

French Couple Wed in Shrapnel-Scarred Church to Tune of Sammy Kaye Recording and Nazi Artillery

By SGT. RICHARD LEWIS
WITH THE THIRD ARMY IN
LORRAINE (Delayed)—The first
wedding in two years was held in
the village today. I attended,
strictly in an unofficial capacity.
I just happened to be around and
they invited me in.

In accordance with local custom,
a civil ceremony followed a morn-
ing wedding in the 16th century
church whose greenish, stone walls
were chipped by shrapnel. The
civil knot was tied by the mayor
who has the powers of a justice
of the peace in these matters.

The bride was dressed in a white
satin wedding gown. She was 24
and a widow of three years. Her
first husband had been shot in a
concentration camp in Wallachia.

THE GROOM, 26, looked as
though he needed a haircut, and,
incidentally, a drink. He wore a
red necktie and a checked suit.
He looked pretty sharp, but he
was pale. The bride was blushing,
just like it says in the book.

There was the bride's mother, a
widow, whose husband who had

He called for Auguste and his
accordion to play a wedding march.

AUGUSTE, the grocer, stepped
forward from the crowd in the
entranceway and held out empty
hands. Didn't they remember?
Had not the Boches taken away
his accordion?

Perhaps, suggested the mayor's
wife, there would be something
appropriate on the radio, if the
power had not failed. Oh, the
power is on, turn on the radio,
people said all together.

"They will play music, Monsieur?"
the mayor's wife asked me. I assured her music would

follow this significant announce-
ment to the troops.

"Ah," said several, "an an-
nouncement to the troops. They
listened intently to the world
series scores not comprehending a
word."

"It is good news, Monsieur?"
the grocer asked anxiously.

That all depends, I started to
explain. Another shell exploded
and the radio squawked and went
dead. After a minute or two, it
continued and there was music.

THE BRIDE and the groom entered
to the stately strains of

"Darling, You And I," as played
by my friend, Sammy Kaye. It
was strictly in the groove.

Somebody turned down the vol-
ume and Monsieur le Maire read
the ceremony and the laws of the

French Republic on the subject
of marriage.

Every time he came to the end
of a sentence, a German howitzer
shell would punctuate it for him.

The earth would quake, the
house would shake and the old
man would lose his place in the
book from which he was reading.

Then there would be a silence in
the room as he hunted the place.

IT TOOK five shells to complete
the brief, ceremonial reading.
After that, he made a speech and
as each shell burst, he paused

dramatically and waited until the
house settled back on its founda-
tions.

"I am an old man 78 years old,"
he began, "and I have lived,
through three German wars. In
the past, our community was
among the first to recover itself
and to resume its peaceful and
prosperous way of life."

"Now, we have come through
another trial. There are twenty
of you good people of our village
in this room and there is not one

of you but who has not lost rela-
tives, dear ones and precious pos-
sessions.

"Did not the dirty Boches take
away my bicycle, the tires from
my automobile and my typewriter,
for example? Did they not take
my silverware? Did they not
humiliate me by forcing me to
humiliate you in asking that the
women volunteer to clean up their
billets for them?"

"ALORS, I do not wish to re-
mind you of our common misery
of the past four years. Rather I
wish to show that this wedding
day stands as a symbol of our re-
turn to the past."

There was a muffled "bravo."

The wedding party broke up.
The bride and groom walked
through the muddy street with its
low stone houses that seemed to
grow out of the earth and be a
part of it and disappeared.

To the east, the shelling con-
tinued.

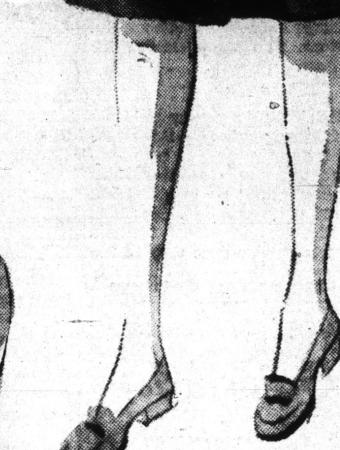
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