

Barbaric newlywed receptions practiced in midcounty area

VINCENT T. LEONARD here grew up in the old mid-county area a barbarous custom for the reception of newlyweds. It was called a "chivaree" (a variant of the old word charivari meaning cacophony, or hodge-podge of sounds.) The procedure was to gather all the boys and men in the area on the first night that the newlyweds went in their new home. The fellows formed a big ring around the house, and the turning out of the last light was their signal to slowly tighten the ring as they whooped and hollered," beat washtubs and kitchen pans with iron rods, produced ear-splitting blasts from musical instruments, and fired all manner of guns into the air. The ring stopped within a few feet of the house and set up a rhythmic chant of "Come on out!" interspersed with threats of violence if the couple didn't hurry.

Couples wise to local ways usually were well-prepared for their boisterous visitors. They appeared on a lighted porch and

invited their noisy well-wishers in, passing out bottles of beer or glasses of champagne or liquor in the early days; later (after prohibition) to sit at tables already loaded with cakes, pies, and coffee. To refuse to entertain was to invite an all-night continuance of the rude serenade.

I must admit that I was often a participant in these wild affairs without ever thinking what the effect must be on a sensitive bride, particularly a stranger in the community. So when I married in 1926 and was offered the use of Wilhelm Verhoeff's home for our weekend honeymoon, I had some apprehension about the effect of a chivaree on my Chicago-born, San Francisco-bred bride.

Besides, we had little more than our return tickets in our purses, and no food or drink in the house. But I had good luck, however undeserved. Good old "Uncle Bill" said never a word about our being in his house, and the only other person in Aptos who knew I was there, my cousin Anne Spencer, did not give me away.

Uncle Bill's house was the former McFadden home in a wooded area north of Trout Gulch Road, about three-quarters of a mile out of Aptos.

Next morning, a Sunday, Anne came to tell us that she had arranged a picnic in our honor on the creek bank near the bridge that joined Baker Road to Trout Gulch. The picnic was a sumptuous feed and Anne had assembled all my relatives and closest friends for miles around

to the number of over 200. On our way to the picnic we first went up the hill into a cleared field from which we had a beautiful view of the bay over the redwoods and, as we looked, a flotilla of yachts sailed by. In that magic moment we committed ourselves to retirement in Aptos, a decision we have never regretted, even though the parade of yachts has never been repeated in our living room window, which commands the same view.

'What you eat you are'

"What You Eat You Are," is title of the last in a series of meetings on alternatives to today's meat prices, sponsored by Santa Cruz County Nutrition Council.

The program will be May 23 at Laurel School auditorium, from 1 to 3 p.m., and May 24 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at Agricultural Extension Office, 1432 Freedom Blvd., Watsonville.

Included will be talks, discussion and displays on nutri-

tional needs of various age groups. Speakers will include a pediatrician, social worker and dietician. Suggestions will be given on how to cope with various eating problems, such as "the pre-schooler to try new foods," "the teenager to make better food choices," "the dieter to choose calories from foods containing nutrients," and "the senior citizen to realize he needs less calories, but the same amount of vitamins and minerals."