

Editorial



Americans revert to Ward and June

Charlene's song has reached one of the pinnacles of pop success. Wednesday I heard a Muzak version of it on the radio in Andy's. Now it is part of America.

You remember it — recorded in 1976 for Motown by a singer known only as Charlene (does a girl need a last name?), "I've Never Been to Me" blandly bombed until its re-release in 1982. Then it went to



Eric Peterson

No. 3 on the pop singles charts in the United States and No. 1 worldwide — it was especially big in Catholic Ireland.

Addressing herself to a "dear lady, sweet lady" whose identity we never discover, Charlene warns of the dangers of liberated sophistication (she moved like Harlow through Monte Carlo and showed 'em what she had). The song includes a long spoken monologue — intended to be movingly direct — but for many listeners the part that hit home was this one:

*I've been undressed by kings
And I've seen some things
That a woman's just not s'posed to see . . .
I've been to paradise, but I've never been to me.*

Charlene's malaise — the regret that is the sap running through the song — raises from not having fulfilled traditional sex roles. She speaks of missing children she never had and longing for the husband she never knew. Myself, I admire those who make their choice and pay their price without whining about it.

The real-life Charlene apparently has both cakes and eats them with, if there were more energy in it, what might be called gusto. She explained her success to the *New Yorker* and is quoted in an April 16, 1984, editorial: "My career just sort of fizzled out. I quit the business in 1980, got married, became a Christian and moved to London, where I got a job as the cleaning lady in a sweetshop, which is like a candy store. Anyway, one day in 1982, I got a call from Motown and they said, 'Remember that song you did about six years ago — 'I've Never Been to Me'? It's flying up the charts with a super-bullet, and you better get back here.' . . . Now I'm about to release a new album, 'Hit and Run Lover,' and my career is going in a whole new direction. It's going in a pop direction. And I've got a new haircut — it's short. I'm very, very excited."

The *New Yorker* goes on to compare her song's comeback with the new popularity of Charles Portis's *Dog of the South*, but for me, the real interest in Charlene's story lies in why her song took off with its super-bullet two years ago instead of eight.

What people thought was sappy and silly in 1976 made sense to them two years ago — this was no kitsch triumph. The values Americans hold about relations between men and women have swung back to the Ward and June Cleaver 1950s. The Equal Rights Amendment was defeated by the kind of obvious nonsense Phyllis Schlafly threw around. The proportion of women to men in Congress — or in tenured university faculties — has not increased, but stayed low. New words like "Ms." and "chairperson," which are perfectly natural and sensible, are held in derision by the old boys who have power and expansively "speak to" their piece. And a woman still gets 59 cents for every dollar a man makes in this economy. Charlene's soft advice to the American women is the same as Ronald Reagan's — get back in that kitchen and rattle them pots and pans.

Just where is this war anyway?

I was just puzzling over why Mr. Reagan was having such trouble drumming up popular support for his covert war in Nicaragua when the door bell rang. It was my neighbor, Mr. Crannich, all decked out in a forage cap, Sam Browne belt and puttees.



Arthur Hoppe

"I'm off to join the CIA to make the world safe for democracy," he said, snapping off a salute.

I clapped him on the shoulder. "Good Man, Crannich!" I said. "I'm glad someone's volunteering for the president's all-out effort in Nic . . ."

"Shhh!" he hissed, glancing over his shoulder. "Seeing as how we haven't declared war on anyone, we can't very well discuss our war plans. I simply signed up when I saw that recruiting poster on TV which says, 'Uncle Sam Wants You.'"

"What for?" I asked.

Crannich shrugged. "Who can say?" he said. "But while I am over somewhere fighting to make some place free, I trust you will do your part to keep the home fires burning."

"What can we civilians do?"

"You can start," he said, opening a folder, "by purchasing one of these \$18.75 Undeclared War Bonds." I examined it. "Does it pay undeclared interest?" I inquired.

"How can you think of your taxes?" Crannich said with a frown. "Don't you know there's an undeclared war on, Mac?"

"Frankly, I can't stir up my blood just," I admitted. "Maybe you should hold some patriotic Undeclared War Bond rallies."

"We had one, but nobody came," he said. "Just

Proposed center isn't for students

When the final attendance figures for Frank Sinatra's show in Lincoln Wednesday come in, it will be most interesting to see not only how many people showed up, but the kind of people who showed up. Sinatra's show could be a foreshadowing, if you will, of the type of acts the proposed Performing Arts Center will hopefully bring to Lincoln — acts that will attract the older, wealthier set, but few students.

The NU Board of Regents announced in February that the Lied Foundation Trust of Las Vegas, Nev., had given UNL a \$10 million gift to help build a performing arts center in the square block between R and Q and 12th and 13th streets. The regents gave the administration authority to receive \$7 million from the Legislature and \$3 million from the NU Foundation to match the gift and build the center.

The center failed to get much legislative attention this session. But UNL students and ASUN should insist on their own evaluation of the need for a center on the UNL campus that will cater to the interests of the general public more than the UNL student.

Not that there's anything wrong with Sinatra appearing in Lincoln. Truly one of the greats still left in the music business, his name justified the \$20 ticket cost for a decent seat. No doubt, Sinatra would have sold out a smaller performing arts center.

But for how many acts will students be willing to pay such a high ticket price? Even the organizers of the Jacksons' tour are considering pricing out their audience for tickets that high. But it will take that kind of cash to see performers the level of a Sinatra, and, as one of the owners of Tommy's said, the center will develop into "just a place where the rich people in Lincoln can go to hear Pavarotti sing." Tommy's will be one of the businesses plowed under to make room for the center.

The UNL administration has made its intentions clear, and the center's virtual slip into oblivion in the last two months has further reduced student interest. Currently, the center is part of LB1128, with the \$7 million listed as an intent to be acted on in the 1985 legislative session. The Legislature will conduct its own study this summer to determine the needs for the center. They should find out that UNL students and faculty have many other uses for \$20 million than an arts center now.

Ward W. Triplett III

wait, though, until the president gets the covert-war economy on a clandestine-wartime footing. He'll expect you to plant a Secret Victory Garden."

"He can count on me," I said. "I'll grow mushrooms in the basement."

"I think it's OK to keep an unrevealed-war map with pins on it," Crannich mused, "as long as it doesn't depict any specific country. But don't let anyone hang a Gold Star in the window. We wouldn't want the enemy, whoever it may be, to think we're up to something."

"That makes sense," I agreed. "But can we gather around the piano to drink beer and sing surreptitious-war songs like 'It's a Long Way to Somewhere or Other?'"

"Certainly," he said. "And toss in a couple of verses of 'Good-by, Mama, I'm Off to an Undisclosed Destination.' I think that's going to be the theme song of Hollywood's big unannounced-war movie, 'The Sands of Whatsitsface.'"

I said I could hardly wait. "But don't worry about us, Crannich," I said. "It's you who are going forth on The Big Adventure. You'll probably come home with a chestful of blank medals and an unperceived-war bride who'll produce a passel of unexplained-war babies."

He chuckled modestly at that. And a lump came to my throat as he went marching bravely off singing "Over Where?"

But Crannich is the exception. Between you and me, I'm not going to buy Undeclared War Bonds. I'm going to give instead to the "Unperceivable Society for an Invisible Peace."

Poor Mr. Reagan. I can see now why he's having so much difficulty. "When it comes to rousing the nation to glorious battle," as William Tecumseh Sherman said, "undeclared war is hell."