

# Bonnie Weitzman: Memoirs of vaudeville

*'Phil Silvers used to run after every skirt he saw.*

*None of us liked him...'*

by Sue Steinwall  
Blueprint Staff Writer

There are many classic myths about the American dream. There's the one about the little shoe shine boy, who by ingenuity, hard work, and perseverance raises himself from a pauper to a veritable millionaire.

There's also the story about the young girl who runs away from her rural home to seek her fortune on Broadway. After long, hard years of song and dance, she either "makes it big in sho biz" or marries the manager of the show.

This, with a few variations, is the story of Mrs. Bonnie Weitzman.

Bonnie left her home of Texacana at age 16 and set off to make her break into show business. She said that her mother really didn't care and that "I didn't give a darn" about what that Texacana townfolk thought.

Bonnie said that she went into vaudeville for the money. "The most I ever made was \$250 a week."

Bonnie saw some of her co-workers eventually reach stardom. She worked with Fanny Brice, Phil Silvers, and Jimmy Durante at different points in her career.

"Phil Silvers used to run after every skirt he saw. None of us liked him and we gave him the cold shoulder," Bonnie reminisced. "Even now when I see him on TV, I'd like to spit on the screen," she added.

"Jimmy Durante was a nice guy. He was nuts, though. He had lots of nerve and pushed himself in.

"During the old days, vaudeville was like one big family. Everyone had lots of fun together--Not like show business is nowadays."

Vaudeville intailed a lot of hard work. There were long hours of practicing over and over again. There was a bit of disillusionment among some of the new cast when they found out that a theatrical career meant hard work not instant acclaim, according to Bonnie.

Bonnie did a song and dance act for three years in the show "High Button Shoes" starring Fanny Brice. Later, when the show went on the road, Bonnie married the manager of the show. "We did a vaudeville act for about thirty years, until I got too old and fat."

**"Nowadays-- those go-go dancers and wild dancers-- they're not show business."**

Burlesque was mainly girly shows according to Bonnie. The Vaudevillians seemed to look down on what they called smut.

"Nowadays--those go-go dancers and wild dancers--they're not show business."

Bonnie spent about thirty years of her life in vaudeville, from about 1902 to 1932. She fondly refers to those years as the old days.

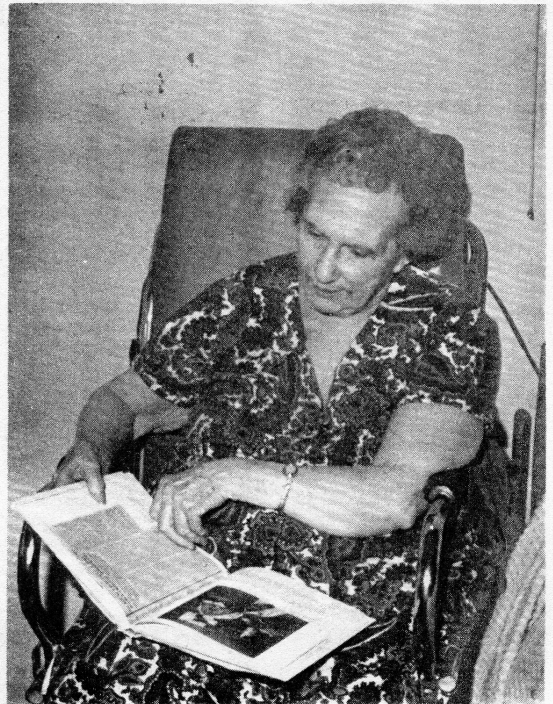


photo by fred wolf

Bonnie pages through her memories of vaudeville

"George Jessel said "People like myself--and there aren't many left--who have been before

the public for a half a century, are all inclined to favor the yesterdays, and unless they are doing exceedingly well, they live in a capsule of the past, seeing beauty only in which cannot return, believing to the full that everything that's old is sacred."

But, as Bernard Sobel says in his, "A Pictorial History of Vaudeville," "Vaudeville is as old as humanity, and in one form or another, will endure as long as people seek laughter, good times, mystification and surprise."

## SIMON & GARFUNKEL'S LATEST MEDIOCRE

# 'Bridge' collapses in mid-stream

by Linda Sorenson  
Blueprint Staff Writer

Devoted fans have been waiting for "Bridge over Troubled Waters" ever since Simon and Garfunkel promised an L.P. featuring their single "The Boxer." but they didn't deserve what they got.

The featured song, "Bridge over Troubled Waters," stands out as a masterpiece against the others. It is definitely worth the price of the album alone. Yet, as the song ends after a smashing crescendo,

the listener somehow expects the same high caliber of quality. It doesn't.

There are a few songs which stand out but the remainder sink back into mediocrity. Their songs seem too saccharine in comparison to some of their earlier works such as "Sounds of Silence" or "Silent Night/7:00 News."

The music is good although it does not introduce any new effects. However, the lyrics, excluding "Bridge over Troubled Water" and "The Boxer" leave something to be desired. Repetition often plagues

the album as seen in "Keep The Customer Satisfied."

"Bye Bye Love" is set in a concert, probably to keep the listener from groaning at the remake of the Everly Brothers hit.

The album is definitely worth listening to. Yet, after "Bookends" and a years waiting, Simon and Garfunkel should have supplied an album with more than just two good good cuts.



## SELLERS' 'MAGIC CHRISTIAN'

# Crucifies the human race

by Mark Johnson  
Blueprint Editorial Editor

A fine line is drawn between devastating satire and bad taste. Peter Sellers in "The Magic Christian" periously straddles this line and occasionally stumbles across it to vulgarity.

Terry Southern's screenplay (which was co-authored with Sellers) indicts the human race as blood-lusting money grubbers.

At times it becomes muddled and confused in its direction.

As Sir Guy Grand, the world's richest neurotic, Peter Sellers flamboyantly runs around England playing satiric jokes with his money. Tagging along with him is Ringo Starr, his newly adopted son. As he sees it, Grand is out to give the human race one huge collective spanking for being so greedy.

"Sometimes it is not enough merely to teach," says Sellers, "Sometimes one must punish as well." Thus he sets out to perpetrate the world's greatest hoax.

He builds the world's poshest luxury liner, "The Magic Christian," soaks the elite with exorbitant fares, and "sinks" the ship in mid-ocean. The passengers pile off the failing vessel only to find that the ship is actually a mammoth mock-up and that they are still inside the warehouse.

Southern's wit is an uneven hit-and-miss affair. Some scenes, such as Hamlet's Shakespearean strip-tease, are satiric dynamite while others fail with a sickening "yecch" because he doesn't know when to quit. The outcome of the latter category is either repulsively crude jokes or muddled and murky screen action.

Funny and pointed and occasionally vulgar and muddled, "The Magic Christian" isn't likely to suit all tastes.

But then again, with Raquel Welch in a cameo, who cares about suiting everyone?

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