

Friends, Neighbors Flock To Support Of Couple Who Fled Families, Business

ORANGE, Tex. (AP)—The enduring love of Betty McCuddy and Tom Buntin, the full story of a secret life from their children after 22 years, rallied friends and neighbors to their side today.

Back in 1931, insurance man Thomas C. Buntin of Nashville, Tenn., called an alcoholic licentiate of earning a living outside of his family's business—disappeared. Six weeks later, after a will had been mailed from St. Louis, the pretty Russellville, Mo., girl who had been his secretary vanished too.

The cost to the lovelorn pair: wife, three sons, family prestige and a thriving business to him; a family and a share in a million dollar estate for unmarried Betty. Only rumor and speculation ever connected the two disappearances. As much of the story as anybody knows began in Brownsville, Tex., weeks after the disappearances when Tom and Betty decided to let their love flower in the lush Rio Grande Valley. Their home to New Orleans was grounded there by bad weather. They moved here from Brownsville about five years ago.

Tom, 28, proved not to be the her-do-well a Tennessee Supreme Court branded him. He and 22-year-old Betty stayed in Texas and assumed the names of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas D. Palmer.

Yesterday, their love—after 22 years of happiness and six children—was splashed across the nation's front pages. The Nashville Tennessean broke the story in a copy-righted dispatch.

Today, dazed by the quick developments, the tall, thin man and the motherly woman with gray in her hair waited to tell their love story to children rushing to their home here.

Neighbors dropped by to chat last night as Tom and Betty, four years ago, and Betty, four of their children with them, ate a belated Thanksgiving day dinner. Silent and miserable, almost bitter earlier in the day, they took on a more cheerful manner as their friends rallied around.

"They're among the finest people I know," a prominent Orange resident told the Associated Press. "Everybody in the neighborhood thinks the world of them," a neighbor told reporters.

"We were in love," Betty told Nashville Tennessean reporter John Seligenthaler. "Money didn't mean too much to us. If money had meant anything, we wouldn't have done what we did."

Both prepared today to return to their jobs to which they commute in nearby Beaumont. Tom's an employee of an appliance firm. Betty works as a court stenographer.

"What can I do?" asked a teen-aged member of the 16-year-old Margaret Palmer's Sunday school class at St. Mark's Methodist church. The class decided to send Margaret flowers. The large bouquet was in the living room today. Margaret, in tears, called her Sunday school teacher, crying, "What will people think?"

"You put on powder and your lipstick and be in church as usual Sunday," Mrs. M. M. Brock said she told the girl.

Parents of two Orange youths married to daughters of Betty and Tom said it was all right with them. They are Mr. and Mrs. B. L. Burton, parents of Cpl. William Burton, married to Betty Ann, 21, and in the Air Force in Korea, and Mr. and Mrs. James E. Herling, parents of Cpl. William Herling, also in service and married to June, 20, who lives somewhere in Washington state.

"We love her very much," said Mrs. Burton of her daughter-in-law who is expecting a baby any moment.

"It makes no difference at all," said Herling.

Editor J. Cullen Browning of the Orange Leader said his paper called many of the town's 24,000 residents and found no one "who had any criticism for that family."

Both Betty and Tom had been declared legally dead years after they vanished with nothing but the clothes they were wearing and little more than pocket change.

Today legal tangles faced Kentucky lawyers over disposition of Betty's estate, which went to a nephew after she was declared dead.

But an insurance company, which first found Buntin about three weeks ago but wouldn't say where, wasn't concerned with legal arguments. Under protest it had paid off on two \$25,000 insurance policies on Buntin.

Of the amount, Joe Chambliss of Chattanooga, a lawyer, said \$31,000 was left. The company—New York Life—is willing to forget the money already spent and any claims for interest. Chambliss said. All it wants is the remaining \$31,000.

The company added that if Tom and Betty concede their true identity—which they have done—it may not be necessary for them to tell their love story in court, ever.

The Tennessean reported in today's editions—in another copyrighted story—that Mrs. Dan C. Buntin, Tom's mother, called her son by telephone yesterday and confirmed the relationship.

Cordial, if somewhat formal, Mrs. Buntin and Tom agreed that she would come to Texas soon to visit the Palmers.

Meanwhile, David, 18, Tom's and Betty's oldest boy, and Jane prepared to come home for a first-hand account of the 22-year-old romance.

The changes time has brought: Buntin's wife is married to Louie Phillips, president of the Broadway National Bank of Nashville. Betty's brother was killed in a 1936 plane crash. Betty's mother died shortly after her daughter disappeared.



JACKIE POOL, Mooseheart chairman of Klamath Falls Chapter No. 467 Women of the Moose, joined the lodge in February, 1947. She has sponsored six candidates, served as escort for Jackie Leach when she was junior regent and as assistant guide when Mrs. Leach became senior regent. Was escort for Blanche Pyle when Blanche was senior regent. Served as ritual chairman under senior regent, Erma Gerue and is now Mooseheart chairman under senior regent Kathleen Hepburn.

Dog Survives Three Weeks In House, Locked In By Mistake, Found By Chance

PORT KLAMATH — Tip, four-year old Shepherd dog belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Martin Yegge, is back home after an absence of three weeks — emaciated and weak, but in good condition considering everything, and thereby hangs a tale — no pun intended.

During the summer and early fall months, Mr. and Mrs. Yegge operate their cabins and picnic grounds at Denton Park in conjunction with the Old Swimmin' Hole, four miles north of Port Klamath on Highway 62. The owners collect a fee from each car stopping at the park entrance and in this part of their business, Tip is especially useful to Mr. and Mrs. Yegge. If neither was on hand to collect when a car drove up and stopped, the dog came up to the car and barked until one of his masters had arrived to attend to business.

Early in November, Tip came up missing. The alarm was sounded, neighbors were alerted and Port Klamath residents were asked to report if they saw him. Time passed with no sign of the missing canine, and his sad owners finally concluded their valuable watchdog pet had been picked up and carried off by some passing motorist.

Tip was not in the habit of straying very far from home; the farthest he had ever been known to travel was to visit the nearby Darling-Brewer ranch located just a short distance below Denton Park.

Also, in early November, J. R. (Dick) Brown, Lakeview, was a business visitor at his former ranch one mile below Denton Park on Highway 62, now the property of Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Roeder. At the time of sale of the ranch in 1952, Brown had reserved 20 acres. The ranch house is unoccupied and on his trip there this month, Brown had occasion to enter the kitchen, but on leaving, neglected to close the door.

Coming along a short time later, Roeder saw the door standing open and closed it.

Again time went on, and on last Sunday, Nov. 22, three weeks after Roeder had shut the door, Roeder and his son Clark were at the ranch and went in the house. On opening the door, they were startled to find Tip, the lost dog and cause of an intensive lookout and search of the entire Wood River valley for the past three weeks.

Although very weak, the poor animal was overjoyed to see his liberators, who immediately gave him a drink of water and took him home to his owners. It was hard to determine which one of the three was the happier at the joyful return of Tip — the dog or his two masters.

After having enjoyed his first meal in three weeks, Tip was accorded an unaccustomed privilege on his first night back home: he was allowed to stay in the house overnight! (He is strictly an outdoor dog as a rule and stays outside to guard his owners and their premises.)

On investigation, it was found by Roeder and his son that the dog had raised considerable hob in the ranch house kitchen in his frantic efforts to escape his enforced captivity. He had literally torn the window curtains to shreds, overturned furniture, etc., before he became too weak to make further attempts.

For subsistence, he had managed to tear open an old box of cornflakes and devour the contents, and in his desperate hunger, had even gnawed on a bar of soap left in the kitchen.

Tip had probably learned a lesson and will stay pretty close to home after his harrowing experience of being imprisoned for three weeks sans food or water — truly a miracle of survival in the annals of canine history.

Mr. and Mrs. Yegge left Wednesday, Nov. 25 on a two-week trip to Natchez, Wash., where they will visit her sister, Mrs. Susie Shanks. On their return here, they will visit other relatives in Oregon before going south to their Los Angeles winter home until spring. Of course, it goes without saying that wherever they travel, Tip goes also.

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MEETING

The November meeting of the GIA to the B of L.E. was held on Nov. 13, at the home of Mrs. Harold Burritt, 4511 Boardman Ave. Plans were made for the annual Christmas party, and the date was set for Sunday, Dec. 13, the place to be announced later. The members agreed to send their usual gifts of toys to the Doernbecher Hospital, in Portland, Mrs. A. F. Condrey, 2234 Darrow Ave., has charge of the mailing of the box. Refreshments were served at the conclusion of the meeting to Mrs. John W. Doran, Mrs. Charles A. Johnson, Mrs. T. W. O'Brien, Mrs. Thomas M. Miller, Mrs. Alfred Clauson, Mrs. A. F. Condrey and the hostess Mrs. Harold Burritt.

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