

# Night, the Time for Mystery

By LYDIA KING FREHSE

Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

"The mystery of nature is never displayed more happily than on a summer night," wrote Emerson. But these words were penned anonymously in a day when even so great a poet as he, if he were also a minister, could not afford to sign his name to any avowal of nature's joys.

Happily too, we have now come a long way since those austere days. Many facts bearing on man's life and thought have made the personal and enjoyment of nature something in which the great and the humble alike can openly rejoice.

Summer night as I knew it when a child, was a time of fragrance, of mystery and expectant wonder.

Gone were the press and heat of the day. Twilight was long and darkness fell softly and slowly. The dew was heavy, sharpening and intensifying all the scents of the day.

June brought the fragrance of blossoms and of all green life growing.



Mrs. Frehse

IN EARLY July, night was filled with the heavy odor of newly cut grass and the unforgettable aroma of hay curing in the barn, spilling itself over the great hand-bewn beams until the mow was filled almost up to the eaves.

From the barn, too, and the overnight pasture which enclosed it came the good animal smells of fresh milk, of warm bodies of cattle and horses.

As the dew fell the burning fields gave off the familiar aroma of growing corn where the hoary leaf trapped in the coarse and drooping blades.

ON AUGUST days the wealth of the harvest stood heavy headed and hot in the golden sheaves. But when evening came, the grain was cool to the touch of a child who ran her fingers through the newly hoarded stores in the old granary bins. And in the nearby stalls the men were finishing the evening milking.

Late summer nights were filled with the apples and of ripening grapes and tomatoes hanging heavy on their vines. One of the last of the seed clover drying its heads in a darkening tangle over the evening fields.

From the open summer-kitchen door came the lingering smell of freshly baked bread, the leaves carefully covered and spread out in the neat array on the reverse side of the old dough-tray.

The stars came out and over all sounded the call of the cricket and the katydid. But it was a friendly darkness and a little child felt safe in it.

THEN AS NOW, the fireflies had their brief hour in the deepening twilight. And what fun to catch the little insects in bottles to see how their lights came out and on!

Here a common name can easily lead us astray, for these are not flies but a kind of small beetle whose luminescence is one of nature's marvels.

The body of the firefly is softer than that of most beetles, is grayish-brown in color and measures about half an inch in length. Turn one over in your hand and you will see that the last segment of the abdomen is made up of the light producing tissue.

This contains a network of nerves and air tubes. It is through the latter that oxygen is obtained for the production of "cold" light, a process which poses a problem not yet understood by the scientist. He does know that in ordinary oxidation more heat than light is produced, while in the firefly's mechanism the opposite is true.

This light-giving property is also present in the eggs, larvae and wingless females of certain species. The latter are called "glow worms."

The eggs hatch underground or in rotting wood where the larvae live and feed on small insects. The adults eat sparingly or not at all.

ABOUT 50 species of fireflies are present in our range, which extends over the eastern half of the United States and over the southern portion of the western half.

Many more varieties are found in the tropics. These are especially spectacular in the Philippines where thousands have been observed flashing their lights in unison at a rate of over 100 times per minute.

Anyone who is much about in the early summer night, especially in low moist hollows, has been startled by the performance of these little beetles.

Thus far there seems to be no explanation as to how the flashing is regulated. It is believed however that the performance is related to the recognition of the sexes in the darkness. But whatever the urge which prompts it, the rhythmic flashing of the fireflies' fairy-like lamps adds much to the mystery and wonder of our summer nights.

## Showers Fete Lou Brannan Bride-To-Be

Alberta Lou Brannan, who will wed Norman Richard Magel on Sept. 3, has been feted at a series of showers.

Most recent was a linen shower given by her maid of honor, Ann Kuttelidge and her bridesmaid, Judy Strong, at the Streng resident in Detroit.

Among guests were the mother of the bride-to-be, Mrs. R. Neil Brannan, the mother of her fiancé, Mrs. Norman H. Magel, and bridesmaids Martha Magel, sister of the groom-to-be, and Judy Bates of Lathrup village.

ALSO PRESENT were sorority sisters of Miss Brannan and friends from college.

A "This is Your Life" booklet, made by guests by cutting pictures from magazines representing important events in Miss Brannan's life, was a shower highlight.

A kitchen shower was hosted June 30 by a sorority sister, Joanne Tait (Latin of Lathrup, Birmingham). Guests included her mother, Mrs. Garland Tait, Mrs.

Brannan, Mrs. Magel, sorority sisters and a few close friends. Dessert and coffee were served.

MISCELLANEOUS gifts were presented at a party given July 29 by Ann Austin of Highland Park. She and the bride-elect were classmates in high school and now are continuing through college together at Michigan State university.

Showers guests included the two mothers, the bride Martha Magel, and classmates of the bride-elect from Highland Park high school.

The rehearsal dinner on Sept. 2 will be given by the Neil Brannans at their home, 506 Golden gate, Detroit, after a 7 p.m. rehearsal. The bridal party plus out-of-town guests and relatives will be present.

### Back from Island

Back from Mackinac Island is Mrs. Jean Greene of Lake Park, Birmingham, and her children. They spent ten days on the island, staying at the annex to the Windermere hotel.

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### From where I sit ... by Joe Marsh

#### After-Dinner Speaker Gets His "Deserts"

"Here Thomas tells about a dinner party he and his Missus went to in Center City last week. He said it was a wonderful party—except for one guest who was a real 'know-it-all' right from the start.

Whatever the subject, this fellow considered himself an 'expert.' Wasn't quiet about it, either. He told different people what automobile to buy, what books to read—even told some who they 'just had' to vote for.

When it came time to leave, this fellow must've felt a pang of conscience. He turned to the host-

ess and said: "I suppose I was a bit outspoken tonight." Quickly he replied, "Of course not. No one could have out-spoken you."

From where I sit, it's all right to have opinions as long as you don't try to force them on neighbors. Take those who would deny me an occasional glass of beer simply because they prefer something else. They're welcome to their choice but shouldn't try to force me to be a 'party' to it!

Joe Marsh

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### For 'South Pacific' Selling Tickets

Ticket headquarters for the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs' benefit performance of "South Pacific" at the Melody Circus Theatre as at Talent Unlimited, where one of the partners in that shop is ticket chairman.

The event is a preview before the regular series of shows at the tent theatre on the grounds of

Belford Inn on Grand River. Date is Aug. 29.

At the shop, Mrs. James F. Sheeran is general chairman of the event and Mrs. R. E. Eardley is ticket chairman.

MRS. SHEERAN, a member of Pleasant Ridge Women's club, is

special activities chairman of the federation. She is also president of the Oakland county Federation of Women's clubs.

The Detroit Federation, which uses its funds from this major event of its year for charitable projects, has many individual members in Birmingham's area. Lathrup Woman's club is only member club in this area.

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