

Terrorists Invade Bridal Fair

Margie Stamberg

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NEW YORK (Liberation News Service/Guardian) "Love starts at Chase Manhattan," said the psychedelic lettering on the plastic shopping bags given to the girls attending New York's first Bridal Fair at Madison Square Garden on Valentine's Day weekend.

In a back stairwell, house dicks, rent-a-cops, some of the city red squad and independent heavies had isolated 10 radical women who were disrupting the day's slave trade and were busy throwing them down the steps, slamming them up against concrete walls, twisting their arms, and screaming, "You're sick, you're sick, you're sick."

The demonstration protesting the commercialization of women was sponsored by Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH).

"The best things in life are free. But it's the little extras that run into money. For the best things in life that aren't free, start a savings plan with your friend at Chase Manhattan." Planted among birds and flowers, this suggestion decorated bigger-than-life posters covering the Garden's Felt Forum.

Brides Showcase International's press kit proclaimed:

- * The average bride spends over \$3,000 to furnish her new home and \$500 for apparel.
- * Brides spend an estimated \$5 billion annually.
- * Weddings have increased from 1,320,000 in 1934 to an estimated 2,000,000 in 1968 with U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare projections estimating 2,170,000 in 1970.
- * Each year brides outspend the other "big spenders" (girls 19 to 25) by more than 14 to one.
- * Wedding dresses alone are estimated to have a \$50 million market potential and the trousseau market is put at \$162 million.

And the sponsors know it. The Bridal Fair was the first for New York, though such lucrative activity has been staged in most smaller cities and towns on Valentine's Day weekend for years. It was felt that New Yorkers were too sophisticated for this crude display.

An assumption proven wrong, to the thinly disguised glee of Modern Bride Photographers, Sachs Quality Stores, New York Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Northeast Airlines, Ramal-Vincent Orchestras, Maxim Freeze-Dried Coffee, the Chase Manhattan Bank, Brides' Magazine, Aeronaves de Mexico, Bahamas Tourism, International Coffee, Inc. and Radio WMCA.

Behind Pepsodent smiles, "bridal experts" cheerfully battered the fears, self-doubts and emotional needs that modern media had created in the thousands of young women attending into tangible commodities, and sold them back at a profit.

Beribboned, miniskirted, golden-streaked damsels by the thousands pushed and poked to grab the hand-outs in the bridal booths, stuff raffle tickets into their respective slots, consider Florida honeymoons via Northeast Airlines, dial-a-decorator from Sachs to plan their decorating needs, negotiate low-cost personal loans from you-know-who, hire a band, and fill out Modern Bride's bridal books purchased at \$2.50 a copy.

God was out in force too. Marble Protestant Church's booth displayed such pamphlets as "Are You Fun to Live With?" and "Christian Guide Lines for Sex. Love and Marriage."

The black girls among the thousands present could be counted on one hand. At the booth of Bahamas Tourism, a toy statue of a black Bahaman with an ear-to-ear smile and a snow-white uniform held up a sign: "Plan your honeymoon with Bahamas Tourism."

WMCA's Good Guy Dan Daniel finally got the girls into their seats by assuring them, "Ladies, you have two more chances before we let you out of here today to visit the booths."

He then introduced WMCA's other Good Guys. Chuck Browning, "The Chucker," took the mike long enough to apologize for the WITCH demonstration and to speculate that the WITCHes were "teed off because nobody ever proposed to them."

The morning's panel discussion consisted of a male doctor, a male clergyman, a male banker, a male dial-a-decorator and a lady from *Brides' Magazine*. She (Barbara Donovan) explained that being a wife today is overwhelming. You have to be a "lover, mother, friend, helpmate, gourmet cook and contribute to community affairs as well," so that "planning is very important."

Dial-a-decorator told girls not to skimp on the "essentials." "You know you need a bed, bedding, a comfortable sofa, chairs, storage cabinets, quality curtains and proper lighting fixtures. These are absolute musts. Make color work for you. Remember, painting is the wonder drug of home furnishing."

Man-doctor said, "Whether you use pills or some other birth control device, work out good lasting health habits through a frank and open talk with your family doctor."

Dan Daniel Good Guy announced intermission before the fashion show. We decided to leave and exited through the glass door just in time to see the rent-a-fuzz slap a demonstrator in the face and shove her out of the Garden.

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