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Jerry Lewis, **My Funny Valentine**

By PATTI LEWIS As told to Marva Saunders and Bob Gaines

What's it like to be married to a zany comic? Jerry's wife tells us in this intimate, heart-warming love letter

BEING IN LOVE with one of the world's most successful and zany comedians is like holding onto the tail of a kite in a hurricane. The ups and downs are breath-taking.

For 18 Valentine's Days, I have played "straight woman" to a million Jerry Lewis gags-and then supplied a shoulder to cry on when the gags turned to tears. During those years, I have been buffeted by the endless contradictions of my amazing and creative husband. For example:

-Jerry can negotiate a million-dollar tv contract, then come home wearing crazy eyeglasses and phony buck teeth to play with our five boys, four dogs, and three cats.

-He wants a peaceful and orderly home, but I never know when he may suddenly run into the kitchen and try to tape the cook to the stove.

-He will play the tv and hi-fi at an ear-splitting yowl (he's slightly deaf in one ear), then insist we give away our pet duck because it's too noisy.

In the words of that wonderful Rodgers and Hart song, Jerry is "My Funny Valentine." But although life with him is a constant stream of paradoxes, he is the secure foundation on which my life is built. He has become a fine artist and a responsible, loving husband and father. And he has given me a home, children, pride-and the strength of a deep and growing love.

We were such lonely, frightened children when we first met. My parents were divorced. Jerry's parents had been in show business, and he grew up shunted among relatives.

In 1944, I had a job singing with a dance band in Detroit. Jerry was doing a pantomime of opera records during the intermissions. He was a skinny, wild, 17-year-old kid who clowned to get attention and love. Often he would jar me with crazy antics, but then he'd become strangely gentle. On our first date, we sat down over a chicken salad and were so shy we could barely talk. Several weeks later, Jerry took me to the same restaurant. When he couldn't get attention from the waiters, he dumped a bowl of oatmeal over his own head.

We had a lunatic courtship. He used to scrawl love notes on my dressing-room mirror with lipstick and hide in the dark corners backstage and jump out at me with jokes and gags. He was wild and unpredictable, but beneath his fran-





Some of the clan turn clowns for Scott's birthday. From left: Chris, 4, Scott, 6, Patti, Anthony, 3, and Jerry.

Another birthday party, this time for Anthony, finds Patti and Jerry sans costumes but not a bit less enthusiastic.

