

Zoel Hargraves

A Love Story That Involves Many

By Jeri Harvey
Post Staff Writer



ZOEL HARGRAVES
...An incredible personality

being surrounded and supported by the love that was being directed our way."

Zoel continued, "I'd made up my mind before I left home that if necessary, the leg could go, but knowing so many people cared seemed to make it easier." The operation went well, everyone marveled at his positive attitude and stamina, and things were looking good. Then the day before he was to leave the hospital, Zoel fell, seriously damaging the wound and resulting in an additional 19 days in the hospital.

The same positive attitude prevailed during this set-back and finally, one day, after practicing in the privacy of his room, Zoel was ready to "solo" down the hall on his crutches. Mrs. Hargrave shaved him carefully, helped him into pajamas and robe and opened the door for him. The hallway was full of patients and visitors enjoying a post-dinner hour and Zoel, conscious that all eyes would be on him, was determined to put on a good show. Proudly he moved through the door and just as he emerged into full view, his pajama pants fell down around his ankles. For a second there was a stunned silence, then someone yelled, "Streaker," and the whole place exploded in laughter, led by - you guessed it - Zoel.

"After a retreat into my room to re-group and re-rag, I went back out and did my number while they all applauded," Zoel laughed. Dubbed The Mailman "because of the stacks of mail he received every day Zoel and Mrs. Hargrave shared his cards and gifts and their strength with other patients and family members, some of whom were alone and friendless, often without even faith to sustain them. "It was like one big family," Mrs. Hargrave said, "We were all in the same situation and we supported each other and attempted to share our faith."

Their arrival back in the Queen City was made very special through the efforts of Clyde Brown - friend and Omega brother - who led a throng of well-wishers who greeted them at the airport with hugs, kisses, tears and a sign that said "Welcome Home Zoel." And the kindnesses continue. He must go to a clinic twice a day to have his dressings changed and the Omegas have taken this as their personal project. Each morning and afternoon two of them drive Zoel and Mrs. Hargrave to and from the clinic. While I interviewed him Saturday, Sterling Woodard and Bob

could do. Later, when this phase of treatment is over and the chemo-therapy begins, the Men's Council of First United Presbyterian Church, where the Hargraves belong, will take over the transportation chores.

The Quettes and The Orbits Social Club have done many things to relieve Mrs. Hargrave of day to day chores so she could devote more time to the care of Zoel. "Former co-workers, neighbors, church members, everyone has been just tremendous," she said.

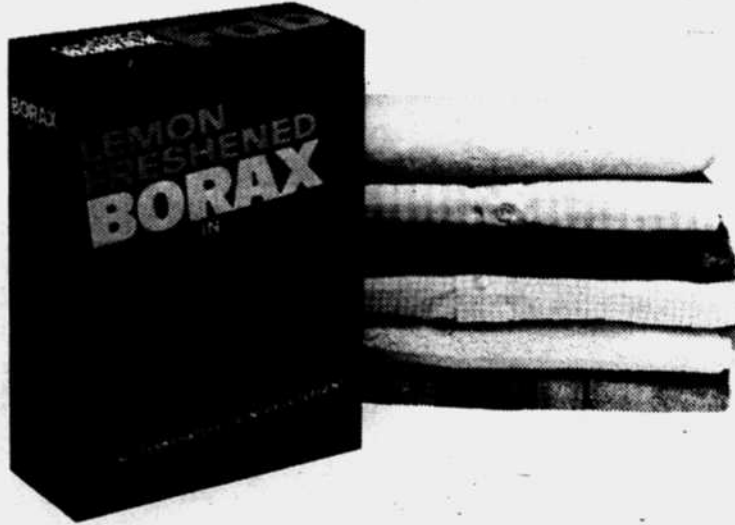
The future looks good," Zoel declared. "We moved our retirement up a little and before long we'll start to do some of those things we planned. As soon as possible I'm taking this lady here," and he pointed to his smiling wife, "and we're going to find us a Shangri-la somewhere and there won't be no calling home or mess like that and we're going to have ourselves one heck of a second honeymoon."

When the interview was over and I took reluctant leave of these two people, I considered the reasons why they are so well loved. It's because they are "real." There is no pretense, no vanity, no superficiality - just two really nice people.

Carter, who is coordinator of this effort, arrived to bring the following week's schedule and see if there was anything they

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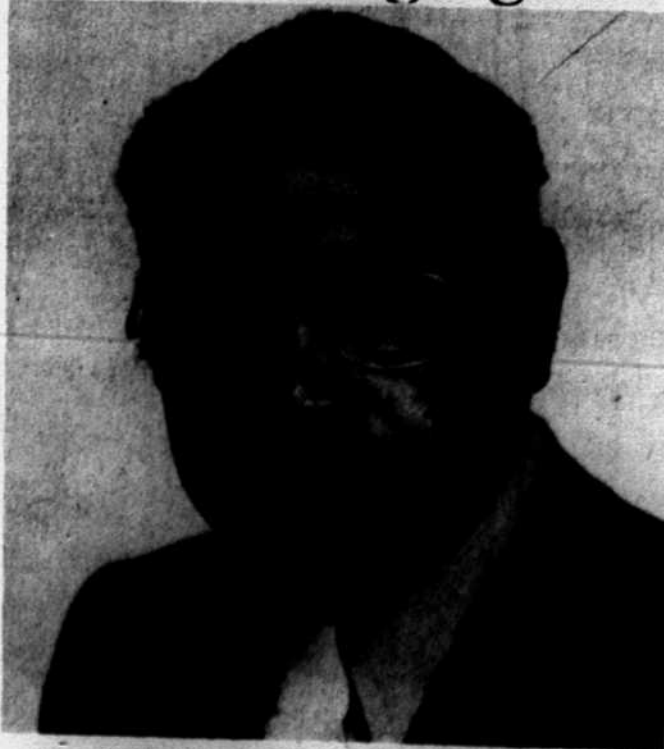
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