

## The NEW BERN

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It would please us immensely to know that there's room among heaven's harpists for a little old lady who plays the banjo. If there is such an opening, Miss Minnie has got it made.

The limitations of earthly death being what they are, she couldn't carry her battered, five-stringed instrument with her last weekend when she exchanged her happy abode at the Craven County Home for a mansion in the sky. Perhaps a newer and brighter banjo awaited her there.

A tiny, wisp of a woman with hair as white as snow and a laugh gayer and younger than springtime, she played and sang and danced for us when first we met. The last time we were together, during the Christmas holidays, she played and sang the same merry tunes.

Even more recently, after a trip to the hospital, she grabbed her banjo as soon as she arrived back at the Home and performed for the other folks who live there. In her own spritely way, Miss Minnie—with one foot in the grave—was living up to the tradition that the show must go on.

Her wants were few in the twilight years. The fact that she possessed little of this world's goods failed to disturb her. Even so basic a necessity for survival as food was of small concern to her.

Never, in all our born days, have we known anyone with a keener sense of humor. A true clown at heart, she would cut capers at the drop of a hat, and if no one else volunteered she would drop the hat herself.

What a card she must have been in her earlier years, when she played for square dances and took time out to whirl through a few sets before the evening was over. Surely, she must have been the life of the party.

For that matter, things were never dull at the County Home as long as Miss Minnie was around. She wasn't bigger than a minute, and in her last days tipped the scales at just 65 pounds, but her laughter was as robust as a blacksmith's chest.

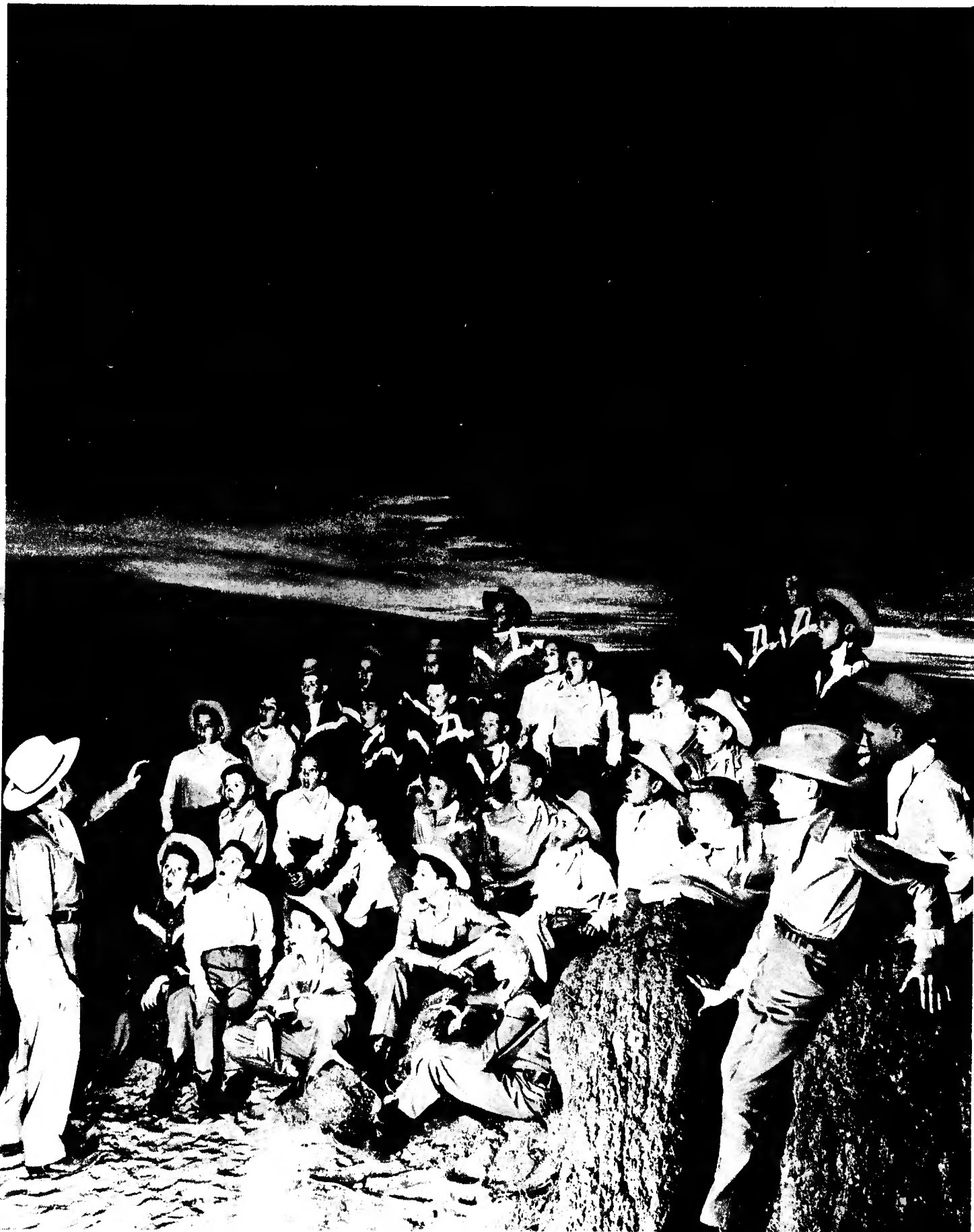
She had no other gift to bestow upon those around her, but what present could be more precious than laughter and congeniality for those who are seldom remembered by an outside world? Miss Minnie was a tonic during the long and lonely hours.

More than she ever realized, her life was a blessing to others. Certainly this editor won't soon forget the fun he had kidding with her. We might add that Miss Minnie could hold her own when it came to wisecracks. She could take it, and she could dish it out.

It always seemed to us that her constant cheerfulness was completely effortless. No doubt, Miss Minnie would have worked at seeing the bright side of everything had it been necessary. We doubt that she experienced, at any time, a need for such prodding of her spirits.

For her there were no age barriers. On the occasions that we had a part in arranging for teenagers to visit the Home at Christmas, Miss Minnie and the youngsters got along gloriously together. She played

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*From the Land of Cactus and Canyons*

FROM SUNNY ARIZONA—"As beguiling a company of lads as ever rode out of the West to hold an audience joyously captive in a stellar lariat of song." That is the Chicago Daily Tribune's glowing review summing up the Tucson Boys Chorus, when it performed in the Windy City. Wednesday night, at the New Bern High School Auditorium, the youngsters — under the guidance of their director, Eduardo Caso — will be presented as the final Community Concert of the current season. Hailed as "The Most Entertaining Chorus On Four Continents" the youthful vocalists from America's picturesque Southwest have three times been guest stars on the Ed Sullivan TV Show, were starred on a George Gobel Christmas TV program, have sung on the General Motors program, Wide, Wide World, and appeared in motion pictures. In the summer of 1955 they toured Europe and were a sensation everywhere they went. In May 1960 they played to sell-out crowds in Australia. As stars of the 33rd Chicagoland Music Festi-

val at Soldiers Field in the summer of 1962, they sang before a crowd of 60,000 music lovers and received a mighty ovation. The Chorus brings a program of classics, carols, folk songs and westerns. Their own original arrangements of songs of the Great Southwest, with coyote calls and the cries of ranging calves, their rope twirling, and their western square dance give their performance a unique American flavor, transforming it into a thrilling round-up of music and fun for everybody. The youngsters get rave notices everywhere they go. One picked at random from a South Dakota paper says, "In the near quarter of a century that the Northern Hills Concert Association has been in existence, never has one program brought such an enthusiastic response from so many people." No doubt about it, New Bern's Community Concert Association made a happy selection when it engaged the Tucson Boys Chorus for the year's grand finale.