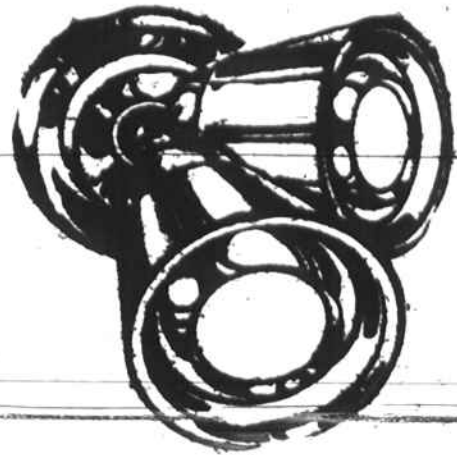


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Chronicle



Wide World of

"THE FUN CAPITOL OF

GLADYS KNIGHT HAS WARM MEMORIES OF FILMING "PIPE DREAMS" IN ALASKA

The temperature was so low, the thermometer had run out of numbers. The actress was pregnant. And she was working from 5:30 AM until late at night.

But, according to Gladys Knight, filming "PIPE DREAMS" in Alaska was the most "exhilarating and wonderful experience of my career." The Avco-Embassy release, a romantic adventure set against the construction of the Alaska pipeline, opens **Now** at the **Winston Theatre**.

Gladys portrays Maria Wilson, a determined young woman who follows her husband to the pipeline's northern outpost in a last ditch attempt to save their marriage. The role of her husband — a vagabond "chopper" pilot — is played by Barry Hankerson, who happens to be Gladys' spouse in real life, as well as the picture's Executive Producer.

"That's one of the reasons I felt so 'warm' about Alaska, even when the snow was drifting five feet and the thermometer dropped to twenty below," she pointed out. "As hard as we worked, it was one of the most idyllic times of our marriage. We were totally united...working together...toward the same goal. To make a movie we'd be proud of."

"I remember getting up at 5:30 AM, putting on a goose down parka and walking toward the make-up trailer, where I would also have breakfast. I could hear the snow crunching underfoot as I breathed in the most incredibly clean air anywhere in the world."

"It was like being in a frozen

paradise."

Adding another dimension to the experience was a medical report the Hankersons received shortly before flying to Alaska. Gladys was in the first months of pregnancy. Early this summer, she gave birth to a son, Shanga-Ali, named after the couple's close friend, heavyweight champion Muhammed Ali.

"PIPE DREAMS" is Gladys' first motion picture appearance, although the acclaimed songstress cut the sound track of the James Earl Jones-Diahann Carroll hit, "Claudine."

"People seem surprised when a singer carries off a dramatic role," she said. "Yet it happens all the time...look at Frank Sinatra and Diana Ross and David Bowie. I think it's because a good singer is an actor (or actress) to begin with. When I'm on stage, I imagine that I'm the person the song was written about. Then I share my emotions — sadness, happiness, loneliness, love — with the audience."

In choosing a vehicle for Gladys, she and her husband waded through more than 300 scripts. Some advisers wanted her to play a flamboyant role. "They thought I should come on strong as a female 'Shaft' or a prostitute with a heart of gold," she recalled.

But she and Barry preferred a character nearer her own personality.

"As Maria, Gladys is warm sympathetic, wonderfully good-humored and able to endure all kinds of hardship without com-



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Songstress Gladys Knight makes her motion picture debut in "Pipe Dreams," an Avco Embassy release opening **Now** at the **Winston Theatre**. The romantic adventure set against the building of the Alaska oil pipeline co-stars Barry Hankerson.

plaining," said Barry. "Which is the way she really is. To irritate her, you really have to go out of the way. But when you do get underneath her skin, watch out!"

Gladys laughed. "That's what made it so easy to play the scene where I walk in on Barry and he's got another woman in his trailer," she noted. "I reacted exactly as I would in real life."

"On the other hand, there's a scene which was very difficult for me. In the story, I share an apartment with Loretta (Sherry Bain), a \$100 a night call girl who's the personal 'merchandise' of a local politico. When he refuses to let her have their child, she commits suicide and I find the body."



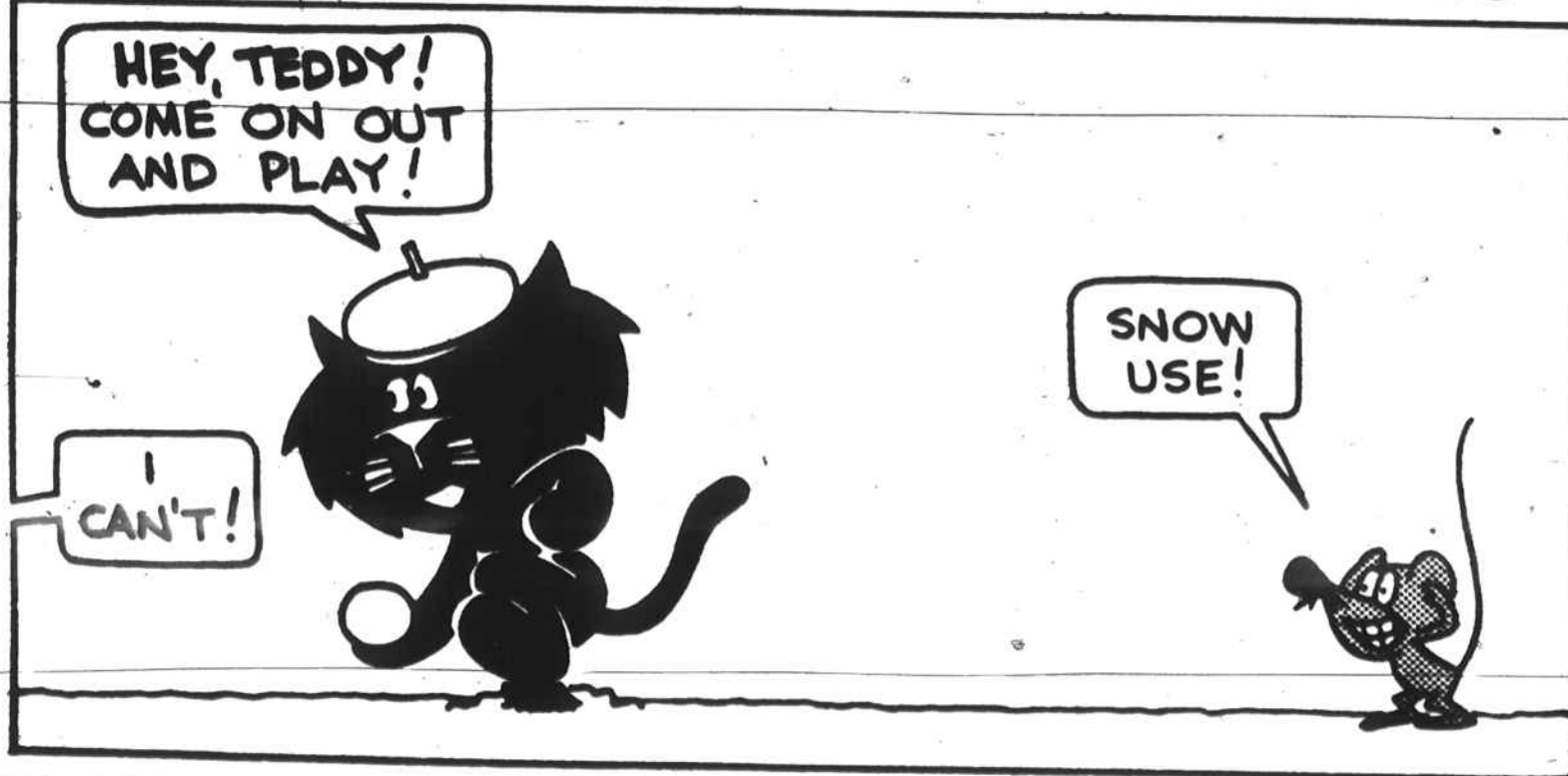
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