

A SUNDAY IN SPRING

A. Norman Cranin

They say that no one is indispensable. That goes for our current federal officials, our governors and mayors, our society and association officers, our scientists, educators, religious advisors, and health care professionals. Some people, however, are more indispensable than others—for example, a spouse, a relative, a friend, a counselor, a councilor, a companion, or a managing editor. When something really great happens to an indispensable person, it is so exhilarating that you want the whole world to know about it.

It is appropriate that this report appears on these pages because it concerns one of my truly indispens-

able persons, the managing editor of the *JOI*, Melissa Rodenbeek.

Not many of you readers will recognize her name, because she, like Eagle Scouts, school-crossing guards, choirboys, ladies' room attendants, legislative chaplains, proofreaders, and others of their ilk, goes largely unnoticed and unheralded. However, Melissa is the keystone, the lynchpin, the beacon, the North Star in our bimonthly efforts to produce this journal. She does it with tact, humor, patience, empathy, and wisdom. One would think that her responsibilities make her like the Ancient Mariner, shackled to an albatross. To the contrary: this sensitive, well-educated woman has eclectic interests: she is a musician, a joke teller, a joke listener, a transplanted Brooklynite,



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a dancer, a dater, and most recently, a bride.

It is the last qualifier that I would like to address.

Although Melissa and I communicate daily via e-mail, thus managing our editorial responsibilities, we also will exchange the names of the best fishing lures, recipes for quiche, chat rooms for SAT improvement, dissertations on Icelandic cookery, the management of umbilical infections caused by piercing, and similar matters of international importance. However, you cannot imagine my surprise (tinged with a flicker of jealousy) when, in a March 15th missive, Melissa wrote of her engagement and imminent wedding to one Hiram Lucke. Well, I thought, whoever this fellow is, two things were certainly true: 1) he had to be pretty great to measure up to his fiancée, and 2) his name described his current status: he was luck-y.

Our correspondence continued, and I discovered that they were coming east to have their friends, Bill and Kara, serve as attendants at a City Hall ceremony. My wife and daughter, both New York lifers, found this to be a pioneering gesture, but somewhat sad because of the impersonal, business-like, and unromantic setting of the planned ceremony. These two busybodies and a close friend, Sy Glass, who has local influences out here just east of JFK airport, started their predictable meddling. They sought a clergyman (any faith would do, advised Melissa), and quickly produced Rabbi Paula. The Rabbi said



that an ecumenical wedding was fine, but when she discovered that it had been set for Sunday, April 25, she was forced to decline: she and many other women were going to march on Washington.

The two girls, now bending to their assignments with glee, found a delightful local jurist, Judge Ed Maron, who said that he would love to perform the ceremony. The wedding party grew and it included about 16 other curiosity seekers, well-wishers, and skeptics (ie, our good friend Ethel Bruck and her family), most of whom considered marriage to be in a moribund state; two neat ladies who served cheap champagne and pigs-in-blankets; and my adorable 6-year-old twin granddaughters, Emmy and Becca, who were toss-

ing rose petals around with unskilled abandon.

The judge performed an inspiring and deeply moving ceremony that had even the most cynical of us trying to swallow the lumps in our throats. We got rid of the lumps with copious drafts of bubbly and spent the next several hours making new buddies and renewing old friendships. When the time came for the wedding party to leave, the whole gang of us drove them to the station. As we watched through tear-swollen lids, they boarded what seemed to be a coach-and-six. It was, of course, only the commuter train which carried the glowing couple and their friends back to Brooklyn. A mundane ending, you think?

It was glorious!