

# Life Begins At 62½

By George B. Russ

Emma Lou knew some one who knew how to get her daddy an apartment in the Bayborough Heights' Low Rental Government Housing Project.

Miss Madie eyed all of her sister-in-law's wheeling and dealing with mixed emotions. For the sake of her good friend, Ben Pratt, she had decided to go to his rescue. Her last visit to the dilapidated house where "Mister Ben" lived had brought tears to her eyes and a quick, definite change of mind — she could not go on living in the same town where he lived in squalor, misery and helplessness — therefore, she was going to his rescue. The only fly in the ointment was Emma Lou's blatant chicanery.

Mrs. Perkins had her sister-in-law packed, lock, stock, and barrel, so fast that her head was swoony for days. Speak of killing two birds with one stone, Emma Lou had hit the jack pot. She had not only found a nurse for her daddy, she had gotten rid of a pesky roomer. Before seeing to the comfort of her father, she hired a moving van and loaded all of Miss Madie's worldly

goods, including the violin case containing her valuables, loaded on the stuff on the van and had it delivered to the Bayborough address. She was too exhausted from the ordeal of packing and helping the movers that she was unable to follow the van and find out how her father was doing.

Miss Madie was on hand to receive both: the emaciated body of "Mister Ben" and her household furnishings. In the light of day, both, ryan and furniture wore the aspects of deterioration. Only "Mister Ben's" eyes were as bright as red-hot coals and restless from the impact of all the excitement crowded suddenly into a single day.

Madie Perkins was aware of only one thing: the prayer she had prayed, the pleas to God to let the mantle of Emma Lou's misery fall upon stronger shoulders. She did not question God's selection, however, she did question her own sanity. Then, armed herself with mop, broom, dust cloths, detergents and Lysol Spray and began setting her house in order.

In all probability, "Mister Ben" would never be a strong,



**FAREWELL PARTY**  
John Richardson, Jr. (Center), Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, welcomes the 5th Dimension at a farewell reception in their honor held in the diplomatic reception rooms at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. The singers (Left to Right) are Marillynn McCoo, Billy Davis, Jr., Florence Rue Gordon, Lamonte McLemore and Ron Townson. Mrs. Townson is center, talking with the Assistant Secretary.

well man in this world, but he would be clean and well-fed until the angel of death came to carry him off to his heavenly home.

The apartment was clean and fragrant with air-freshener but the rooms were sticky hot. So, she had a window-fan installed in "Mister Ben's" room and the bill was mailed to Mrs. Emma Lou Perkins.

The cool breeze worked wonders for "Mister Ben"; he was no longer listless and mousy quite, he babbled about everything: the sunlight in his room, the pictures on the wall, and at times, he would hold his hands out toward the cool breeze filtering through the fan in the window. He didn't eat much, however, he smacked his lips with delight when she fed him and wiped his flabby lips; and, his beady, black eyes followed her wherever she went while she was in his room cleaning, dusting or putting away his freshly laundered clothes.

Between nine and ten o'clock every morning was bath taking time; Miss Madie gave him a bath and a rub-down with Witch Hazel. At first "Mister Ben" objected strenuously to her giving him a bath but, as time passed, he was at his jolliest when she patted and rolled him about. He would jabber and kiss her cheeks or nibble her earlobes as she held him in her arms. She could have done very well without his juicy kisses but she didn't shoo him away; "better a half-a-loaf than none

at all." She told herself. On the other hand, she wouldn't mind giving a pretty price for a whole loaf before the roll was called up yonder and she'd have to de-part these mundane shores. Truly enough, she was no spring chicken but she could shake a leg with the best of 'em. Telling folks that "men weren't anything but breath and breeches" was a crutch she didn't relish. A little smooching now and then never hurt a ny one, but she, honest to God, wouldn't go as far as the end of her nose seeking male companionship.

After "Mister Ben's" morning feeding, Miss Madie fluffed his pillow, gave him his pink pill, opened the blinds so the sun could stream in; then, she would tell him aht she was going for a walk. He didn't like the idea of her leaving him, but her better judgment told her that she had better get outside and let the pre-noon day breeze and sunshine get the kinks out of her bones and flesh — and see something besides "Mister Benn" — or she'd start climbing the walls. Being kind to someone was one thing and staying cooped up inside the house around the clock was another. A body could very easily come down with a case of the willies, therefore, she made it a point to get into something cook, comb her hair, daub on smidgen of perfume. She would not have accepted "Mister Benn" as a gift but she always left him with something to remember

## 5th Dimension Tours Europe Under U. S. Cultural Program

WASHINGTON — The 5th Dimension, one of the leading contemporary vocal groups in the country, begins a one-month tour of Turkey and three East European countries this month as part of the U.S. Department of State's cultural presentations program.

The five-member group will perform in nine cities, beginning with concerts in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey, April 5-10. They will also perform in Bucharest and Ploesti, Romania (April 11-16); Warsaw and Katowice, Poland (April 17-23); and Ostrava, Bratislava and Prague, Czechoslovakia (April 26-29).

For Czechoslovakia, this will be the first official U.S. cultural presentation since 1968; and the 5th Dimension's visit to Turkey will be linked with U.S. participation in the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Republic of Turkey.

For the group's European tour, the singers have waived their salaries and domestic engagements and will make the tour as a national public service.

On learning of the 5th Dimension's contribution of time and talent to the Department's cultural presentations program, Secretary of State William P. Rogers expresses his personal pleasure and thanks and said

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## JODY CARR COMMENTS

from the Car Care Council  
"Booster Cable Baby?"

It was dingy garret with cobwebs hanging from a player piano. The floor was scattered with crumpled pieces of paper.

"You're my last resort, Mrs. Carr," said Bert Hatrack, aspiring songsmith. "I thought I had the answer; it was merely a matter of lyrics."

"What answer?" I asked.

"Let me explain. I'm a very specialized kind of songwriter. I have a hang-up on disabled cars. It's all I write about. . . . I got the fetish while working on a tow truck after I dropped out of music school.

"It really got to me, rescuing so many people who'd thought emergency road service was a good substitute for preventive maintenance. I found myself putting words to the old familiar song, so to speak.

"An agent heard my Booster Cable Baby and offered to make me famous. When he couldn't hit it with that one, he tried I've Got Two Flat Tires. One On The Left Front And One In The Trunk Blues. A real winner, but no sale."

"How could that one miss?" I gasped. "What about your latest effort?"

"This one's gotta be it. I call it The Fight Song For The Irate Motorist Who's Fed Up

With Being Stuck In Traffic Behind A Stalled Car."

"An interesting title. Let's hear it," I urged somewhat weakly.

While he pumped the pedals, I noticed that he slipped on a roll marked Yellow Rose Of Texas. The piano tinkled as he sang.

"It's those hang-up cars that vex us. They're the highways' endless blight. From the shore of Maine to Texas Through the chilly winter night. Let's unite to keep 'em moving. Keep the traffic flowing free. For folks like you and I."

"Now let me play my Would You Believe I Haven't Had My Car Tuned In 40,000 Miles Samba."

And so it went. His words were inspired, but his melodies seemed to lack originality. This could have been part of his problem.

I suggested that he not call me. I would call him. Somehow I think there must be a place in our society for dedicated souls like Bert Hatrack. The problem is finding it.



## Paneling Converts a Kitchen Into an Oasis Of Warmth—With Easy-to-Clean Efficiency



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**NEW YORK (ED)**—Homemakers who love the long life and low maintenance of paneling, but are tired of the wood look of the traditional type, are in for a pleasant surprise. Paneling has gone fashionable.

The latest thing is solid-color panels in those decorator-styled House & Garden hues—the first time this authoritative palette has been used in the paneling field. The Bright-On panels come in twelve colors—Lettuce, Parrot Green, Pineapple, Chrome Yellow, Bittersweet, Real Red, Blue Sky, Teal, Space Blue Pongee, Oyster White, Bisque—making it easy to do a professional job of color-coordinating.

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