

The exchange took place in July and August. The Soviet visitors, led by Vladimir V. Matskevich (see *C.B.*, November 1955), were shown nearly every phase of Midwestern agriculture. The area is covered largely by family-operated farms which concentrate on the conversion of forage crops and feed grains into milk, eggs, and meat. In 100-degree heat, which annoyed them, the Russians played football and golf, ate watermelon, and attended church services. The American public treated them with warmth and cordiality wherever they went.

In the Soviet Union the American delegation, led by Dr. W. V. Lambert (see *C.B.*, November 1955), became impatient with the succession of ceremonial banquets, visits to champagne farms, and with the apparent impossibility of seeing the farms they preferred to visit. The *New York Times* (August 1, 1955) reported that nine members of the group, headed by Soth, drove "to two collective farms they spotted from the highway," while the others visited the champagne farm specified in the official itinerary.

While the Americans were in the U.S.S.R., the Soviet government asked permission to send two more missions to America, one a group of agricultural machinery experts, and the other a company of trade union delegates. The *New York Times* (August 7, 1955) reported that "no recent tour of the Soviet Union except that of Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, has had more publicity than the farmers' tour."

On his return Soth wrote (*Washington Post and Times Herald*, August 23, 1955) that "Soviet bosses have had to back away temporarily from their long-run aim of completely socialized agriculture. . . . On many collective farms we found that farmers were earning 25 to 30 per cent as much income from their private operation as they earn collectively."

Among Soth's conclusions were: Soviet agriculture will continue to produce a nutritionally adequate, though not a rich, diet for the growing Russian population; farm people . . . are being favored by state policy . . . and there is actually a movement back to the farms; Soviet farming is backward and extremely inefficient in the use of labor. This places a drag on the whole economy and restricts industrial expansion; in farm research and education the U.S.S.R. trails far behind the United States; the virgin lands development program is costly but Russia will get lots of wheat from its new farms in Siberia and Kazakhstan (*New Republic*, September 26, 1955).

Columbia University in New York announced on May 7, 1956 that Soth had been selected for the Pulitzer Prize in the field of editorial writing. Soth's editorial was one of 718 entries that had been submitted. The *Nation* commented that his casual proposal "blossomed into one of the most important news stories of the post-Geneva [conference of July 1955] period," and that the exchange of agriculturists ranked "among the most successful adventures in amateur diplomacy of the postwar period."

Soth is a member of the Des Moines Press Club, American Society of Newspaper Editors, National Conference of Editorial Writers, American Farm Economics Association, American Civil Liberties Union, Chamber of Com-

merce, Council on Foreign Relations, a vice-chairman of the agricultural committee of the National Planning Association, and an honorary member of Phi Kappa Phi. He has written articles for popular periodicals and the *Journal of Farm Economics* and pamphlets for Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and National Planning Association.

Lauren K. Soth married Marcella Shaw Van on June 15, 1934, and the couple have three children, John Michael, Sara Kathryn, and Melinda Soth. Politically Soth is an independent. He is a member of the Episcopal Church. He is five feet ten inches tall, weighs 172 pounds, and has brown hair and brown eyes. His recreations are golf, fishing, and gardening.

#### Reference

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**SOTHERN, ANN** Jan. 22, 1912- Actress; singer; producer

Address: b. c/o Vincent Productions, Inc., 10333 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif.; h. 620 Walden Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif.

The actress who gained fame in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films for her characterization of Maisie is Ann Southern, who later became known to television viewers as Susie MacNamara in *Private Secretary* on the Columbia Broadcasting System network. She is also president and principal stockholder of Vincent Productions, Inc., which manages and promotes entertainers for television, motion pictures, theatre and night clubs. Miss Southern launched her fifth season in *Private Secretary* on September 9, 1956, alternating on Sunday evenings with Jack Benny, and with the American Tobacco Company as sponsor. According to *Variety* (September 12), "Few other half-hour situation comedies have enjoyed such longevity."

Beginning in 1933, she made twenty-five pictures for Columbia Pictures, portraying "a sweet young ingénue." For MGM she first appeared as Maisie in 1939 in a film of the same name, and this proved to be such a success that MGM produced a series of pictures with Maisie as the heroine. "Honky-tonk Maisie with a heart of spun sugar" became so well known that mail addressed to "Maisie, U.S.A." reached Miss Southern. She also portrayed the character on seventy-eight radio programs for the Columbia Broadcasting System (1945-47) and for MGM Radio (1949-52).

On Broadway she had singing roles in *America's Sweetheart* (1931), *Everybody's Welcome* (1931) and in 1933 she played in the road company of the musical *Of Thee I Sing*. Although she made such pictures as *Panama Hattie*, *Lady Be Good*, and *Thousands Cheer*, critics still referred to her as "Maisie." She returned to Broadway briefly in 1951 as the star in *Faithfully Yours*.

The actress's real name is Harriette Lake. The eldest of three daughters of Walter J. and Annette (Yde) Lake, she was born on January 22, 1912 in Valley City, North Dakota,



## CURRENT BIOGRAPHY 1956



CBS-TV

ANN SOTHERN

where her mother, a concert singer, was on tour. Her father was related to Simon Lake, inventor of the first submarine to operate successfully in the open sea (the *Argonaut*, in 1897). She has two sisters, Bonnie and Marion, who gave up potential musical careers when they married.

Harriette was educated in the public schools of Waterloo, Iowa and Minneapolis, Minnesota. In high school she won prizes for original musical compositions and upon graduation was sent to Detroit to represent the state of Minnesota as an outstanding youthful composer. She went on to study music at the University of Washington in Seattle, but later joined her mother in Hollywood, where Mrs. Lake taught diction and singing. She found Harriette a job with Christie Comedies. When this proved unsatisfactory, she worked for MGM. Kyle Crichton wrote in *Collier's* (July 12, 1941) that she was dropped by MGM in 1929 and everyone was surprised when Florenz Ziegfeld heard her sing and in 1930 gave her a place in the chorus of *Smiles*, a Broadway musical starring Marilyn Miller.

Miss Lake next appeared in *America's Sweetheart*, a musical which ran on Broadway from January to June 1931, and then in *Everybody's Welcome*, which opened on October 13, 1931 and ran for 139 performances. She played the feminine lead in the road company of the George S. Kaufman-Morrie Ryskind-Ira Gerstein show, *Of Thee I Sing*, for thirty-three weeks and then replaced Lois Moran in the same part in the Broadway production on June 19, 1933.

When the show closed, Columbia Pictures invited her to return to Hollywood. The *New York Herald Tribune* (November 18, 1935) said that the change of name from Harriette Lake to Ann Sothern was made by Columbia, which also persuaded her to change the color of her hair from red to platinum for a role in

*Let's Fall In Love*. In a review of the film Richard Watts, Jr. (*New York Herald Tribune*, January 23, 1934) called Ann Sothern "an agreeable musical comedy ingénue." United Artists borrowed her later in 1934 for *Kid Millions* with Eddie Cantor. She was first starred by Columbia in *Eight Bells* (1935) and then in *The Girl Friend* with Jack Haley (1935).

Soon after her marriage in 1936 to actor-band leader Roger Pryor, she became dissatisfied with ingénue roles and made personal appearances with the Pryor band and sang in night clubs. The "dumb" stenographer character part in *Trade Winds* appealed to her and MGM producer J. Walter Ruben finally succeeded in persuading his studio to offer her a contract. Ann Sothern in *Maisie* proved a "sensation." Louella Parsons (*New York Journal American*, June 16, 1939) predicted that Ann Sothern would be one of the biggest stars on the MGM lot. She had made *Hooray for Love* with Gene Raymond (RKO) and *Brother Orchid* with Edward G. Robinson (Warner Brothers) before *Maisie* was released. Both films were on Broadway in 1940 almost as soon as *Congo Maisie*, the second *Maisie* picture.

The critics were kinder to Ann Sothern than to her material. Leo Mishkin (*New York Morning Telegraph*, August 1, 1941) complained that *Ringside Maisie* was a "tear-jerker" and it was a pity to let the series run into the ground because Miss Sothern was "one of the brightest and liveliest comediennees in the business." The *New York Times* (July 16, 1942) said that *Maisie Gets Her Man* "just limped along with Maisie and Red Skelton laboring heroically over soggy material." Of *Wing Shift Maisie*, a *New York Times* reviewer (September 10, 1943) remarked that "his devotion to Maisie was badly shaken . . . her innocence was so downright heartbreaking." But Irene Thirer (*New York Post*, September 29, 1944) wrote that *Maisie Goes To Reno* "hit the laugh-enticing level of Maisie's other escapades." Commenting on *Up Goes Maisie*, Sheila Graham (*Baltimore Sun*, December 9, 1945) noted that the nine successful *Maisie* movies had taught the public to love Ann Sothern in spite of the "flimsy material that made up the stories."

In her effort to get away from *Maisie*, Miss Sothern made a number of other films, which included *Cry Havoc*, a melodrama of Bataan. Bosley Crowther (*New York Times*, November 24, 1943) called Miss Sothern "a wan and wistful Maisie as a hard-boiled ex-waitress." In *Three Hearts for Julia* Crowther (May 21, 1943) found Miss Sothern "trying too hard" in a heavy role.

Beginning the broadcast series of *Maisie* over CBS radio on July 5, 1945, she continued them through March 28, 1947. Following a long illness she was seen in *April Showers* (Warner Brothers, 1948); *Letter to Three Wives* (Twentieth Century-Fox), which won a Film Daily Award in 1949 as one of the ten best pictures of 1948; *The Judge Steps Out* (RKO, 1949) and *Nancy Goes To Rio* (MGM, 1950).

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*Love*. In a review of the film *Love*, Jr. (New York *Herald Tribune*, 1934) called Ann Sothern "an unusual comedy ingénue." United Artists signed her later in 1934 for *Kid Sister* with Eddie Cantor. She was first signed to Columbia in *Eight Bells* (1935) and *The Girl Friend* with Jack Haley.

After her marriage in 1936 to actor Roger Pryor, she became dissatisfied with the Pryor band and sang in the "dumb" stenographer character in *Trade Winds* appealed to her and her husband J. Walter Ruben finally succeeded in persuading his studio to offer her a contract. Sothern in *Maisie* proved a success. Louella Parsons (New York *World-Telegram and Sun*, June 16, 1939) predicted that Sothern would be one of the biggest stars of the MGM lot. She had made *Hooray for Love* with Gene Raymond (RKO) and *My Darling Clementine* with Edward G. Robinson (MGM) before *Maisie* was released. Films were on Broadway in 1940 when *Congo Maisie*, the second film in the series, was released.

Reviews were kinder to Ann Sothern in *Maisie* material. Leo Mishkin (New York *World-Telegram and Sun*, August 1, 1941) said that *Ringside Maisie* was a "tear-jerker" and it was a pity to let the series go on because Miss Sothern was "one of the brightest and liveliest comedienneesses." The New York *Times* (July 1, 1941) said that *Maisie Gets Her Man* was "a good deal along with *Maisie* and Red Skelton's heroically over soggy material." The New York *Times* (September 10, 1943) remarked that Sothern in *Maisie* was badly shaken . . . and her face was so downright heartbreakingly sad. Irene Thirer (New York *Post*, September 29, 1944) wrote that *Maisie Goes to the Sun* "hit the laugh-enticing level of the best of her escapades." Commenting on *Maisie*, Sheilah Graham (Baltimore *Evening Sun*, September 9, 1945) noted that the nine *Maisie* movies had taught the public to love Sothern in spite of the "flimsy material made up the stories."

After her first effort to get away from *Maisie*, Miss Sothern made a number of other films, which included *My Darling Clementine*, *Havoc*, a melodrama of Bataan, and *My Darling Clementine* (New York *Times*, November 13, 1943) called Miss Sothern "a wan and pale Maisie as a hard-boiled ex-waitress." In *Hearts for Julia* Crowther (May 21, 1944) and Miss Sothern "trying too hard" in *My Darling Clementine*.

After the broadcast series of *Maisie* on radio on July 5, 1945, she continued on television on March 28, 1947. Following a year she was seen in *April Showers* (MGM, 1948); *Letter to Three Wives* (Twentieth Century-Fox), which won the Academy Award in 1949 as one of the best pictures of 1948; *The Judge Steps Out* (1949) and *Nancy Goes to Rio* (1950).

Miss Sothern's illness (hepatitis) kept her from work for more than two years except for tape-recording some *Maisie* programs of the MGM radio series. This syndicated series ran from the end of 1949 to early 1952. The actress returned to New York late in August 1951 for rehearsals in *Faithfully Yours*. The play opened in October, but had only a brief run. She made her first "video dramatic bow" as star of *Lady With A Will* (CBS-TV's *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars*), and *Variety* (February 6, 1952) noted that it was again evidenced that an actress schooled in the theatre or films could make "the switch to TV with ease." Another play in which she starred on TV was NBC's color spectacular *Lady in the Dark* (September 25, 1954). Meanwhile, *The Blue Gardenia* (Warner Brothers) brought her back to the screen "the saucy charm of Ann Sothern after a three-year absence" (New York *World-Telegram and Sun*, April 28, 1953).

Two months after the premiere of *Private Secretary* (CBS-TV), *Time* (April 20, 1953) noted that Ann Sothern had "built up an audience of a good portion of the 5,000,000 secretaries in the country, plus a few hundred thousand others." *TV Guide* (April 9, 1954) called it "one of TV's brightest comedies," and commented that as Susie Miss Sothern "gave it plenty of bounce and charm."

Vincent Productions was formed early in 1954 to produce the variety show in which she starred in several night clubs. *Variety* (August 11, 1954) reported that *Ann Sothern and her Escorts* met with a "resounding reception" at Chez Paree in Chicago. The highlight of the act came when she reverted to the character of *Maisie*.

In an interview with Hal Humphrey (New York *World-Telegram and Sun*, May 7, 1955) the actress said that she was expanding Vincent Productions to include TV shows and was negotiating for the rights to "*Maisie*." According to the New York *Times* (June 5, 1955) these negotiations were carried on with the agent of Nell Martin, who had created the character in stories for *Top Notch* magazine between 1923 and 1930.

Miss Sothern was married to Roger Pryor on September 27, 1936. The marriage ended in divorce in 1942. Her second marriage, to Air Force cadet William J. Hart, took place in Ventura, California on May 23, 1943. (Hart's professional name is Robert Sterling.) The couple had met in 1941 when Sterling had a part in *Ringside Maisie*. Their child, Patricia Ann, was born on December 10, 1944. The Sterlings were divorced in 1949.

Miss Sothern's hair is blonde and her eyes are blue-gray. She is five feet one inch tall and weighs 112 pounds. In 1953 she was converted to the Roman Catholic faith. During the war years she rode a motorcycle back and forth to the MGM studios and became expert in handling it, although she has never liked to drive a car. One of her favorite relaxations is to sit in an old rocking chair and read.

are gardening, reading medical books, transoceanic airmail envelopes and animals. She has two live mink and two poodles named *Maisie* and *Susie*.

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**SPIVAK, LAWRENCE E (DMU)**  
b. 1900- Radio and television writer and publisher

Address: b. Meet the Press, 48th St., New York 17; h. 48th St., New York 17; Washington, D.C.

The most preferable of television program *Meet the Press* of its co-founder, panel member, Lawrence E. Spivak, "a man in the news, but once on the show will more than ten years on television, this lively, hearty press conference its guests American and whose answers to the four newsmen have more often influenced the *Meet the Press*, a Sun the National Broadcaster estimated weekly audience of persons. It has received the George Foster Award of 1952.

Spivak has also been publishing. He began as manager of *Antiques* magazine and is assistant to the publisher of *Antiques* and *National Sports* 1930 to 1933; and in 1934 a year association with the business manager. From publisher of the magazine from 1944 to 1950, was a member of the magazine and in 1951 Mercury Publications, Inc. a pioneer in modern paper.

Lawrence Edmund Spivak, second oldest of the four children of Benjamin and Sonya (Berenson) Spivak, was born in New York City on October 1, 1900. His father was a businessman and a member of the nurses' uniforms and ladies' uniforms. His sisters are now Mrs. Samuel Benjamin Povill, and Mrs. K. As a schoolboy, Spivak worked for the *Eagle*. He was graduated from High School in Brooklyn in 1918 and from Harvard College in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1920.