

modern screen

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...HAPPILY EVER AFTER?



Friends Fear Their Tempestuous Courtship May Be Just a Taste of What's in Store for Ava and Frankie in Marriage.

■ Back in 1936 when Frank Sinatra was a riveter's assistant in the Jersey shipyards, almost crippling himself daily by hauling heavy loads of tools, one of his co-workers predicted his subsequent success.

"That skinny little kid," he remarked, "is going to be a big man some day. He's got the drive and will-power of a tractor. He knows what he wants, and he's going to get it."

It's taken Frank almost two years, \$50,000 in expenses, \$20,000 in gifts, dozens of legal conferences, and loads of aggravation. But at long last he's come close to achieving his heart's desire—Ava Lavinia Gardner.

There have been great love affairs in Hollywood before, but none have ever been as tempestuous as this one, or more thoroughly reported.

Towards the end of September, when Frank burst into Ava's room at the Desert Inn in Las Vegas and ecstatically announced, "It's almost set. I think Nancy's going to sign the papers!" Ava breathed a long sigh of relief. Two years of turbulence and heartache, of risking career and reputation, of mad dashes across the country were finally to be resolved in marriage.

In Los Angeles, Nancy's lawyer had announced, "We have come to an agreement, and Mrs. Sinatra will probably (Continued on page 96)



happily ever after?

(Continued from page 27) file for divorce in California." Under California law, the lawyer explained, Frankie wouldn't be free to marry Ava for one year. But under Nevada law, Frank could file his own divorce suit and marry Ava immediately.

Everyone expected Ava to become Mrs. Frank Sinatra by September 24th. Even Ava Gardner!

THEN the bomb was dropped, dropped the very next day when Nancy Sinatra's attachment suit in the California Superior Court was made public.

Nancy had slapped a lien on a business building Frank owns in Beverly Hills in an attempt to recover some unpaid alimony.

Nancy revealed that under a property settlement signed when the couple separated, she was to receive one-third of Frank's gross income up to \$150,000 yearly and 10% of his income above that figure. She told the court that in the first six months of 1951, Frank had earned a total of \$328,050. This, she pointed out, entitled her to \$67,805 for the support of herself and her three children. Frank, however, had only sent her \$27,000. According to the settlement, she was entitled to an additional, \$40,805.

Nancy made it clear that she wanted the back alimony before she would sue for a divorce in California, thus clearing the way for him to obtain a Nevada divorce and marry Ava.

When Ava got this latest information in Nevada, she and her sister packed their bags and headed back to Los Angeles. A few days later, it was announced that Ava would appear with Bob Hope on his opening radio program.

At this very moment, it is entirely possible that Ava and Frank are honeymooning in New York where Frank is hard at work on his new TV show. Obstacles are something Sinatra specializes in overcoming.

There are many skeptics who insist that a marriage between Ava and Frank cannot possibly last. They point out the very significant fact of opposing backgrounds.

Ava is a girl with simple tastes. She likes blue jeans and shirts, no makeup, lots of children, strong family ties.

Frank is a city boy who goes in for natty clothes, hectic night life, strange acquaintances.

A Hollywood sage who predicted that the Elizabeth Taylor-Nicky Hilton marriage would last all of a year and no more, says, "There is no doubt that Ava and Frank are very much in love, but marriage, as both of these intelligent people well know, consists of more than love. Will Frank turn out to be a better husband than Mickey Rooney or Artie Shaw? Will Ava have more luck with him than Nancy had?

"Ava has what it takes to keep Frank in line right now while their ardor is intense, but how about next year?"



happily ever after?

"Sinatra is one of the most charming men I've ever met. He can turn on the charm at will. When he wants you to like him, you just have to. He has a very winning personality.

"Frank had a pretty unhappy youth. He's tried to compensate for it ever since. During his separations from Nancy, he went overboard for Lana Turner, Judy Garland, and many others.

"Does Ava have enough on the ball to keep him occupied physically, mentally, and socially? Ava isn't a very social creature, you know. She's too smart for that. Hollywood parties give her a swift pain. She doesn't want to be bothered. Frank has to keep on the move, otherwise he isn't happy.

"Statistics show that girls who are married for the third time by the time they're 30, usually wind up with a fourth or fifth husband. I wish Frank and Ava every happiness, but if they marry, I'm convinced that it won't be their last marriage."

Ava is a whole lot brighter than many in Hollywood think. When she first turned up in film circles, she was a shy, giggling, frightened Southern girl who didn't know what it was all about. She tried to cover up by doing all the things she thought people expected of an actress.

Her marriages to Rooney and Artie Shaw caused Ava many a heartache, but they taught her plenty. Unfortunately, the school of experience always exacts the highest tuition, but in the end, it turns out to be the very best teacher.

Ava learned about men from Mickey and Artie—and she learned well. "Instead of growing up at 18," she once said, "it took me longer. I couldn't be interested in a man unless I had a crush on him. Now I know that a girl can be friends with men, and that's a sign of her maturity. As for me—I think I'm perfectly normal. What I'm looking for in life is a happy marriage, a large family, lots of children."

Ava is the baby in a family of eight children, and most of her early life was spent in the company of nieces and nephews. She loves them all. And more than anything else, she wants children of her own.

Should Frank ever ask her to give up her career, Ava would consider it no sacrifice whatever.

"My career was an accident, anyway," she says. "I never started out to be an actress. The whole thing was a fluke. I wouldn't be giving much up."

AVA is particularly modest when it comes to her career. She refuses to realize that at this moment she is one of the hottest young actresses in the world, that every studio in Hollywood is clamoring for her.

There are some actresses whose entire lives center around winning an Academy Award. Ava just doesn't care. She'd like to win an Academy Award for marriage.

She feels that she can make a fine wife, that she understands Frank, knows his problems, is tolerant of his habits. Whenever people criticize his behavior, she always seems to have a very valid explanation.

When she makes a mistake herself, she's quick to admit it.

Remember that fiasco of a vacation she

happily ever after?

and Frank took in Mexico a few months ago? "One of the biggest mistakes we ever made," Ava admits. "We thought we could get away for a few days without any fuss. We didn't think it would turn out to be an international affair. We purposely got to the airport at the very last minute, and I wore my dark glasses. But when I got inside the plane, I was trapped. A photographer was standing in the aisle waiting for us. When the plane stopped at El Paso, there were more photographers, more reporters. At Monterrey, Mexico City, Acapulco—it was the same story. Frank got a little hot under the collar and blew his top a bit. But so would you if you'd wanted a vacation so desperately and then found yourself hounded every minute.

"When reporters are regular with Frank, he's just as nice as he can be."

No matter what you've read about Sinatra, this is true. All during his six weeks in Nevada, he was extremely polite to the newsmen. He gave interviews graciously, admitted that Ava was in town with him, confessed that he had a Nevada divorce in mind for only one purpose, to make Ava Lavinia Mrs. Frank Sinatra.

While Frank was in Nevada, a rumor was spread to the effect that he had tried to commit suicide. Even Ava had to laugh at that one. "Wouldn't I be silly?" Frank asked reporters, "to try something like that? For two years I've been trying to beat this problem (the problem of divorcing Nancy) and now I've just about got it beat. What happened was that I took a few pills for an upset stomach and they affected my skin, so we called the doctor."

Sinatra has a news-making personality. Ava has not. She can walk down the main street of any city, and she will never be recognized as a Hollywood star. She kind of melts into the crowd.

Frank is recognized as a celebrity anywhere, anytime. Unlike Frank, Ava's had no stage training, and large gatherings make her nervous. She likes no more than on or two couples to go out with her and Frank.

She is fairly self-sufficient. Give her a stack of record albums and some books, and she'll be happy. Frank, on the other hand, is restless. He has to be doing things—making records, appearing in night clubs, acting in front of the camera. He likes and demands activity.

All Ava wants is a house of her own, a husband of her own, and babies of her own.

By this time next year—most of her wants should be satisfied. She hopes.

THE END

(You can see Frank Sinatra in RKO's *It's Only Money*. Ava Gardner will be in MGM's *Lone Star*.—Ed.)