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THE BRIDE was a widow with four children. The groom was a widower with five children. It was a most unusual wedding indeed, but perhaps befitting for Mr. and Mrs. Tom G. Alban who will observe their 10th wedding anniversary in June.

The "unusual" has become more or less standard procedure for them.

SHORTLY AFTER their marriage they abandoned their respective professional careers to open a country store in Birmingham. He was a gainfully employed accountant. She was a most successful interior decorator.

"But having a store of our own was something we both wanted to do," Mrs. Alban said.

And didn't take long for the enterprising Albans to convert the store to a unique gourmet's palace without losing the "old creaky barrel" atmosphere.

THE STORE was the beginning of an enterprise that now grows more than a million dollars annually for the Albans.

On April 11, the couple formally opened their second place for the dining, shopping and diner.

The Albans purchased an old barn and 10 acres last year and converted it into a rustic public dining room and gourmet specialty shop.

They call it Alban's Country Cousin.

It is located just off M-24 between Lake Orion and Oxford on property originally purchased by the Government from the Cherokee

NATURE NOW
By Lydia King Fresh

Tiny Plowman Essential To Enrichment of Soil

When the water of the earth is full of life, it is the tiny plowman that does the work. If you are walking along the street or working in your garden after a spring rain, you will see large numbers of these "wigglers" which the water has drawn to the surface from the seclusion of their underground burrows.

SOME 20,000 species of true worms are widely distributed over the earth's surface. They crawl over the ground, burrow into the soil and swim in the water attached to the outside or housed inside other animals.

The body of an earthworm is marked into joint segments equipped with about bristles. These act as anchors while the worm moves over the surface by contracting and expanding its strong muscles. Both robins and ants have a difficult time pulling this creature from its hole in the ground.

There is no distinct head and no one can find eyes or sense organs. Breathing is accomplished through the thin skin kept moist by a slimy mucus so that an exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide can take place. Exposure to the sun is therefore fatal. If it remains long enough for the skin to dry.

THIS UNSPECIALIZED exterior hides an already specialized digestive, circulatory and respiratory system and a true nervous system with a tiny brain. Five rudimentary hearts pump the blood through upper and lower veins.

The eggs are held in a swollen gelid or ring which surrounds the body. As it moves along the length of the worm it receives sperm which were deposited there previously by another worm during the mating process.

His journey finished, it slips off the head, contracts into a little ball and rolls off to the earth. Here the eggs hatch into tiny worms which immediately go about their business of "eating" the earth for which they are named.

EARTH WORMS not only eat dirt as they dig their way into the soil, but they come up to the surface at night and with their sucking mouth parts, drag bits of humus into their burrows.

Much of this food is not absorbed and is deposited around the mouth of the tunnel as "castings." In this process the soil is aerated as well as enriched.

Earthworms burrow deeper than any plow or cultivator can penetrate—up to 12 or 14 feet. In his studies Darwin recognized the immense part they play in keeping the soil drained and loose, in burying stones and waste vegetable matter, in converting natural soil minerals into soluble plant food and in preventing erosion by banking topsoil.

Studies have shown that even poor soil can support as many as 250,000 worms per acre each year. Land may have as many as 1,750,000. Recent chemical tests have shown that freshly deposited cast soil contains five times as much nitrogen, 11 times as much potash, seven times as much phosphorus, three times as much magnesium and 10 times as much humus as ordinary soil.

IT IS ESTIMATED that three

Early Deadline In Effect for Our Next Issue

Because of an event of community-wide interest, The Birmingham Eccentric will publish its next week instead of Thursday.

This means that early deadlines must be observed.

To be published in the April 26 issue, all NEWS, CLASSIFIED AND DISPLAY ADVERTISING COPY must be submitted by 5 p.m. Monday, April 24.

WEEKLY VISIT
She Earns Her Living on Wheels

By IRMA N. DAVIS Staff Writer

Marie Kinard hasn't bought a pair of shoes in six years but she's covered a lot of miles on her job.

She drives a taxi for Birmingham Veterans' Cab Co. and has worked for her for eight years. She loves to drive but has been conducting a one-woman boycott of the shoe industry because she "doesn't like pointed shoes."

Obviously she is an individualist.

Mrs. Kinard lives alone in a seven-room house in Royal Oak because she "likes alone room." She is rarely home because she is "with people all day long" as she drives in and around Birmingham.

Many of her fares are children, chauffeured to school and home by doctors and dentists. Mothers ask for her when calling for a cab because "it seems like I get along with children and dogs."

DOGS, HOWEVER, must find their own transportation and grows in her carport are limited to "one dog" in the continued "now and again."

She finds that her clients are less talkative in the morning hours but almost always friendly.

Because she married "too early," she often gives a word of advice, free of charge, to teenage customers.

"I made up my mind that my own two girls would at least get through high school," she commented, explaining her interest in the younger set. "I hate to see them get into a bad way. That's why I, sometimes tell them not to be in a hurry to get married or quit school."

HER "FIRST LOVE is the

musua's Is Standard for Alban Family

ban purchased the house where the offices of the Oxford Lumber and Coal Co., were located for many years. It was built in 1908. This structure, dubbed the "gingerbread house" will be used as a gift and antique shop.

ONE GETS AN idea of how the mind of Mrs. Alban works in the purchase of a quaint old popcorn wagon.

The couple was driving through Clare, Mich., when they spotted the popcorn wagon of the main English coffee.

"Both Tom and our daughter, Barbara Ann, 9, love popcorn," Mrs. Alban said.

"We stopped and Barbara walked to the wagon for two bags of popcorn," she said. "She also asked the man if he wanted to sell the wagon. He replied that he had another one just like that he would sell."

"We bought it," she said. "One day while stopping in at State University, who backstops his wife's progressive imagination with a scum business approach, she believes the wagon will pay for itself this summer."

AND HERE'S AN example of Mrs. Alban's ingenuity.

One day while stopping in a Detroit antique shop, she found an old chandelier which once capped the Crystal Ballroom at the Sheraton-Cadillac Hotel.

She purchased it at a reasonable price, dismantled it and made several unique electric lamps which now hang on the walls of the dining room. Each has an angled for a centerpiece.

THOUGH THE ALBANS are most productive in the idea department, Mrs. Alban said, "and they decided that 'Mom and Dad' should get together and arranged for us to meet."

"The couple who now also have ten grandchildren agree it was the best idea yet."



Barbara Ann, 9, serves her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Alban from the chef's head-quarters in their new establishment, Alban's Country Cousin.

The Birmingham Eccentric Features
APRIL 20, 1961

Seaholm Merit Finalist Follows Busy Schedule

By SUE McCADE Seaholm Student

Editor's Note: Following is the first in a series of personality sketches on National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists from Birmingham. Names of the merit scholars and their scholarships will be announced sometime in May. This series is being written by Seaholm students interested in journalism under the guidance of journalism instructor Tom Hammel.

Jan Brundage, a Seaholm senior, is a student who has more people might like to have. She can't find a career that combines math, science and languages, fields in which she is both interested and gifted.

It is a foregone conclusion that national merit finalists have ability in many areas, but when Jan is able to maintain a 3.5 average while carrying third year German and French, chemistry, English and college algebra, it is evident that she is something more than a "bright kid."

Realtor Week

Birmingham Mayor Florence H. Willett has proclaimed the week of April 23-29 as Realtor Week.

Mayor Willett pointed out that realtors "have been of immeasurable assistance in the continued economic and physical growth of our city."

Active as secretary of Ascendancy, Seaholm's science club, and the National Honor Society, she is a member of the biology club and the Student Nationalists organization. Jan has carried her academic interests into extra-curricular activities. As associate editor of the yearbook, the Piper, she has proved her versatility, rising to that position without having taken the usual courses in journalism.

SCHOLASTICALLY RANKED twenty-sixth in a class of over seven hundred, Jan ranks high in service to her class as well, contributing time and effort to the senior edit committee. With graduation of the class of '61 behind her, this merit scholar will be attending the Honors College of Liberal Arts at the University of Michigan.

Known among her friends for her unpretentious charm and delightful dimples and among her intellectual peers for her quiet assurance and clear thinking, Jan has a rare combination of ability and personality. She is a credit to her family, school and herself.



BRUNDAGE

DOWN TO EARTH
Columnist Tells About Gardens of the South

By ALICE WESSELS BURLINGAME
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Mobile, Alabama: This is a beautiful city of wide streets and a history which dates from one hundred years before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock. Today you approach the city on good roads which seem to be built right out of the water.

Mobile is one of the top 10 seaports of the world. You can see ocean-bound vessels loading at the wharf. During the Azalea festivities in February and March, more than a half million people visit this mecca to enjoy 35 miles of Azalea Trails.

ABOUT 20 MILES from Mobile on the Intra-Aux-Oes River is the location of the famous Bellingsrath Gardens and home. In 1917, Mrs. Bellingsrath purchased this site and invited his cronies to come and fish with him. His wife upon occasion would come with him to the camp and the two of them dreamed about the potential beauty of this spot.

Azaleas were planted and the couple took a trip to Europe where they could see gardens on the continent that would influence the potential design of their Alabama site. Soon an American architect, a French gardener, and others worked together to create the splendor which is yours to enjoy today.

YOU MAY WANDER unburdened through 60 acres of a garden with rippling fountains, trees dripping with moss—their height reaching the roof of the highest cathedral.

Every season of the year is beautiful and as Mrs. Bellingsrath said, "it is like a woman with 52 gowns."

Your columnist is only mildly interested in tours within homes but the home of the Bellingsraths is the most beautiful I have ever seen. Priceless furniture, linens and china, are used daily by this fine couple. Because they did not have children, the Bellingsraths have arranged that the income from this beautiful project help to educate young people at Huntington College and at Stillman College for colored students. The Presbyterian Church is also a trustee.

St. Meyers was a scheduled stop. Previously, I described the gardens of Thomas Edison which you won't want to miss. Our goal was Matlacha which is a fisherman's paradise on Pine Island.

An interesting short trip from there was Sanibel Isle which can be reached by a boat out of Ft. Myers.

On the average I visited Hydroponics International which has truck vegetables growing. In the future they will be growing rare plants needed in the pharmaceutical industry. The growing beds are 36 inches wide and 100 feet long and are connected to a central flume which permits the flow of the mineralized solution for the plants. Each bed is filled with an inert gravel for root support.

This industry, which will support 600 persons is a method of growing plants which some feel is a superior technique because it will grow year around growing. With a planting density 15 or 20 times greater than in fine soils, the plants will not be subject to drought, they will be free from soil diseases, and cannot erode. Rotation of the crops will be necessary, any type of crop can be produced by an analysis of its needs. The product is a clear, fine liquid soil will contain the maximum minerals and vitamin content.

AS YOU APPROACH Sarasota you will see a sign: "The Oaks." It is the former 300-acre Florida home of the famous Mrs. Potter Palmer. Here you see world famous art within the home—Ment, Picasso, Cassatt. Other fine collector's items are within the house but the gardens look my interest.

Mrs. Palmer developed a fine garden with rare tropical trees and shrubs. Each are numbered and are given a key to identify them and read about their history. This would be invaluable for anyone wishing to plant a southern garden as they are shown as specimens and you can see their nature profile.

WHILE GOING OVER the Tampa Causeway I saw this sign: "Beware of poisonous. Do not cut or burn."

That evening I met a doctor and asked him the story behind the sign. He said it affects many people like poison ivy especially if they are in contact with shrub can make people very ill.

He also said that crotons can do the same thing. This is often used as a houseplant up north. I had known that many people cannot be in the same room with crotons. They soon have running eyes and symptoms of a heavy cold.

ANOTHER PRIZE stop is the Busch Gardens in Tampa. On this 160 acres—15 of them in gardens—you will see an exotic bird haven with more than 400 large, brightly-plumed unchained birds. Several times a day there is a free show where they perform almost human antics and high wire acrobatics.

IF SHE HAD the time she would "get into volunteer work." In her few hours of leisure time she bows, works in her yard and home, or entertains guests at back-yard cookouts.

Her favorite hobby is embroidering "anything from pillow cases on" and she keeps a bit of needlework in her bag to work on if "she has a spare minute or two."

She spends some of her time dispatching at the cab office and said the history books in the office were especially interesting "so I sometimes borrow one."

She finds being a woman no handicap on her job although her boss, Norman Johnson, doesn't allow her to change for, and insists that she call for "help." She is the only woman driver presently working for the company.

SHE LIKES driving in the Birmingham area because of the "nice people and there are no rough types and no beer gardens."

She said that lost articles were sometimes a problem; "there must be 15 half-pairs of gloves, and a quartet of umbrellas in the office, to say nothing of the things kids leave behind."

She believes in "give and live" and cures her rare blue jeans by remembering an old proverb: "I woke up without shoes and saw someone without feet."

"At least I've got a job, a home and nothing too much to complain about," she grinned.

ed by young women who were in her troupe and "they say they would be happy to help, especially those who are now married."

Birmingham women, she says, like a woman driver, and they like to discuss "gardening, fashion and clothes and sometimes aches and pains."

As far as a women's wardrobe is concerned, she is ready to chime in on any such discussion because she is especially interested. She makes most of her own clothes.

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Marie Kinard, lady taxicab driver, stretches a moment from her busy schedule, to add a stitch to her embroidery project. Her very feminine interests provide a startling contrast to a job that is traditionally a "man's game."