

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 morning 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 and a pair of shiny, black shoes. 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

Sgt. Richard Lewis is the Indianapolis Times' "Voice From the Balcony," on leave with the army for the duration.

been taken to Germany as a slave 18 months ago was reported dead about a month ago.

There was the bride's brother, 19, with his head still bandaged where a fragment from an anti-personnel bomb had torn part of the scalp away.

Then there was the mother, also a widow, of the bride's first husband. She does most of the washing in the village. Her husband had been killed in 1940 in a tank battle.

IT IS customary during weddings in Lorraine for the villagers to fire shotguns. This, in some obscure way, symbolizes that the poor groom has lost his freedom as a gay, young blade.

But there were no shotguns left in the village which had been disarmed by the S. S. However, the Germans obliged during the afternoon civil ceremony by shelling a village four miles away with long range artillery.

The shelling started just as the wedding party entered the mayor's house. The building shook and the windows rattled as though they would fall out of the frames.

Monsieur le Maire observed, as a former artilleryman would, that the Germans were using big stuff.

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.

Twisting of the dial yielded a news summary from a German

station. "Bad news, we hope," commented the mayor drily. Everyone laughed. "Ah," he said, "I have it. The American station. Toujours les Américains, ils nous aident." The Americans always help us out.

A FARMER, who had assumed charge of the radio, tuned in the American forces network from London and stepped back triumphantly as a G. I. announcer was reading the baseball scores.

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

follow this significant announcement to the troops.

"Ah," said several, "an announcement 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 volume 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, and 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 foundations.

"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 relatives, dear ones and precious possessions.

"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 remind 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-

covery which has already commenced under the mouths of the German cannon.

"Life starts again in this corner of France! I say to this husband and to this wife to go forth in freedom and in blessedness and to build a new life and a new nation."

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 continued.

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WAVES LIEUTENANT WILL SPEAK HERE

Lt. Marjorie P. Forsyth, former member of the Warren Central high school faculty now serving with the WAVES, will speak at the Indiana annual meeting of the International Association of Public Employment Services Nov. 4 at the Hotel Washington.

Lt. Forsyth is assistant district civil readjustment officer at Chicago and will discuss the navy's civil readjustment program.

SAFETY SERIES SET FOR SCHOOL DRIVERS

A series of eight safety meetings for school bus drivers throughout the state is being conducted by state police today.

Trooper William Gemmill will conduct the local meeting in Tomlinson hall. Meetings were held yesterday at South Bend, Lafayette, Terre Haute and Osgood.

Other meetings today will be at Ft. Wayne, Jasper and Crown Point.

CHURCH TO SHOW FILM

The First Friends church will present the movie, "Courageous Mr. Pen," at 7:30 p. m. today in the church. The film, produced for use in theaters, will be shown in the church in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of William Penn.

Ration Calendar

MEAT—Red stamps A8 through Z8 and A5 through K5 in Book 4 good indefinitely for 10 points each. L5, M5, N5 and P5 become good Sunday.

CANNED GOODS—Blue stamps A8 through Z8 and A5 through R5 in Book 4 good indefinitely for 10 points each. S5 through W5 become good Nov. 1.

SUGAR—Stamps 30, 31, 32 and 33 in Book 4 are good indefinitely for 5 pounds. Stamp 40 in Book 4 good for 5 pounds of canning sugar.

Applicants applying for canning sugar should send in one spare stamp 37, attached to the application for each applicant.

GASOLINE—Stamp A-13 for 4 gallons through Dec. 31. B4 and C4, E8 and C8 good for 5 gallons; T (4th quarter) good for 5 gallons through Dec. 31. E, E1 and E2 good for 1 gallon; R, R-1 and R2 are good for 5 gallons but are not valid at filling stations. E and R coupons will expire Oct. 31.

SHOES—No. 1 and No. 2 "airplane" stamps in Book 3 good indefinitely. Airplane stamp 3 in Book 3 will become valid Nov. 1.

TIRES—Commercial vehicle tire inspection every six months or every 5000 miles. B card holders are now eligible for grade 1 tires if they can prove extreme necessity. All A holders are eligible for grade 3 tires, if they find tires which may be purchased.

FUEL OIL—Period 4 and 5 coupons valid through Aug. 31, 1945. All change-making coupons and reserve coupons are now good. Fuel oil ration for 1944-45 heating season now being issued. Period 1 good immediately.