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Biography of
SYLVIA (FINE) KAYE
(Mrs. Danny Kaye)



Sylvia Fine was born in Brooklyn, N. Y. on August 29th. Her father was a dentist and had his practice in Brooklyn, and Sylvia grew up there. At the age of three she showed the signs of what later developed into a top-notch song writing talent. At that early age she could pick out on the piano any tune played on the radio or that had been hummed for her.

At six she began studying piano and shortly after that started writing compositions. She studied theory and harmony and won several medals before she was ten. At ten, she began getting nervous playing for audiences and decided to abandon public performances. When she was fifteen, Sylvia graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School where she had written humor columns for the school newspaper.

Sylvia's father wanted her to attend college, although she was supposed to go to Juilliard. His wishes were complied with and she attended Hunter College, where she majored in music. Then she transferred to Brooklyn College for an excellent reason. It was a half hour closer to home in the subway! (Well, besides that it was co-educational).

At Brooklyn she became active in the Drama Society, wrote the music and lyrics (with Irwin Shaw, a distant cousin) to "Legs and the Lady", a takeoff on "Arms and the Man". In college she wrote a column called "Barking Doggerel" for "Spotlight", the school paper. Her greatest rhyme--and one she feels she has yet to top, went:

"The great American Tragedy

Is to have no date on Sagedy!"

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Sylvia noticed that in blank verse you can use two words on a line, so she began to use that form. She took time out to write the official song of Brooklyn College while there. After college (she was 19) she went to music publishers with some of her material. No one was too encouraging and Sylvia decided to write for theater and that way come to publishers attention.

She took a job as music and drama counselor at a summer camp and there discovered that re-writing Gilbert and Sullivan and changing their traditional tempo made the children like and accept them.

In writing the parodies, she used parts of popular tunes and strung them in a row. That meant that she had to write the connecting musical "bridges". Roughly this was the start of the technique she now employs when she writes the special material that Danny uses to such tremendous advantage.

A few summers of this tired her and she looked for another job. Max Liebman told her that Inogene Coca needed someone to write material for use at Camp Tamamint, which had a summer theater attached to it. She auditioned and got the job. That winter she gave piano lessons and when that got slow she got a job demonstrating soup in grocery stores for \$11 per week.

Sylvia had written a takeoff on "Pins and Needles" and a Mr. Lichtman (who heard of her through the "summer theater grapevine") asked to hear it. He was planning a revue to show off the talents of various actors, scenic designers, writers, etc. This was where she met Danny. "He was the main-stay of the company", as Sylvia puts it. Sylvia got him a job at Tamamint, where Inogene Coca was featured

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also. This was the summer of 1939. After the season was over, Sylvia convinced the players to remain an additional week without pay and they took the cream of the season's material and whipped it into shape for producers to see.

The Schuberts came, liked it, and later produced it as "Straw Hat Revue". It got wonderful notices from the critics who loved all the new talent and raved about Danny. However, due to no elaborate scenery and tremendous production, it played only eleven weeks. After it closed Danny and Max Liebman went to Florida.

Danny called Sylvia on the telephone and asked her to marry him. She said "No", but promptly took off for Florida! They eloped to Ft. Lauderdale, with Liebman as a witness, and were secretly married January 3, 1940. She came home and announced her "engagement" to an actor. Everyone of the family was promptly horrified, but she was married again on February 22, 1940.

Sylvia then convinced Danny to try working in a night club, The Martinique. He did and was tremendous. She wrote the special material he used and has done so for the past ten years. She walks and thinks, pacing around the room and visualizing both words and music.. Sometimes a tune will pop into her mind and she'll fit the words to it...and just as often it's the other way around. "One 'pulls' the other along", she says.

The Kaye's have an adorable little girl called Dena, born December 17, 1946.

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