

Nina Simone's Rise to Stardom

(Continued from last week)

Nina Simone's family moved to Philadelphia to be near her during her studies at Julliard. After a year the fund was de- lity in Philadelphia, working as- pleted and she joined her fam- an accompanist for vocal stud- ents at the Arlene Smith studio and giving private piano lessons. With her earnings she studied with Vladimer Soko- loff, the Curtis Institute of Mu- sic's distinguished Master.

At th estudio most of th stud- ents were oriented toward pop music and Nina's gospel and classical musicianship took on an added dimension. Too, she developed a keen interest in jazz and began improvising clas- sical themes. Her musical ap- preciation knew no limits and she enjoyed listening with equal fervor to the singing of Kitty White, Louis Arstrong and the late Nat "King" Cole and the virtuoso playing of classical concert artists such as Myra Hess, Schweitzer and Brailow- sky.

The summer of 954 saw most of the studio's clientele depart for vacation and resulted in a seasonal shutdown of the studio and the stark reality of unem- ployment - facing Nina. She sought work as a pianist at the many hotels in the nearby re- ver, the only opening she came sort area of Atlantic City. How- upon was for a singer. Nina had never sung professionally. Her only experience had been as a child in church choirs and occasionally helping at the studio, but \$90.00 a week loom- ed like a life-saver and she took it. She changed her name to Nina, fear ful that her students' parents would take a dim view of her working in a night club and out of respect for her own parents who had returned to residence in Tryon.

The name derived from her childhood wen she had some- times been called "Nina," meaning little one. Simone was euphonic and just happened to sound well with it.

The summer went well. Au- diences were enthusiastic, no doubt awakening in her that indescribable thrill a perform- er feels when his work is ac- cepted and appreciated. A hard- core local following developed and a reputation as a fine jazz pianist and vocal stylist was gained. At summer's end she faced the dilemma of trying to carve a career in the entertain- ment world, or returning to the relative security of "her job" with the studio. Not fully con- fident, she returned temporari- ly to the studio. After a few months of musing and telling herself "maybe I can, maybe I can", she left the studio and started along the path of a car- eer that since those, first uncer- tain days has never seen a back- ward or faltering step.

For the next two years she worked in small clubs in and around Philadelphia, appeared on local TV shows and spent one summer with her own trio at the New Hope Playhouse Inn, Bucks County, Pa. During this time she made a demonstra- tion record and was signed by an independent jazz recording firm.

Recognition came—and grew and soon industry trade papers were hailing her as the music find of the year. Night clubs, all welcomed her as sure-fire theatres, concert auditoriums "box-office." She became, and remains, a favorite attraction on colleg campuses from coast

to coast.

Her meteoric rise was un- able to outdistance Cupid's ar- row and after a somewhat whirlwind courtship, she mar- ried Andy Stroud in Decem- ber, 1961. He had been a much- decorated police sergeant in

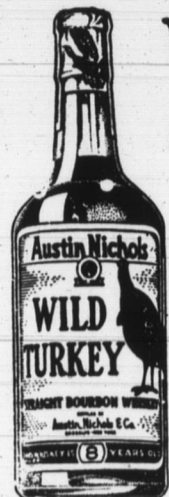
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PTICIPANTS IN AD- VANCEMENT SCHOOL—Pic- tured here are pupils from Orange County Schools who were participants in the North Carolina Advancement School

at Winston-Salem. From left to right (back row) are Turlleton Davis, a teacher from Central High School of Hillsborough who accompanied the group;

Benjamin D. Clark, Lacey Tin- nin and Donald Beasley. Left to right (front row): Clyde Payne, Roger Trayham and Cornelius Cathcart.



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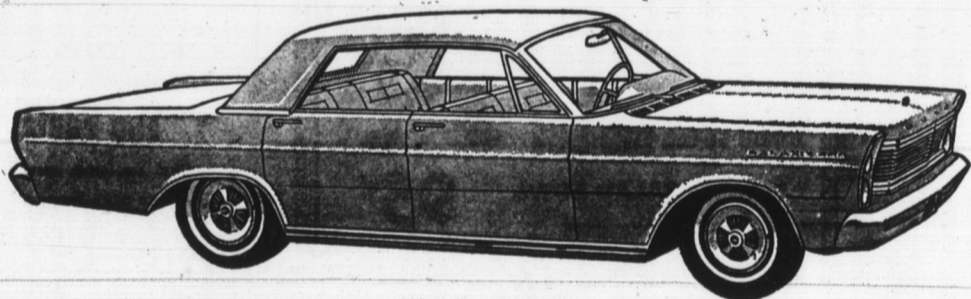


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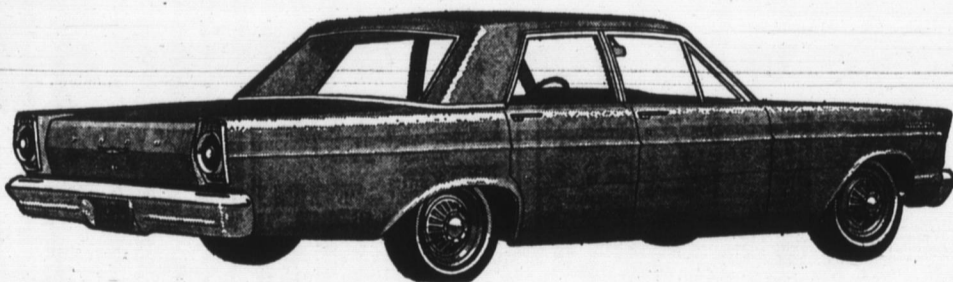
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