LIFE

Scandal overtakes the Governor of Ohio

CORNELL: Guns on campus

SINGER
JUDY COLLINS
Gentle voice
amid the strife

MAY 2 · 1969 · 40¢

Vol. 66 No. 17 LIFE May 2 1969

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May 2, 1969 Volume 66, Number 17

LIFE is published weekly, except one issue at year end, by Time Inc., 540 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois 60611, principal office Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y. 10020; James A. Linen, President; Richard B. McKeough, Treasurer; John F. Harvey, Secretary. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, Ill., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department at Ottawa, Canada and for payment of postage in cash. U. S. subscriptions $8.75 a year and Canadian subscriptions $9.75 a year.

EDITORS' NOTE

Tragedy in a house that friends built

The story ran small in Monday's newspapers: Father, Son Die in House Fire; Mother Critically Burned.

For us at LIFE, and for Photographer Gordon Parks, the news hit with a wrench. The family of Norman Fontenelle had been Gordon's subject in his LIFE essay a year ago on the desperate life in New York's black ghetto. Gordon had lived with the 10 Fontenelles; he had argued, laughed and eaten with them—and sometimes gone hungry with them—until he became a part of their lives. Out of the months together came the kind of bond that often does—and sometimes must—grow between a journalist and his subject. The bond doesn't end with publication.

After Gordon's story appeared the Fontenelle family moved, with the help of LIFE and contributions volunteered by LIFE readers, to a modest furnished house in Springfield Gardens, Queens. The accidental, middle-of-the-night fire that swept through their house last week killed Norman, the father, and Kenneth, age 9. The other children escaped but their mother, Bessie, was badly burned and is hospitalized.

BESSIE AND KENNETH FONTENELLE

Gordon Parks, flying back to New York to attend the funeral, recollects the last time he had visited Norman Fontenelle's family:

"They were getting a new chance—in a new neighborhood, a healthy distance from the ugly Harlem tenement where I had found them six months before. Fifteen-year-old Rosie was happy but still concerned about losing her city friends. Norman Jr., Kenneth and five other young brothers and sisters bounced happily on the new furniture watching Bugs Bunny on the new television set. The whole family, including Bessie Fontenelle and her husband, appeared to be in a state of pleasant shock—unable to fully acknowledge the good fortune that had suddenly come to them. Promise replaced despair. Now there were clean clothes, food, scrubbed floors, a front porch, green grass, fresh air and quiet—far from the Harlem hunger, rats and bugs, from the Harlem heat, cold and death.

"Rosie, Ellen, Riel and Lette each pecked me on the cheek as I was about to go. Norman and Phillip walked me to the door. Then little Kenneth ran up and thrust a photograph the size of a postage stamp into my hands.

" 'It's me,' he said proudly. 'Keep it in your pocketbook next to your kids' picture.'

"I promised him I would.

" 'Don't forget me,' he said.

"No, I won't forget him. I won't forget the sparkle of youth in his large brown eyes; I won't forget that we were both really happy that morning—and so unaware of yet another misfortune, more tragic even than poverty, creeping toward him. Kenneth is right there in my pocket book, next to my own kids' picture."

George P. Hunt

GEORGE P. HUNT, *Managing Editor*

'I've looked at life from both sides now'

An interview with Judy Collins

The words, from her hit record "Both Sides Now," are more than song lyrics to Judy Collins. She was a child prodigy at the piano but suffered polio at age 12. She became a folk singer, entered upon a marriage that ended in divorce, then discovered—three days after her Carnegie Hall debut in 1962—that she had tuberculosis. She came back from that but was overshadowed by bigger names like Baez and Dylan. In the past three years she has gone beyond traditional ballads and political protest to the heart of her own experience and become an unsurpassed interpreter of contemporary songs. Here, Judy tells LIFE Reporter Irene Neves how it looks from both sides.

I think if I were younger, having a hit record might be a lot more confusing. But for me, this comes after 10 years of working. You pay incredible dues—all those clubs, all those shows, all those late, late nights, all those walks home by yourself. You think of all that music, all those changes. The thing that gets you is that suddenly, by dint of a fluke—which it was and always is—one particular performer is recognized by the masses of people, approved by the masses of people and taken under the wing of the culture-hero bird which hatches all these beings who aren't real. Out come these different, out-of-proportion, malstructured pictures of people. The response that comes from an audience

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On an outing near San Francisco with her band the afternoon of a Berkeley concert, Judy juggles a single stone for the benefit of Steve Stills, the guitarist and singer, who was her host. Below, she kids with Michael Sahl, pianist in her band, which also includes bassist Gene Taylor and drummer Susan Evans.

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during a concert, I don't question. But what people respond to when you sell a million records becomes very strange. They are responding to the vastness of your image, the recognizability of your image by many, many people, which in turn gets translated into "this person is now im-port-ant." When you see this happen with people you have known for years it gets very sticky.

My having a hit record has already changed the attitude of some of the people who run this business. All of a sudden, I'm important, I'm a person. "Take time, see what she wants, encourage her," whereas before they were doing me a favor.

'I couldn't find ways to express myself with the other kids'

I always felt something like this would happen, that one day I would be lucky. That doesn't mean that I don't have tremendous anxieties. A lot of people develop ways of letting their anxieties out—I used to get sick all the time. I recently found a diary at home I started when I was 15 years old. The whole thing is a painful reminder that a lot of the patterns I'm still fighting started a long time ago. I gave a performance when I was 15 of the first folk song I ever learned, and two days before the performance I came down with a horrible throat thing where I couldn't sing. Now, after a lot of analysis, my anxieties don't make me sick—they just come out as anxieties. But there is also in me a powerful pull toward positiveness about my life, a conviction that, if I wish, I can do almost anything.

I don't know why one feels peculiar as a child, I just did. There was always that feeling of discomfort, the feeling that somehow I just didn't fit in. It's funny—music probably had a lot to do with that sense of isolation I felt. I could read music before I could read words, and from the time I was 5 until I was 16 I spent all my afterschool hours in front of a piano. I couldn't find ways to express myself with the other kids. Even if a teacher called on me in class I would get upset and terribly emotional about just having to answer a question. But there was always the music and the tremendous feeling of peace I still get when I sit down by myself at the piano and have no intention of accomplishing anything with it except pleasing myself. I think a lot of artists begin working that way, as a kind of outlet where they don't find too much else to connect with.

I don't think there was ever any illusion that being able to perform in front of people had anything to do with becoming at ease with them. I'm still a fairly timid and shy person, and I have to kind of wind myself up to things. It's getting easier, but it's annoying to have to learn so late.

I'm always just petrified right before I go on stage, but then I rely on that ultimate thing that happens when the lights are out, the spotlight is on and visually, vocally and musically I have complete contact with my audience. I suppose in a way it's like assuming a position

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In a tree house outside Joni Mitchell's home in Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles, Judy swaps songs with Joni, her good friend as well as a fellow singer and songwriter. It was Joni who wrote "Both Sides Now."

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that's undeniable—nobody can assault you for the reasons you are doing what you are, nobody can talk to you about it at the moment it's happening.

It's incredibly inspiring to connect with an audience, but that's not to forget there's a learning process that goes on which permits it to happen. A lot of the extreme pleasure and satisfaction that are possible in this kind of work is knowing how to do it. There are things you simply have to spend time to learn —how to play, how to sing, how to project, how to think of a phrase as more than a string of single words. The first thing I have to do is absorb a song, fall in love with it, cry over it, be upset by it—digest all that and then put it out so that hopefully the same thing can happen for the audience. The object of craft is to make you unaware of it and to transcend the music, to go with it wherever it takes you—as far as you want to or can take it.

I never like to end a concert on an encore that is too big or too demanding. I prefer something much quieter, more intimate. I don't like frenzy in my music. I try to make a mood that causes people to think about how they feel about things. Maybe nobody's life is going to change because of it, maybe nothing will change. But there is always the chance that somehow some remembrance will come up that makes a person say, "Oh yeah, that was nice, that made me happy."

Sometimes I get letters from people who tell me how sad their childhood was, how troubled their lives are. I think they hear something in the music which gives them the feeling I am someone who will understand—which is true: often I do understand. But I also know too much about the magic spell that a performance can cast to be trapped into the notion that I can go into someone's life and do something to change it dramatically.

I had never written or even thought of writing a song before a year and a half ago. I think that because of all those years in classical music I just assumed my role was always to be an interpreter of other people's music.

I'm sure everybody works differently. I start with the music and then a line will fall in place. I have to work at the piano—I can't do it on guitar. I'm not a prolific writer by any means—I've only written five songs.

> *'My father was very proud of me—he'd yell bravo in the wrong places'*

One of them is called *My Father*. My father and I were always close and he was very proud of me. He was a performer on radio and he used to tell people that I was taking up where he had left off. I remember when I began to perform at programs around Denver he would applaud so loud and yell bravo in the wrong places and I would get embarrassed and forget it came from love.

There's a line in that song, "The colors faded from my father's dreams," which probably has to do with the fact that my father was blind from the time he was 4. In our house and in memories of my child-

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hood there wasn't a lot of visual presence. For example, I was not aware of dreaming in color until I was about 20. I had broken my leg and they had given me some pills for the pain. I got delirious and dreamed giant colored balloony animals with polka dots and stripes and purple horns and huge luminous bodies. They were marvelous.

What happened with that song is very strange. My father was in the hospital. It wasn't supposed to be anything serious. I talked to him several times and he was getting better. I must have picked up something I wasn't even aware of, because about three weeks before he died I wrote that song. It just popped out. It took 35 or 40 minutes. When I had barely finished the phone rang. It was my old friend Tom Glazer, and I said, "Let me sing you this song I just wrote." Tom said, "Your father is going to love to hear that." But he never did.

I've been making my living as a performer for 10 years now. I was 19 when I got started, out in Colorado. I had dropped out of college to get married, and I began working in clubs around Boulder to help my husband finish school. When I look back, it reminds me of that Dylan song, "I was so much older then." I really was an old lady at 19—set in my ways and closed off.

The following year our son Clark was born, and then when my husband got a job teaching at a college in Connecticut the three of us moved east. I was still involved in music, sort of plodding along in my own thing, feeling uncomfortable in just about every area. But, even though I'd be miserable when I'd have to go off and sing three sets a night in some club for five days at a time and be hoarse and depressed, still, I did it. Somewhere in my head I must have known I had to learn my craft and find out who I was.

'Some people need an analyst, some people need a rabbit'

I remember once I took a psilocybin sugar cube, and my husband and I went to see *Breakfast at Tiffany's* at a drive-in. We had a big beige Chevy carry-all. It rained the whole time, and I remember the rain was streaming down the window and I was watching the story of Holly Golightly through it. But on the way home, on this country road, we hit a rabbit. The shock of it made me crazy. When we got home I was still upset about the rabbit and then, all of a sudden, I was upset about me. I started to talk. I was able to say things that had been stored up for a long time. So you see—some people need an analyst, some people need a rabbit.

This is a crazy culture. Absolutely nutty. You see it reflected everywhere you look, this desperate search—who are we, what are we, can we ever make it in the hip world? On the scene, on the go, in the know.

We're constantly deluged with absorbing news—of revolution here and war there, of internal politics here and domestic problems there. And on top of that, like a huge whipped-cream dressing, sits the culture hero—this kind of fantasy world made possible by the mass media and peeking in on other people's lives. Instantly, let's see what the Beatles are doing today. Instantly, is the Maharishi going to make it with the Beach Boys? Instantly, is Eastern meditation doomed at the hand of the American teen-ager? You can drown in it. In all our lives we have it all the time. We're thrown into it, catapulted into it, hurled into people's personal lives, taken through their tragedies and had our catharses instigated by the death of our heroes.

This enormous rush to know what is happening with everyone somehow ends up being destructive. It gives us the feeling we have to accomplish something all the time. If we don't do it in our work, we have to accomplish something with what we know is going on in the world. We have to achieve a decision about it, become a critic about it, be able to say this is good, this is bad. It becomes a kind of substitute for being satisfied with your own life.

I find myself becoming a bit like a hermit. I don't read the newspapers and seldom listen to the radio anymore. Things get so mixed up and out of proportion that it can eliminate your own quiet moments. You tend to forget that sitting still and the pleasure of being alone can be more important, more soothing, more intense, more universal than going 50 different places and having many experiences in which there's no stopping, no quiet.

A lot of people are always asking me, "Why don't you sing all protest songs like you used to?" But about a year ago, after thinking about it a lot, I finally decided I couldn't be a political agitator with my music. It isn't what I want. I don't wish to sing to people at a

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concert who are going to sit back and say, "Yeah, that's right, that's right. That's what I believe too."

I am still actively involved in two issues where I feel I *have* to do all I can, and those are conservation and resistance to the draft. But all this singing about what we believe at rallies where one constantly is facing an audience you recognize from the last rally after a while becomes a disappointing experience. It's like hitting people over the head, it's preaching, it's finger-pointing. You end up making a statement not of emotional depth but of unity in the face of an obstacle, an enemy or an idea which does not agree with ours. It divides people into "us" and "them." There is a cancellation of the meaning music can have, which should include everyone, even the areas of division. We spend so much of our lives fussing and fuming and feuding.

Occasionally, there are moments when I find this life empty, but a lot of it has to do with being on the road, seeing the same hotel over and over, being constantly uprooted, having to relate on an unnatural level to a lot of people—particularly in this business where one gets caught in the backwash of who people *think* you are. But there are always momentary things where you hit it off with somebody. It makes up for a lot but, undeniably, it's hard. I think men deal with the road and this thing of being in front of people more easily than women. Most of the women singers I knew in the early years found they couldn't take it. The desire to be in the home and have a man take care of you is very great. It's hard to come to terms with.

I know a lot of women who seem to have this huge frustration about "I must get married, I must find my mate—someone to tie my life together so I can function, so I can be whole." We also have something almost ingrained in our genes which has to do with a need to depend on someone, have someone depend on us, wanting when we're 50 to be sure there will be somebody there.

I'm not saying that marriage shouldn't happen, only that too often the conclusion seems to be, "I have found it. I am married. I know the answer. I am O.K." It seems to be used as a way to avoid a confrontation with life rather than open it up.

I feel I need to sing, and when things are right it's exciting, it's illuminating. You find out things about yourself you never thought of before. I feel as though my voice is capable of doing anything. I get high, terribly high, very very high, higher than on anything else. I don't question that I can make a sentence mean anything I want it to as long as I know what it is I want to say. I don't know why I seem to be able to do it, but I do, and I think people are pleasured by it. At the end of a concert I am filled with a great sense of peace if I feel I have connected with my audience, because that's the point—to extend one's emotions beyond the interior of your own loneliness and include and be included by other people's lives.

But performing is not a very satisfying thing outside its own context. It means I can't settle down in one place, it means leaving my son, it means being involved with the fantasy world of stardom which seems to me is kidding us, putting us on, cheating us out of our lives. Sometimes it makes me mad that I'm involved in it.

Off on tour, Judy holds her son Clark, 10, in goodby embrace