

Rita Walks (Alone) to Repay Those Who Helped Lick Polio

ARKANSAS CITY, Kas., (NEA)—A misty-eyed young girl stepped out of a car in front of the big VFW memorial hall in Arkansas City. While people held their breath she walked—alone—up the building and into the big dining room.

Rita Hammer, 14, was walking without help for the first time in two years, and her slow but sure journey into the VFW hall was to pay back those who had helped her lick infantile paralysis.

Across the street, in pits dug in a couple of vacant lots, a barbecue simmered. The beef for it came from six yearlings Rita's father, H. H. (Earl) Hammer, had cut out of his herd in nearby Dexter. The trimmings—beans, potato salad, bread, coffee—came from the people of Arkansas City.

Rita's father had the idea for the barbecue as a way to repay the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis for the \$2000 hospital bill the foundation picked up when Rita was stricken two years ago. Before

he got through, the whole town pitched in.

An old friend, Harry Derry, local VFW commander, got the veterans' organization to provide the hall and line up the rest of the food as a community service project.

Local butchers volunteered to slaughter Hammer's yearlings. A couple of barbecue experts from the Flint Hills Cooon Hunters Assoc. presided at the pits.

On the big day that Rita walked alone again, Red Cross canteen workers hustled plates from the pits to the dining room from 10:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. to feed several thousand people who had donated \$1 to get "a big stack of barbecue" and help the polio fund.

Other thousands sent in money—some from distant states—and wrote "don't send us a ticket; just add this to the fund."

When the last plate had been emptied, and Rita had been bundled up in a car to watch the giant Arkalalah Fall festival parade, down Arkansas City's main street, Hammer and his friends started adding up the returns.

They found they had more than \$5000 to turn over to the polio foundation to repay the \$2000 bill for Rita's recovery.

"We know that people are good," Hammer said, "and we have received hundreds of letters from all over the country telling us Rita's recovery from polio has given new hope to their own sons or daughters who are suffering from the disease now."

Rita spent six months in a Wichita hospital, and another year and a half at home in braces and casts. There were later expenses, including a spinal operation, that Hammer paid for himself.

The polio fund's \$2000 had no strings attached, but Hammer felt it was a "moral obligation." And the people of Arkansas City thought the town had a share in that obligation, too.

The barbecue was a big day for brown-haired, dark-eyed Rita.

There was an even bigger one a few days later. She answered the roll call at Dexter Junior high, back again with all the teen-age friends who had been dropping in to bring school to Rita's living room for the last couple of years.

Jobless Pay Totals \$807,000

SALEM, Ore.—Oregon's jobless workers received \$807,600 in unemployment compensation benefits during November, the unemployment commission reported.

The total, slightly higher than in the same month of 1950, brought the total for the first 11 months of this year to \$9,173,469. That compares with \$19,355,900 in the first 11 months of last year.

The commission said unemployment is increasing because of shut-downs in lumber operations.

Wasco Remains In GOP Column

THE DALLES, Ore.—The Dalles and Wasco county retained their traditional Republican party majorities on the basis of registered voters on December 1, County Clerk D. V. Bolton said.

But total registration dropped by almost 1000 from the 7909 carried on the rolls at the November, 1950, general election to the 6937 voters listed the first of this month.

In the county, 4102 persons registered as Republicans and 2738 as Democrats.

BOAT EXPLODES

EUREKA, Calif.—An explosion ripped apart the 28 foot crab boat Doris Lee Green, here yesterday, but the two men aboard escaped with minor injuries. Owner Alex Karas and Harold Daniels were picked up by another fishing boat, the Shark, a few minutes after the blast.



JACKIE DUFF (above), son of Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Duff, 2532 S. 6th, has recently been released to inactive duty by the marine corps. Cpl. Duff served overseas with the marines in the South Pacific, China and Japan from 1945 until 1947. He was recalled to active duty September 16, 1950 and served with the first division in Korea.

Bus Rate Boosted In Eugene Area

EUGENE, Ore.—It cost Eugene residents two cents more this morning to ride the bus to work.

The fares increased Wednesday from 10 to 12 cents, or four for 45 cents, following approval by the city council Monday night.

The city transit lines had requested the increase here after winning a similar fare hike in Salem. Frank Foster, Eugene manager of the bus company, pledged his firm will immediately begin surveying ways to improve service.

ONETIME SINGER IS CHEERY BUT BEDRIDDEN

PHILADELPHIA, (NEA)—Mary O'Connor has a very cheery signature—she makes a smiling, winking face out of the "O.C." It's the signature of a happy woman, and she is a happy woman. The fact that she's been bedridden for 14 years hasn't changed her disposition.

Mrs. O'Connor would be excused if she had turned into a sour, self-pitying person. She was a promising singer back in 1937. A native of Cleveland, she'd sung with the Cleveland Symphony Opera and in light operas in Cleveland. Then she slipped and fell on the ice, injured her spine and never walked again.

Her singing career was ended. She had three children to look after. She faced a lifetime of helplessness in bed. It was a prospect to unhinge even the sunniest disposition, but it didn't stop Mary O'Connor.

She accepted her handicap. Instead of a singing career, she turned two hobbies—art and poetry—into full-time avocations. Her poems have appeared in newspapers and national magazines. Her careful, dainty pen-and-ink sketches

Arthritis Fund Campaign Set

PORTLAND—A state-wide campaign to raise \$40,000 for the arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation's program of research, relief and education, got underway this week under direction of John P. Casey, state campaign chairman.

Casey, prominent Portland attorney, said the intensive period of the campaign would be during December, but he would continue the drive into January if necessary to achieve the goal.

The foundation seeks funds to establish clinics, promote research, create fellowships in rheumatic disease, for interested doctors, and to foster a continuing program of education and service to arthritis sufferers and the public.

EFFECTIVE ACTION RIO DE JANEIRO

RIO DE JANEIRO, (AP)—Pres. Getulio Vargas signed a decree early today making striking air-line employees "loyal soldiers." Several hours later operations of air lines running in and out of the Brazilian capital were returning to normal.

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and her paintings have been hung in many galleries and been published in periodicals.

Today, Mary O'Connor is a happy and contented woman of 51. She has four grandchildren. Her room in the Philadelphia Home for Incurables is a sunny, cheerful place. Across her bed is a specially-built rack, holding her typewriter and drawing board.

Four times a year, she puts out a little four-page paper called "One Tiny Candle." This is a collection of poems and stories full of hope and encouragement, which she sends to shut-ins, hospitals and prisons.

"I have learned," says Mrs. O'Connor, smiling serenely in her bed, "that doing things to make others happy has great rewards for the one who takes the trouble."

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