

The Oakland Observer

May 11, 1964

Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan

Vol. V — No. 27

VARNER FIRES METZGER OVER SEX SURVEY DISPUTE



LEONARD PENNARIO



MARY COSTA

Festival Soloists Chosen: Shell Progressing Rapidly

By the Observer Staff

Oakland's exciting 1964 Meadow Brook Music Festival will offer the first of a series of twelve concerts Thursday, July 23.

Sixteen Ehrling will direct the full Detroit Symphony Orchestra in the concerts to be held on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays in the music shell now being constructed.

Soloists Chosen

Ehrling has announced soloists for the Thursday and Friday series. Saturday programs will be announced later. Featured in the July 23-24 concerts will be violinist Gordon Staples and cellist Italo Babini playing Brahms Double Concerto in A Minor.

Mary Costa, lyric soprano of the Metropolitan Opera Company, will appear July 30, 31 and August 1. She will sing Richard Strauss' "Four Last Songs" and Ravel's "Sheherazade."

Ehrling Dual Role

Ehrling will appear August 6-7 as conductor and piano soloist in Hindemith's "The Four Temperaments."

Pianist Leonard Pennario will play the Khatchaturian Concerto on August 13-14.

Season tickets with choice of evenings are being offered in a series of four priced at \$10, \$6 and \$3. Tickets are available on campus.

The site of the 1964 Meadow Brook Music Festival will be a \$250,000 outdoor shell and audi-

ence pavilion centered in a natural amphitheater on the Oakland campus. Construction is progressing rapidly on the shell.

The shell and pavilion will be the first completed structure of an eventual performing arts center which will include music, theater and the dance.

2,000 Capacity

The Howard C. Baldwin Memorial Pavilion, named in honor of that noted civic leader and Kresge Foundation trustee, will have a seating capacity of 2,000 this summer. It will be expanded later.

Seats will be arranged in tiers,

each row six inches above the preceding row in order to provide an unobstructed view of the stage for everyone.

Fiberglass

One of the nation's finest acoustical consultants, Christopher Jaffe, has especially designed the Lula B. Wilson Memorial Concert Shell. The fiberglass structure will incorporate a flexible ceiling that can be adjusted to balance the orchestra sound.

The system, one of the best in the country, will eliminate any need for sound reinforcement.

Dickerson Takes Leave To Run For Congress

James Dickerson, assistant to the chancellor and a candidate for the United States Congress, took an official leave of absence from the University last Friday to campaign full time.

Where he will be campaigning is not known, as the Legislature has failed to come up with new districts since the present districts have been ruled unconstitutional. The nineteenth district is where Dickerson originally intended to run.

Asked if he would run at large if necessary, Dickerson said it

would depend on the machinery used. If each party were to nominate a slate of candidates, he said he would seriously consider. If this is not the situation, Dickerson is not sure what he would do.

He also stated that there is a very definite possibility that the state will receive a stay of execution to maintain present districts so as not to create chaos in the November election.

A Republican, Dickerson feels strongly that the Republican Party must find a positive image, and not be classed as a party which has a negative philosophy.

CENSORSHIP CHARGE ISSUED BY METZGER

By Howard A. Coffin II

Touching off what may well prove to be the most publicized controversy in the brief history of this university, Chancellor Varner last week dismissed Wolf Metzger from his position as editor of the Oakland Observer and had all copies of the May 1 edition of the paper destroyed because of their reference to a Metzger administered survey purporting to measure sexual activity among Oakland dormitory residents.

The Chancellor's action culminated a week-long series of discussions with the newly appointed editor during which Varner sought to dissuade Metzger from printing any story based on the results of the survey. Varner asserted that the survey had not been authorized; that the methods employed in conducting the survey were unscientific and rendered the results invalid; that the questionnaire was not treated seriously by many of the respondents, further invalidating the results; and that any results from such a survey, if given public exposure, would likely be misconstrued in a manner damaging to the character of students and the interests of the university.

Still unwilling to comply with the Chancellor's request Metzger asked Varner what action would be taken if he ran a story anyway. Varner advised Metzger that he would be suspended from school if the story were published. In light of that ultimatum, Metzger decided not to print an article concerning the survey results, but to publish instead an account of Varner's "threat," with an accompanying editorial calling the incident "the first step to delineate the freedom and power of OU's student newspaper."

The lead story of the May 1 issue was to have begun: "Chancellor Varner this week threatened Observer Editor Wolf Metzger with suspension from the University should the results of a recently conducted survey on the sexual activities of dorm students be published."

After the issue went to press, Varner learned about the story and concluded that this indication of the prohibited story's content would only serve to whet the appetites and curiosity of readers, and would be just as inflammatory as more specific news of the survey results. As Varner explained in an open letter to the University community, "Technically, the letter of my explicit request had been followed, but quite clearly,

the spirit of the request had been ignored."

On Friday, while the paper was still at the printer's, Varner summoned several members of the Faculty Senate Publications Committee. Messrs. Hetenyi, Quaintance, and Delauney agreed after several hours of discussion that distribution of the issue "would be unfortunate."

The three attempted then to convince Metzger not to permit the papers to be distributed, but three hours of effort in persuasion proved fruitless, and the partial committee was adjourned without having reached a decision as to the best course to follow.

Legal Advice

Varner then conferred with the chief legal counsel for the Board of Trustees, Leland W. Carr, Jr. He was advised to prevent the issue from being distributed in order to avoid subsequent pressure to publish the actual results which, in the opinion of the attorney, might embroil the University in legal difficulties with students offended by implications of the survey. A short time later, Varner ordered all copies of the May issue destroyed, and suspended operation of the paper.

On Monday, Metzger was notified of his suspension from the Editorship of the Observer and was told he was ineligible to participate in any other campus publications.

REPORTERS AROUND

By Monday night the story of Metzger's suspension had been picked up by nearly all of the local news media, as well as by the Associated Press and the United Press International wire services. Newsmen and photographers flocked to the campus in droves on Tuesday and Wednesday, drawn by the double-rich story potential of news censorship and sex on the campus. AP and UPI sources confirm that the controversy received wide national and some international coverage.

Students View Survey

However, amid the jangling telephones and photographers' flashes there were many students and faculty members who placed little credence in the ousted editor's assertions that Varner had acted without sufficient cause, or that Metzger had been deprived of editorial freedom.

The ex-Editor's claim that "eighty per cent of valid returns indicate that students in general were aware of the seriousness of the matter and reacted accordingly," was challenged by many dorm students as "ridiculous" and "impossible."

(Continued on P. 4)

The Oakland Observer

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Comments On Actions

On the positive side, the events of the past week have insured—at least momentarily—a cross-country recognition that a university does, in fact, exist in these hinterlands.

On the negative side, the effects which may eventually accrue to Oakland's sex survey controversy can scarcely be calculated at this early juncture.

However, the controversy has cast up in its wake a froth of uncertainties, two of which merit immediate attention.

First of all, why did Chancellor Varner go it alone in making the decision to fire then-editor Metzger? We question not his authority but his wisdom in pursuing that course.

He had a standing Publications Committee set up by the Faculty Senate which, had it chosen to destroy the May 1 Observer issue and fire its editor, could at least have lent a note of collective sentiment to the action. Additionally, faculty groups are substantially less subject to the suspicion of illiberalism than administrators. Varner's solo action, even though preceded by consultations with subordinates, had an anti-democratic ring to it that might have been averted had he not gone over the heads of an able and conscientious Faculty Senate Committee. To set up committees and not use them is time-wasting folly.

The second uncertainty, in the minds of our readers, although not in the minds of the newspaper's staff, is the question of the Observer's future independence.

It is our contention that the Observer has been unfettered in the past and will remain unfettered in the future. We view the newspaper's action in last week's fiasco as an attempt to preserve its freedom while ignoring its responsibilities. To do this is to operate under a disabling form of journalistic schizophrenia.

We have been given a strong commitment of the Administration's continued support and are confident that we have a rope as long as we need to hang either ourselves or whomsoever we see fit. To those who doubt our freedom we can only say, wait and see.

The primary interest of those now connected with the paper is to restore it to full vigor and to make sure another situation like this will never happen again. With the cooperation and support of students, faculty and the administration, our attempt to strengthen this paper and sustain the free flow of ideas and information, so vital to the growth of this university, will be made substantially easier.

Hill House Four Weeks Behind; Completion By September in Question

By the Observer Staff

Construction of Hill House, Oakland's new six-story dormitory, is four weeks behind schedule and faced with the possibility not being ready for occupancy in time for the beginning of the fall semester.

Two unions, the electricians and the sheet metal workers, have gone on strike. The sheet metal workers walked out May 1, while the electricians went off last Wednesday. As of press time, no agreement had been reached with either union.

Questions Completion

Before the contracts expired May 1, a spokesman for Alfred E. Smith, contractors for the new dormitory, stated that he did not know if the dorm could be completed if there were a strike, whatever its duration.

No one could be reached for comment Wednesday as to the possibility of completion by the September 1 due date.

Varner Concerned

Chancellor Varner, concerned over the lag in construction,

stated April 29 that production had been stepped up and that other measures had been taken to have the dorm ready in the fall.

Both Varner and spokesmen for the contractors have stated that it is possible to complete the dorm on schedule.

Construction of the dorm, now on the third floor, has not been seriously affected to date by the strikes by the two unions.

No Solution Yet

Asked what would be done if the dorm were not ready for occupancy by the fall semester, Varner replied that no definite plan had been set as yet.

One possibility would be to ask all student who could commute to do so, Varner stated.

May Triple

Another solution would be to triple rooms in the existing dorms. Tripling first became acute in the fall semester when freshmen were tripled.

Varner has given repeated assurances that there would be little or no tripling in the fall, but failure to complete the dorm might alter his decision.

Letter To The Editor

MUSINGS OF A RELUCTANT PRESS CZAR

In arguments over censorship the chances of the two parties winning to ultimate agreement through rational processes are slimmer than in any kind of argument I can think of. This observation, growing on me during the recently ended ten-week course for adults on "The Problems of Literary Censorship," was confirmed amply during the Observer fracas of last week.

Conveniently and coyly poised midway between Metzger and the Chancellor through the whole thing was the cool voice of reason: my own, of course, and those of three other members of the Publications Committee, a standing committee indissoluble and garrulous as the Faculty Senate itself, its members and chairman appointed by the administration "to consider and recommend policies for all student publications and University publications and to advise individuals responsible for them."

Wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it.

Absolutist Positions

Before hearing from the Publications Committee, the Chancellor and the editor had each forced his opponent into an absolutist position from which he couldn't move without losing face (the situation of noon Friday, May 1).

Absolutist positions established on a college campus are built upon sand.

Anyone could have threatened, or ranted, or ceased to listen. There were three times during the debacle when I wanted desperately to bust someone in the nose. But that is not how civilized men settle arguments. Yet the others ceased to listen, to each other or to us, and in effect bloodied each other's noses. No one wins a censorship dispute. As in divorce trials there is always more heat than light.

Clarification

Now that matters have cooled down let me try to clarify what happened.

As the new editor, Metzger determined to carry ahead into publication the results of a poll. There are many other subjects it would be good to learn about: campus political views (possibly contrasted to parental voting patterns) in this election year; attitudes toward dorm living and the new building; the impact of studies upon religious views; the degree of editorial freedom manifestly enjoyed by the Observer heretofore. But no, it had to be this subject, in Metzger's first issue.

Error #1

Journalistic Error #1: Failure accurately to estimate audience responsiveness, develop a lubricant of mutual trust and respect that would enable the new editorial board as well as the administration to flex and sway to each other's machinations. Such an impasse could not have occurred in Metzger's tenth issue: wasn't it worth waiting?

Trying to hit the moon the first try is a romantic dream.

The bald figures themselves, the numerical results of the questionnaire, are not publishable, I think, in a college newspaper during this decade. Like the findings of the Kinsey team, they are meaningful chiefly to men like Dr. Lowy and Dean Sells. But not only do the rest of us know too little how to read and evaluate such figures (delivered in vacuum, as if Oakland

were the only college worth polling!).

More important, the poll itself (reporting on so few) represents a cheapening of what is most valuable, because in a very special way one's sexual experience is one's own. The poll represents a reduction of what might be spontaneous and creative to statistics and percentages.

If any student polled was content to have his sex life—his!—blended in the public pot, his fun figured, in the name of bogus sociological "truth," then so much the worse for him! If his sense of his individuality is not insulted by the poll—if that's all sex meant to him—then his college had better exercise the judgment he, sad man, lacks. If there's that kind of "safety in numbers" for him then I maintain his proportion of potency to will is not yet that of an adult lover.

Discretion

The college exercises, then, the discretion the answering student lacked: the discretion that respects some secrets as the prerogative of youth; the need for some privacy in this banal first-name-crazy world. A man who's incapable of sensing the value nowadays of just this privacy (even when it's pointed out to him in the course of several hours' conversation) reveals a radical ineptness for the position of editor. Journalistic Error #2, another romantic fallacy: all "truths" are "news."

Metzger was dim-sighted and insensitive (odd characteristics in an editor!) to undertake the poll in the first place. But once in action, to attempt to claim for this display the immunity of "editorial freedom" was presumption indeed, and led him to Journalistic Error #3.

Similarities

It might be excusable for a professional newspaperman to view the operation of a college paper as similar in all respects to the operation of an independent self-supporting urban daily. (Certainly experience with one provides limited but valuable training for work with the other.) It is certainly understandable that a college editor with professional ambitions would wish this similarity existed.

But it is clear to me—after five years' experience with a prep school weekly, then a college weekly, then three years in a college News Bureau filing stories for national papers and wire services, and a summer with the San Francisco News—that (surprise!) a school paper is not as independent as an independent paper.

Whose Property

The reasons for this are not merely financial. (If an independent editor loses advertisers and circulation by antagonizing them, he has risked his own capital; a college editor risks the capital of others. Metzger is not picking up the tab for the destroyed issue of May 1. Why should he? It was never "his" to the extent that he was allowed a chance even to see it, the first letterpress issue on which he and others had expended many hours. Physically, the Observer, even in ashes, is the property of the University.)

The subsidization of a school paper can be accounted a release as well as a confinement upon an editor, depending on how you look at it. Less ambiguous confinements are his dependence on

voluntary assistants; the leisurely pace of his paper's appearances, thus the special nature of the "news" he seeks; the unusual homogeneity of his public, thus again the special nature of the "news" he publishes.

Captive Audience

The college editor addresses a peculiar audience: it cannot effectively boycott his product; it expects information and opinion on off-campus events only insofar as those events demonstrably affect people on campus; it demands on the other hand his thorough interest in the present and future of every phase of the university's life. And it has a right to timely printed treatment, in exemplary English, of his staff's findings and opinions about every newsworthy phase of the university's life except those areas where "the facts" are significantly prejudicial to the personal integrity of an administrator, faculty-member, or student.

Thus in a story on student plagiarism, pregnancy, or off-campus misdemeanor there would be no justification for the naming of names. A report reflecting on the professional competence of a teacher or dean might be publishable, while another on their embezzling techniques would not.

Confinement

But Metzger's third error as a journalist is greater than a refusal to acknowledge that all such considerations might exert some confinement upon him as editor—might, with at least sufficient probability to warrant his removing mention of the poll in his issues of May 1 and later.

Not only did he romantically refuse to recognize that no editor is totally free. Not only did he wave his borrowed banner of "editorial freedom" from a bastion he had no business occupying. But he pridefully assumed that no one is interested in what the Observer observes except Oakland students. He could not have greeted the press as he has since May 4 without revising that opinion at least.

Protest

Either he underestimated his audience or he deliberately chose to address an undergraduate merely: The result's the same, an unwarranted confinement of the Observer's purlieu. As a champion of press freedom, I protest. As a faculty member I insist on my right to be informed by a student-edited, uncensored, alert and challenging weekly paper, subsidized just as far as is necessary to leave the business-ad majors a piece to cut their teeth on too.

Doesn't Want PR

I want to read what student writers find commendable and lamentable about the curriculum, my colleagues and myself, the administration, their own conferees, the whole works. If I wanted to go on reading PR releases I'd stop in at the Admissions Office. There are other media for conveying unmitigated disgust: the OC bulletin board, any convenient tree-trunk, my own office door.

I look to the Observer for fearless and fearless praise and blame of what is public property in our joint enterprise. If the criticism is impersonal and considered and on a matter of community interest I want to read it. A campus which does not furnish its faculty with this forum is not worth teaching at.

Others have a right to know what students are doing and thinking: parents, trustees, legislators, local citizens. As these

(Continued on Page 3)

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The first of two scheduled spring sports days took place last Saturday at Oakland against the University of Detroit.

* * *

According to Assistant Director Richard Robinson, Oakland's intramural softball league will "probably" be cancelled because of insufficient entries.

Letter

(Continued from Page 2)

groups of readers diminish in size they do not diminish in worthiness. An editor who pretends they do not exist denies his own capacity for communicating a clear version of what is important about college life. He denies his responsibility to

a community and an undertaking which are collectively greater than any individual can become, even through "martyrdom."

Next week I will crave "equal time" to discuss some Administrative Errors.

R. E. Quaintance

Editor's note: Richard Quaintance is chairman of the Publications Committee

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But when you come right down to it, that's what your college

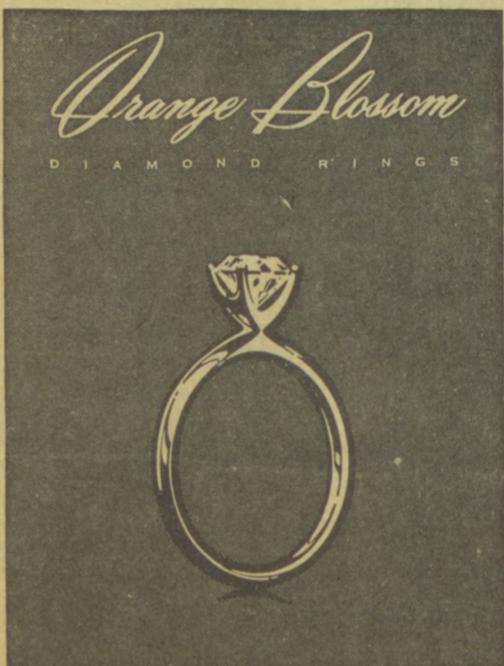
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(Continued from Page 1)

Ann Schultes, a Junior residing in Anibal House, claimed that "Just about everyone gave fictitious answers," and that she knew of "only two or three kids who filled it out honestly." Miss Schultes added that many female students found the wording of the questionnaire offensive. "If the psychology or sociology departments had done it, it would have been different," she concluded.

Survey Termed Invalid

Experienced researchers in the social sciences roundly discredited the validity of any results that might have been obtained from the sex survey.

Assistant professor of psychology Donald Hildum in his assessment of the methodology employed in taking the survey cited the fact that there was no way to determine how these students who failed to return questionnaires considered "valid" by Metzger would figure in the over all statistics had they given frank answers. "There's bound to be a bias," he stated. "Getting survey results in this way — through anything but face-to-face interviews—gives you fuzzy results, at best." This was supported, he said, by the American Psychological Association's study of the Kinsey Report. Hildum also cited other aspects of the survey which would tend to lessen the reliability of the responses. "It seems to me that there's a two-fold problem here: First, to whom are the results going to be communicated; and, secondly, what use is going to be made of the responses?"

Hildum suggested that these two factors might easily have affected students' willingness to give frank answers. Commenting on the Chancellor's refusal to allow the survey to be made public, Hildum said, "I think it would have to be termed a correct action . . . I wouldn't hesitate about it." "Raw percentages mean different things to different people," Hildum said. "An anxious parent is going to see any percentage other than 'O' as shockingly high."

Dr. David Beardslee, Chairman of the Psychology department and director of the Computer Development Projects Center, also called the Chancellor's measures in halting the release of information concerning the Sex survey "a correct action." "This is an area in which people have very strong feelings, and from that point of view I'd place little credence in any results obtained in this way."

Beardslee expressed concern over the way the survey data might be interpreted. "Since I don't think the data would be worth much, I can't see any reason for taking the risks involved," he said. Beardslee also stated that he was afraid Metzger's actions in taking the survey would "reflect on legitimate student activities in the area of social science research." "I would have been concerned had he (Varner) not taken this action," Beardslee concluded.

Protest Rally

A rally organized by students supporting Metzger's position was held on Tuesday night. Approximately 75 students gathered between Anibal and Fitzgerald house and called for Metzger's reinstatement as Observer Editor.

Attending the rally along with the students were the head residents of both dorms, assistant director of physical education and recreation, Richard Robinson, and Dean Sells. Sells later said that student sympathies at the meeting "seemed to be somewhat split." He described the gathering as "orderly and well-behaved."

REPORTER COMMENTS

UPI reporter Harold Maertz, who covered the controversy last week, said that he too had "mixed feelings" after posting several stories dealing with the dispute. He felt that, "The Chancellor was right in not allowing the survey to be published," but added that, "he should have let Metzger publish the news story" in the May 1 edition of the Observer. He commented that the incident "doesn't make the school look good."

RIGHTS VIOLATED?

As of Friday, May 8, Metzger was scheduled to meet with representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union which has decided to investigate the affair. The National Student Association has also decided to look into the controversy. NSA representatives Phil Sutton and Joel Sharkey were scheduled for appointments with Varner on Friday afternoon. They will attempt to ascertain whether Metzger's rights were violated.

VARNER CONFIDENT

In an interview with the Chancellor on Thursday afternoon, Varner said that there was a "strong wave of public support" for his actions, and that, "Both parents and students in the community have endorsed the stand I took in this issue." "I haven't a worry in the world," he stated. "I'm as certain as I'm sitting here that I did the right thing."

Asked why he had made the decision to fire Metzger and destroy the May 1 issue of the Observer, without first consulting the Publications Committee on that specific course of action, Varner explained, "I knew it was going to be volatile and thought it unfair to place them in that position." He added that he had consulted "a great variety of sources" before determining that the poll was "invalid, improper, that publicity about it should be stopped." He said that "The Board of Trustees has the ultimate legal responsibility for anything that

happens at Oakland, and under the authority which they have delegated to me I took this action."

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Varner has set up an ad hoc committee of four students and four faculty members to review the structure and policies of the Observer, and to serve in an advisory capacity to it. He stressed that the committee would by no means supervise the news or editorials of the paper, and would not make regular reviews of its content prior to publication each week. He is also hoping that the staff of the Observer will seek to utilize the advisory services of one or more members of the University community who have had experience as professional journalists.

METZGER STILL ENROLLED

As of Friday Metzger had indicated no intention of withdrawing from enrollment at Oakland, and it is assumed by sources close to him that he will remain to complete degree requirements.

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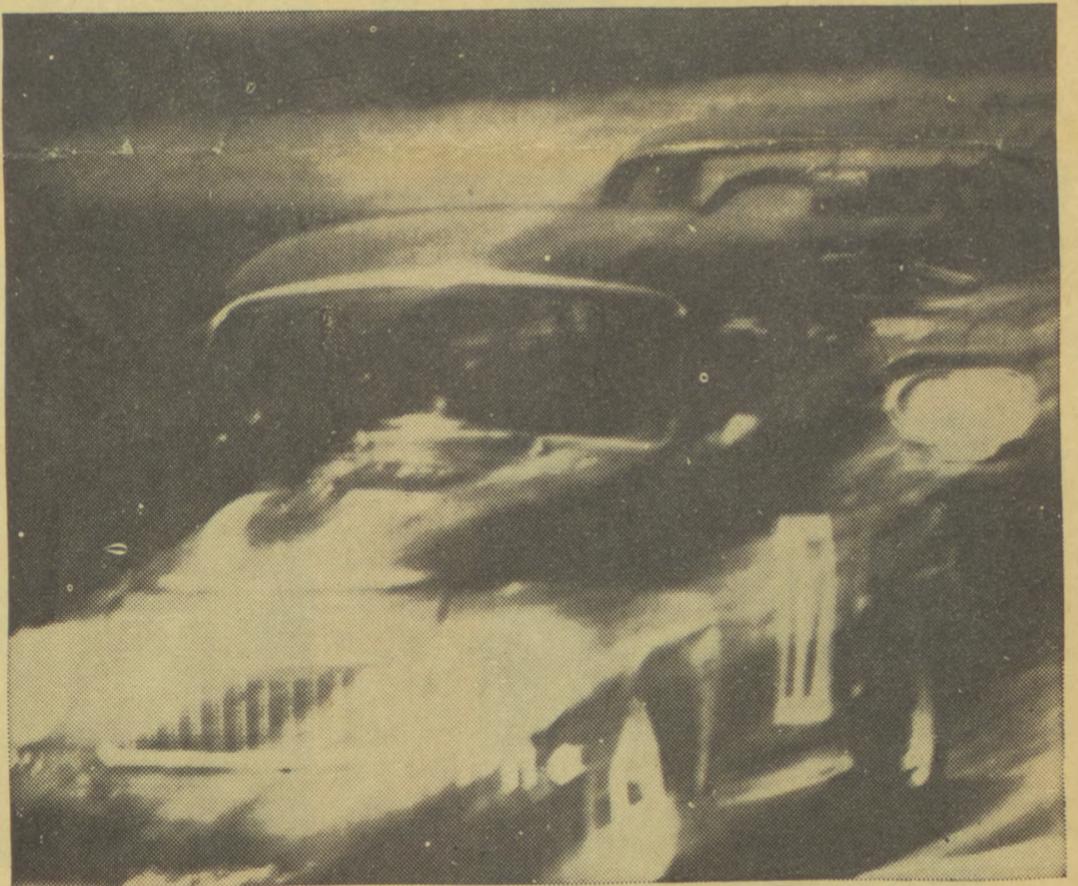
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