

Features and Reviews



A Portfolio



—Pauline Pratt, Pauline Pratt—

Graduation Brings Surprises, Sadness to MHC

Before the final events of PAULINE PRATT, PAULINE PRATT are brought to a close, a backward glance over the year's events seems appropriate. Our poignant drama has traced the metamorphosis of one Stella Boredeaux, star student and social misfit at Magnolia Hill College. Not having experienced the easiest of upbringings, our demented but undaunted heroine has tried throughout to overcome her sullied roots. From a childhood of cloaked innocence to a turbulent blossoming into womanhood, Stella's story has run the gamut of trauma and tribulation: our first episode found a grief-stricken Stella swept away from home and hearth at Magnolia Hill by Russian spies, mistaking her for the deceased Ivan B. Masanov, only to escape her Hefty-bag captivity via a fateful waterbed spill in episode two. Groping aimlessly through the darkened streets of Miami, Stella inadvertently found her avenue home — an open manhole cover on 42nd street and subsequent sewers. The faint smell of magnolia blossoms brought her back into what she thought were the welcoming arms of her beloved Magnolia Hillians, only to discover yet another tragedy in her young life: thus, episode three found our heroine thrust into the midst of a bathroom court battle with her reputation at stake. When all seemed lost, Stella, in an act of self-preservation, decided to reveal dark secrets, long hidden from the members of Magnolia Hill. Stella's testimony revealed Pauline Pratt's alleged iniquity. With episode number five, tragedy took a backseat to romance in Stella's life, but not before her efforts at preserving her respectability as a woman sent her to Sisters of Solomon General Hospital, (after leaping from Mike Machonelli's speeding auto on their first date). At Sisters', Mike realizes his "love, true love" for Stella and proffers a bedside proposal of marriage on bended knee. The Yuletide season found Stella and Mike at the altar, ready to take their nuptial vows when a mysterious figure interrupted the ceremony. Shocking revelations occurred: the mysterious figure, Harold Finkk, disclosed to all the intimate relationship which he had had with Pauline Grunch (Pratt) years earlier, the end result having been Stella. These revelations brought on not only the untimely demise of P. Dexter Pratt, but sent Stella into a life of seclusion as a roller skating waitress at New Rurubomba's finest drive-in. But installment nine found Magnolia Hill, minus a de-

mented Stella, embroiled in yet another turmoil — the premeditated burning of one of the halls of academia and long-loved campus landmark. Stella's seemingly placid life was threatened with controversy again when Pauline Pratt pieced together unrelated facts to point an accusing finger at Stella as the arsonist.

Our Final Episode:

In the third chaise lounge beneath the Claude (Class of '54) Bogroot Memorial Magnolia Cluster, two alumni sip their tulip juleps while discussing Magnolia memorabilia. Each clutch tightly a copy of the latest Alumni Quarterly, whose cover graphically depicts the tragic loss of the beloved Administration Building, which only recently was consumed by fire. Tears stain their seer-sucker leisure suits and floral print shirts, and even dare to wilt the delicate petals of their traditional mums, (which they purchased from school-spirited yet destitute members of Phi Phi Phi sorority). All reflection upon the past is halted, however, when the hypnotic notes of the Kimball 450 strike the first chords of *Pomp and Circumstance*. These two rush to take their seats before the graduation procession begins. Old and familiar faces to Magnolia Hill fill the circus tent which serves as a make-shift administration building to view the spectaculars of a Magnolia Hill graduation: recently-widowed local adultress Pauline Pratt nervously fondles a near-by cream puff; Flora Lou Belle does a fast pin-curl job on her neighbors coiffure; an ever-crazed Barney still clutches a treasured photo-cube containing a compact portfolio of Stella's early life; Sister Anna Maria Smith dusts off her 9 by 12 glossy of Julie (Sound of Music) Andrews which is seated beside her; ever-vocational Sissy, makes final steps to secure the graduation platform; meanwhile on the stage, Felicia Quagmirst and ensemble (two coastal Namibian pygmies) rehearse the latest hit tune in their repertoire, "Come to Me with Those Diploma Blues", Opus No. 14, by Hershel Josten. As the graduates begin to file into the circus arena, all wonder whether star student Stella Boredeaux will be among those faithful fifteen graduates.

Stage Manager and interim president, Bobby Trotter flits about, shouting last-minute instructions to the nervous but serene graduates: "Straighten your tassel, big boy. And, you, honey, level your mortar board." From the length of the tent, Bobby yells to an anticipatory Felicia Quagmurst and company:

"Let 'er rip, Flecie and pygs." As Felicia begins, a placid but queezy Bobby rushes discreetly down the center aisle, trying desperately to reach the platform before the pygmies strike their final refrain. All heads rivet to catch a glimpse of the graduates, lest they miss one of their favorites among the throng of fifteen. While all "enjoy" Felicia's last recitative, two familiar figures, Horace and Henry Hinkle, bring with them a shroud of gloom to the proceedings. Appropriately, Felicia slides into a minor key. The two security cadets unobtrusively make their way onto the stage and to Bobby's side. Bobby, annoyed at this personal affront, gasps: "Horace. Henry. How could you!" Grasping Bobby by the lapels, they whisper, in unison, "We've just heard over our C.B.'s that a nuclear holocaust is imminent. We've got to get everyone to the nearest fallout shelter". Always calm, cool, and collected at times of stress, a pallid Bobby shrieks: "A nuclear hellocaust is imminent. Let's get the hole out of here!!" Simultaneously, Bobby cues Felicia to begin "Nearer My God to Thee" to calm the exiting throngs. As Sissy hurtles toward the stage, Bobby leaps astride her shoulders: "On Sweets. To the fallout shelter. Away!" Later that Evening . . .

We find the residents of Magnolia Hill, gathered in the expansive but quaint, early Rococo fallout shelter beneath Flora Lou's Beauty Salon. With spirits broken by the seemingly inevitable end, the members are gathered in intimate before-bedtime share groups. Attention focuses on one especially distraught group. Tears and sobs fill the tainted air amidst numerous confessionals. All want to clear their sullied consciences before disaster pays a visit: ". . . and Bertha, it breaks my heart to tell you this but, when your hair turned pink last summer, it was because I was in the back room giving Bobby a backcomb, and I left you in the peroxide too long." Flora Lou confesses. "Oh, Flora Lou. That's not half as bad as what I've done. You see, 'Search for Yesterday' went off the air five years ago, and I've been acting as if it were still on the air. Oh shame, oh agony. I've lied, lied, lied." Bertha responds. Sissy, getting Flora Lou in a head-pin, demands: "What the hell do you mean giving my Bobby a backcomb? You little hair-dressing hussy." But before Sissy can break Flora Lou's neck, Bobby, on bended knee, confesses: "Sweets, she did my duck tail, too.

I just couldn't help myself. It was all for you."

Sister Anna Maria Smith, caressing the sacred 9 by 12 glossy of Julie Andrews mumbles, ". . . oh, and when I dropped that bedpan I was so tee-teed off that I spat upon the sacred Julie." Felicia knowingly comforts her sobbing Sister.

Pauline, overcome by all the blatant honesty, astounds the others by chiming in with her own admissions of past guilt: "Enough, enough. I've got to speak. I've got to tell what's on my mind and troubled heart." All share-group members turn to face a disgruntled Pauline Grunch Pratt. (When P. G. Pratt speaks, everybody listens.) "I was the insane arsonist who, with lighted safety match, set fire to those sacred timbers of academia. Desperate to shift suspicion from myself, I planted those S.B.-emblazoned roller skates behind the clump of Colorado spruces so as to implicate my illegitimate daughter Stella."

As all listeners hang on every condemning detail, Barney clutches his photo cube even closer, delighted by Pauline's confession. Talking into the cube, Barney whispers: "We've got her now Stella. Come on down."

As Pauline sobs uncontrollably, the door at the head of the stairs opens. All eyes turn in horror toward the door, expecting the worst. In the doorway stands a jubilant, self-assured Stella Boredeaux, star student but social misfit at Magnolia Hill College. At this poignant moment "father" and daughter embrace. "I knew we could do it, Papa. The old walkie-talkie in the photo cube trick always works." Barney, overcome by the emotion-filled reunion sobs on Stella's shoulder. A happy ending is finally in sight.

Epilogue

Thus, Stella has proven her innocence in a well-conceived scheme to expose a devious Pauline Pratt. It was she, along with Barney, who engineered the entire nuclear holocaust incident by propagating the false rumor of doom and destruction over the C.B., which she knew would inevitably lead to Pauline's confession of guilt. Stella, therefore, has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt her final maturity as a woman and communications expert. Through the long years, she has cleansed her sullied roots, as well as those of other residents of Magnolia Hill.

And so as the graceful magnolias sway in the breeze, we leave the residents of Magnolia Hill.