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It was our pleasure recently to spend a couple of hours with Kay Kyser. We talked of many things, and dwelled at length on the old days when he was radio's top attraction as the clowning professor of the "College of Musical Knowledge."

Kay was easily the most colorful band leader of his era, and a great credit to the entertainment world. Because show business gets a black eye periodically from shenanigans like the latest Liz Taylor affair, it is well to remember that some of the most respectable people you'll ever meet are in the entertainment field.

Birds of a feather flock together, which no doubt explains why Kay can speak well of the profession he retired from at the height of his career. "Everybody was kind to me," he told us, "not just after I became famous but when I was an unknown starting out."

Another Tar Heel maestro—Wilson's Jan Garber—gave the Rocky Mount native a helping hand when he was first catching on in Chicago, and Guy Lombardo went out of his way to publicize Kay and his band in New York. They, and other big names in the business, gave him the sort of build-up that no press agent could possibly have achieved.

It was that way also in Hollywood. "I didn't know the first thing about making a motion picture," he says, "and was certainly no actor. However, when I was cast in a movie with top-ranking stars like Mae Robeson and Adolph Menjou, they gave me every advantage in the scenes I played with them. They could have easily stolen every scene from a novice such as I was, but instead they saw to it that I got all of the breaks."

Thousands of New Bernians who found Kay's weekly quiz shows on radio delightful have doubtlessly wondered why he chose to retire when he had the nation's listeners in the palm of his hand. The answer gives one an accurate glimpse into the heart of a very sincere person, who feels genuine love and compassion for his fellow man.

"I changed my line of thinking during World War II," he told us, "when I took the band on tour to play for service men outside the United States. I was deeply impressed with the manner in which they were serving their country, and when I got back home I found that I no longer had any desire to clown around."

Kay would have retired then, but understandably his sponsors wanted him to remain on the air until his contract ran out. Because he is above all a very fair minded person, he lived up to his obligations in this respect, but for him the zest and joy had vanished forever.

Turning his back on continuing fame and no small amount of money, he left show business. There was no bitterness. Just as fellow entertainers had recognized him as genuine at the outset of his career, and a man of high ideals, they admired him for his sincerity in bowing out of show business when his heart was no longer in it.

Kay is a deeply religious man, and he works tirelessly as a lay reader for the Christian Science faith. The morning we visited him there was an open Bible on his desk, and he was reading it, as we entered the door. Kyser is no prude, looking down his nose at other folks. He lives his religion as a personal, day-to-day experience, and it is our firm conviction that he has found the peace of mind and spirit he sought when he left the glamorous world of entertainment.

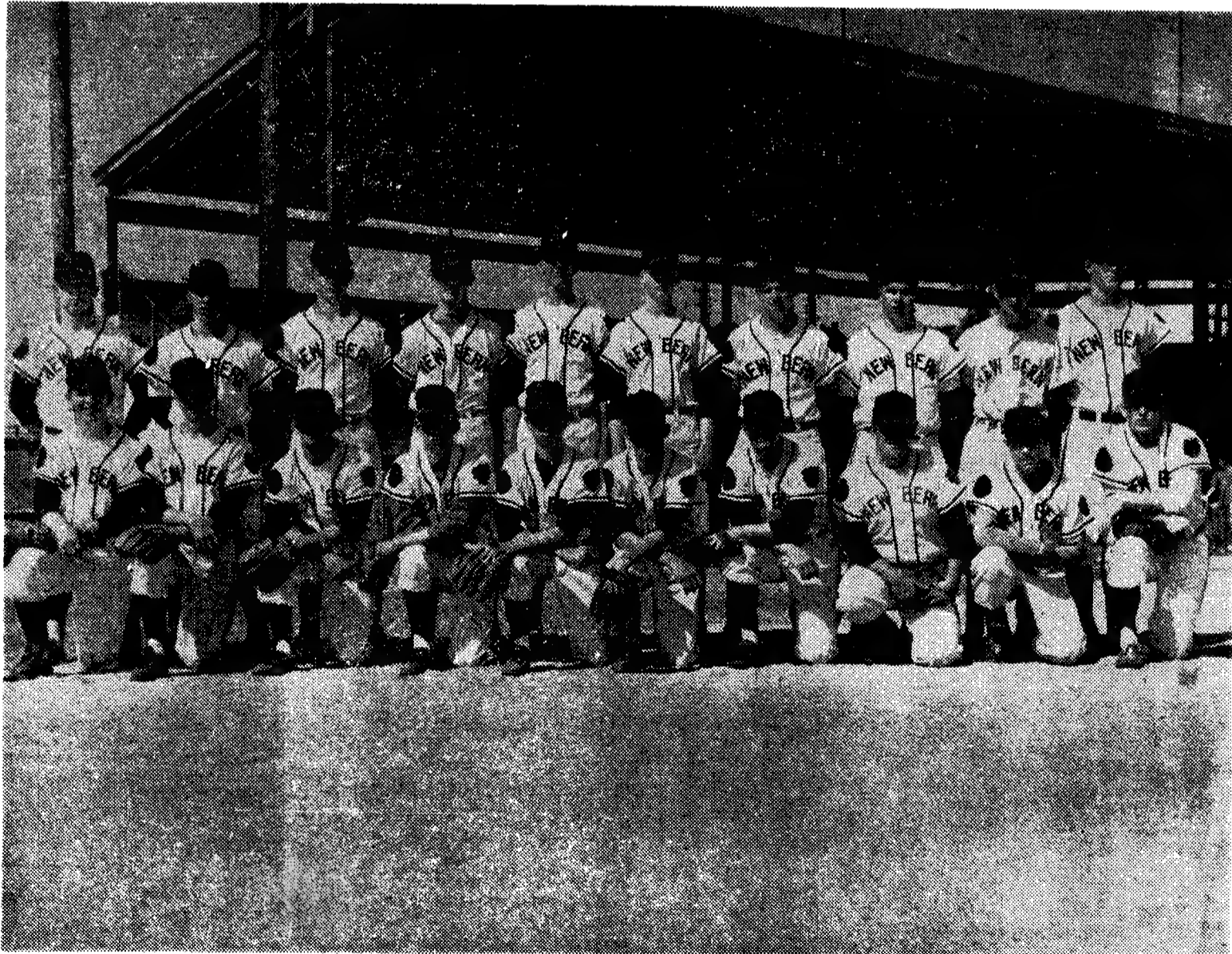
Kay and his wife, the former Georgia Carroll, live with their daughters in Chapel Hill, where he

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UP A LAZY RIVER—Mitch Miller's musical reminder that we should "be kind to our web-footed friends" is heartily endorsed by these three happy paddlers along the shores of the picturesque Trent. John Baxter, Jr., who wields a

camera almost as expertly as his Dad, caught the stream's early spring serenity with this scene. Truly, we do live in the land of enchanting waters.



THEY'RE HARD TO TAME—New Bern High school's scrappy Bears, coached by Jete Taylor, are bringing diamond glory to our town this season. You'll have to delve pretty far into sports history to find as formidable a group of

Bruins. Despite injuries to key players, the local ball club has racked up an impressive record against Northeastern Conference foes and outside competition.—Photo by John R. Baxter, Sr.