonderful."

"Betty had always been conservative," Edie explains, "but Kippie—well, Kippie is a lot like Ernie. She had her own riding horse, and she loved it, but one day she came to me and said: 'Mother, how much is that horse costing us a month?' I looked it up and told her. 'Let's sell it,' she said. 'It's something we can do without. We can grow up.'"

In the past months, Edie admits she has "pushed" her career as never before. "I always figured one full-time career was enough for any family. Besides, the older girls needed somebody who could take time with them."

BETTY AND KIPPIE were children of Ernie's first marriage; they unquestionably needed extra attention. In their early years they were pawns in a prolonged and bitter custody battle between Ernie and his first wife. The court awarded custody to Kovacs, and he and Edie set out on the difficult course of "making things up to them without spoiling them."

The custody fight resumed after Kovacs' death. The children's natural mother sued to regain them. The courts decided the girls were old enough to decide themselves which mother they preferred to live with. They chose Edie.

Meanwhile, Edie's career spurted forward. She contracted to do six television "intimate musical reviews" for Ernie's former cigar-company sponsor, and she filmed "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" for Stanley Kramer. Then came a tentative offer to costar with Bob Hope in "Call Me Bwana."

It was a big break for a comedienne. But Edie hesitated. Was she getting these offers because of her talents—or because people felt sorry for her or, worse, because they could capitalize on the sensational but painful publicity surrounding Kovacs' death?

"I won't sign until I'm sure it's *me* they want," she said, and then she put a ban on interviews that might "exploit" her personal problems.

On the basis of her past performances, Edie seemingly had little to worry about. A no-nonsense student who wanted to be a music teacher, she had spent five years at the famed Juilliard School of Music. Her attempts to

(Continued on page 14)



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