

# With Songs In Their Hearts

By PEGGY PHILLIPS

**A**NOTHER chapter has opened in the fabulous life story of Jane Froman, the popular singing star. It all began last New Year's Eve when she danced with Rowland H. Smith, a newspaperman, at the home of a mutual friend in Columbia, Mo., Jane's hometown. Six months later, in a quiet and simple ceremony, they became man and wife—a turning point in their lives.

Several weeks before the wedding, approximately 125 Columbians had been alerted to "a reception" by a social secretary representing Jane's aged but active mother. Everyone accepted with alacrity, but no one knew whether it meant an engagement would be announced or the anticipated marriage would take place.

As might be expected, the mystery titillated the guests and added zest to the occasion.

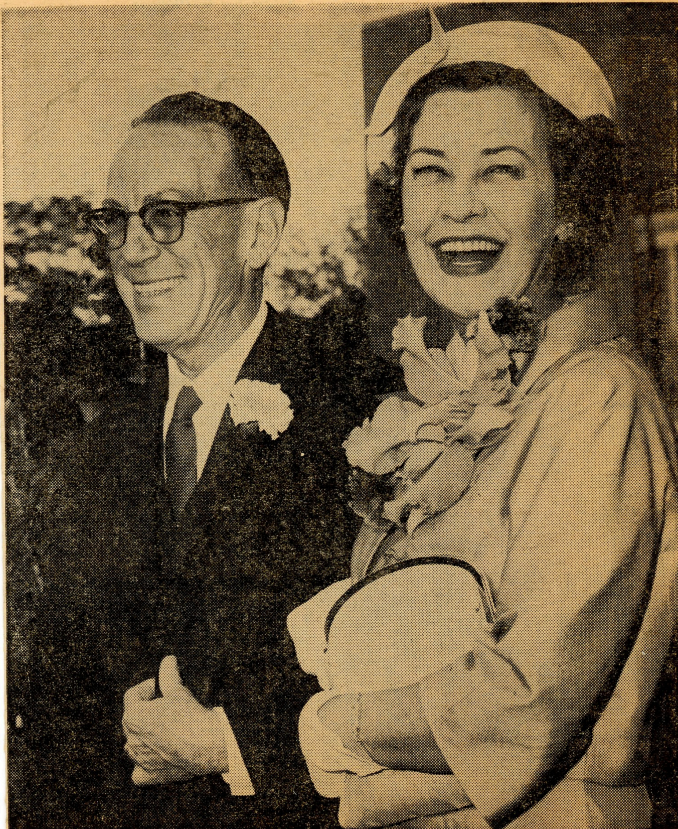
Everyone arrived promptly at the affair and greeted a radiant bride and a beaming groom, very obviously "with songs in their hearts."

**ON A RAINY NIGHT** in April, driving back from St. Louis, following an Ad Club Gridiron dinner where Jane—as guest of honor—had been saluted for her continu-

ing courage, the writer sat in the back seat as Jane's then-secret fiance drove. She began to sing, her richly beautiful voice brightening the night. On and on she went. Often, he would whistle a half-forgotten tune to get her started. Their mutual interest in music cemented the romantic bond.

For the wedding and reception, the bride wore a raspberry-colored raw silk suit with three-quarter length sleeves, an aquamarine beret, and a corsage of two huge purple catalina orchids.

Indicative of Jane's appeal and the enduring friendship she inspires were the out-of-town guests who flew in from Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago for the occasion. They included show-business people, colleagues, youthful fan-club



Mr. and Mrs. Rowland H. Smith Leave Prayer Chapel at Columbia, Mo.

devotees, and some of the doctors who had shared so many of her hours of anguish.

Jane's ever-ready and sincere smile overshadowed the seldom-noticed brace which she must always wear on her injured leg, but which gives her freedom to dance, drive a car, and will now permit her to cook and keep house.

**FOR OVER A YEAR**—ever since Jane went "home to Columbia for a change of pace," a real rest, still more surgery, and renewed studies at the University of Missouri—her cherished household possessions have been stored in her mother's basement. Now, they will be brought to light, the silver polished, the glassware shined, and the china washed—all to wait for guests and visitors.

Many Americans, some for the second or third time, saw the filmed version of Jane's life on NBC-TV as the featured Saturday night movie, scheduled during her wedding week quite by coincidence.

It depicted her indomitable determination to make a comeback from an invalid's wheel-chair. In so doing, she overshadowed the success that she had achieved earlier in her great singing career.

Miss Froman was a night-club and radio favorite when an accident threatened to end her career and almost cost her life.

On Feb. 22, 1943, when she was traveling to Europe to entertain American service men, the airliner crashed into the Tagus River in Portugal. Twenty-four of the 39 persons aboard perished. Had it not been for the co-pilot, John C. Burn, she probably would have died too.

He happened to have been hurled into the water near her, and—though injured himself—he swam to her side and held her head out of the water for 45 minutes until help arrived.

**WHILE HER LIFE** was spared, she was badly hurt. There was a compound fracture of the right leg just above the ankle, and her left leg had nearly been severed below the knee. She also suffered a fractured right arm, two broken ribs, and other injuries.

As soon as she could travel, Miss Fro-

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man returned to the United States for treatment. After a bone graft, doctors suggested she try to resume her career insofar as possible.

While still in a wheel-chair, she starred in a Broadway production, "Artists and Models." Shortly afterward, the Second World War ended, and she then kept her interrupted engagement with the service men. On crutches, she toured for 3½ months, covering more than 30,000 miles and doing 95 shows before an estimated 300,000 men.

Meanwhile, she had undergone 18 operations, and more were to follow. In accumulated time, she had spent three years out of five in hospitals. Finally, after 25 surgical operations on her legs, she was told that the treatment was a success and that she could walk without crutches or cane.

**EVEN DURING** all the treatments, however, she continued to work. She made frequent appearances in night clubs and on the radio. When television became popular in the early 1950's, she appeared on some of its leading programs. Later, she had her own show.

The plucky battle that enabled her to overcome handicaps and to go on to greater success than before captured the nation's heart. Her life story was made into

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Jane Works on a Canvas in Art Class at University of Missouri