

A tophat and song provide unique way to make money

BY TERRI PARRISH



photo by Bill Graf

Cecilia Lawson—The Tune-a-gram Lady.

Many people dream of starting their own business and being their own bosses. Trouble is, it's usually a very expensive proposition. But not always. Cecilia Lawson started her business with a song, a dozen helium-filled balloons and a tuxedo. Her new-found business, Tune-A-Gram, is a revival of the old "singing telegram" service. With prior notice, Lawson will have a song and balloons delivered to the doorstep of a loved one. She can even arrange a hot-air balloon ride for you and your girl or guy on Valentine's Day.

Tune-A-Gram was started about a year ago by Lawson. She was tired of her job and needed some money. She'd thought of starting her own business before, but getting the money to begin business with was a problem, she said.

When the idea of singing telegrams came to her, she called her friends, Mark and Mary Ellen Brown, to see what they thought about it, Lawson said. It was agreed that it sounded great and inexpensive to begin, she said.

Lawson remembers their first call.

"The client wanted the message delivered in three hours and we weren't prepared," she said. Mary Ellen ran to several stores trying to get the proper attire for the occasion. In two hours, they had uniforms and a song written, she said.

Now Tune-A-Gram is an organized business with three employees. Mary Ellen and Mark Brown have since moved to New Mexico and hope to start a business there, Lawson said.

Lawson recalled one delivery she made to a party. She sang her song and was leaving when a man asked if she needed any help. He started singing "Cecilia" and so she joined in.

"I told him he sang pretty good. When I got to the door, someone tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I knew who that man was. It was Gordon McCrae, and I had said he sang pretty good," Lawson said laughing.

Lawson has had other unusual deliveries. Once she sang a song to all the check-out clerks at a grocery store. She also had the privilege of delivering a singing marriage proposal, she said.

Most of the messages are for birthdays and anniversaries. Of course, holidays like Mother's Day, Father's Day and Valentine's Day are busy also, Lawson said.

There are some messages Tune-A-Gram won't deliver. These include songs to lovers from married people or any messages that could cause the messenger to get hurt, like telling someone he's fired, she said.

The prices for Tune-A-Gram services range from \$15 to \$35. The most popular service costs \$25 and includes 12 balloons delivered by a messenger in uniform, who sings the standard song and leaves a copy of the song, Lawson said.

Although Lawson can arrange balloon rides, they're not part of her regular business and they cost \$100 for one person or \$150 for two people, she said.

Tune-A-Gram delivers in Lincoln and will go to towns within a 20-mile radius of Lincoln for 30 cents a mile, she said. Messages can be phoned to other cities or states at a cost of \$16.

Lawson does most of the deliveries, but has three employees to help her if needed. They are: Karl Nyquist, June Segal and Ellie McKinnon.

"We have to have an absolute minimum of a day to prepare a message and get it delivered. Same-day service is available occasionally, but it costs \$2 extra," Lawson said.

Moroccan tour gives students a dose of culture shock

BY LORI MERRYMAN

UNL students experienced culture shock stronger than any picture or story could relate while touring Morocco, a third world country which UNL researchers through a government AID grant.

Fifteen UNL agriculture students compared agriculture in both lesser and higher developed countries while taking a 23-day tour with Ted Doane, professor of animal science, in June.

Extreme poverty and vast differences between social levels left strong impacts on his students, forming a "real picture of poverty," Doane said.

Students' perceptions of the third world country were formed, among many stops, with a tour of a small, 240-acre farm which supported five to six families, a large poultry farm and the royal farm owned by the Moroccan government.

While people on small farms had poor livestock and overgrazed land, the royal farm bred some of the finest cattle in the world, Doane said.

People owning land, usually small amounts like 240 acres, have a subsistence living, he said. Many Moroccan men have four or five wives, increasing the number of mouths to feed, he said.

Production on the small farms is low compared to a good large farm because the land is overworked. Cattle graze continuously on the same overworked land, he said.

"Livestock are walking bankrolls," Doane said, in Morocco "three poor cows

are worth more than one good cow."

Farm men search work in town to support their families. These men usually end up in the slums with minimal pay, Doane said.

The climate adds to the poor conditions in Morocco. While the UNL students were touring the country there was a drought in Morocco, Doane said, resulting in extremely poor and thin wheat crops.

The major contrast in the country is the poor living condition of the small-acreage farmers and the conditions on the royal farm, he said.

Described in a journal kept by the students as 16 miles long and six miles wide with 7,000 head of cattle, the royal ranch breeds cattle which produce better in the poor Moroccan conditions.

Qualified and educated people on the royal ranch have used breeding crosses of native cattle fed on improved pastures, Ann Henderson of Alliance wrote in the tour groups journal. By creating a better breed of cattle, the royal ranch hopes to be an elite seedstock ranch selling cattle to local smaller acreage farmers, she wrote.

When leaving Morocco, one student said "I'll never complain about not having some things again," Doane said.

Deb Hamernik of Columbus wrote in the journal that at first she felt sorry for the Moroccan people.

"But then, they seemed so proud of what they have and were so willing to share their lifestyle with us, I have to wonder who was really happier.

"They know no other kind of life," she said.

From Morocco, students compared other types of agriculture systems in Spain, France, Switzerland and England.

Some of the different agricultural stops the group made were: a large dairy farm and the American embassy in Switzerland; Limousine and Charlais cattle ranches in France; purebred sheep farm and cheese factory in Switzerland and government-owned demonstration farms in England.

Art collection . . .

graphs and magazine illustrations. "He wanted to go the the U.S.," said Nelson, who has been piecing together a biography of Kauba, "but his wife wouldn't leave Vienna."

The names of numerous well known artists and sculptors crop up as Nelson discusses the collection: Frederic Remington, Andrew Wyeth, Gutzon Borglum, Olaf Wieghorst; and each piece seems to have a story to go with it. In his office, Nelson turned and pointed to an oil painting in shades of gray, entitled, "The Manhunt" painted around 1915 by a then-unknown artist named Norman Rockwell.

"It was painted before Rockwell had any commissions for illustrations," said Nelson. "It's either a piece he painted as a student, or, more likely, he painted it on the chance of getting it published, but was rejected. The youth in the picture is supposed to be a self-portrait."

There are far too many pieces of art to keep all of them on display at one time in the 40 by 140 foot room in the library, so some of the works will be changed periodically. However, "It is a permanent collection for the University," said John Christlieb, who wants it to be "available

for study by all the students and anyone else interested in the area of Great Plains study."

Doane, a sheep specialist in the Department of Animal Sciences, has taught three overseas study tours since 1974. He will teach a three-credit-hour winterim course in Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii from Dec. 26 to Jan. 10.

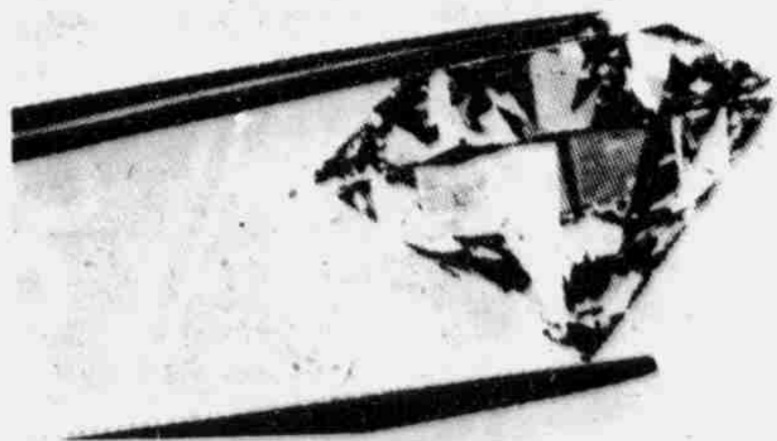
Because the Christlieb collection is one of the finest in this part of the country, Ed Hirsch says that the University Foundation has already received "inquiries from others who are interested in donating pieces, because they've heard we have a particularly fine display here."

Nelson said that while the Great Plains Art Collection is in its infancy, "the Christlieb Collection is a very good core collection" to start with, and he hopes that as more people become familiar with the collection, it will give the Center for Great Plains Studies a stronger public identity. The opening of the collection to the public on Sept. 12 "is just the beginning," according to Nelson.

But shifting back quickly to the present and the business at hand, Nelson relates that once the exhibition opens, his next project will be to publish a complete scholarly catalog of the collection "with biographies of all artists and histories of all the pieces."

He said that it should take two years to complete the catalog.

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