

Various Matrimonial Problems Solved By Reason and by Calm Discussion Form Basis of Popular Series Of Playlets by Famous Authors Being Presented Over Pacific Coast Network

Vicki Vola and James Krieger in domestic argument



Monty Marquet shares a family lull with Charles Gerard



Charles Gerard shares his side of the argument to Monty Marquet



"Excuse me please," says Monty to Charles in hazy moments.



Reconciliation Monty and Charles decide to have no more quarrels.

"I Want A Divorce"

By JACK BURROUGHS
DICTONARIES are all right in their way, but they certainly do take the drama out of dramatic productions. What I mean is, I can't picture myself getting excited over hearing a line like this out of the loud speaker: "I want a legal dissolution in whole or in part of the marriage relation by a court or other body having competent authority."
 Not even Montgomery Mohr or Vicki Vola or Natalie Park, with all the practice they've had breathing fire into the mike in that "I Want a Divorce" series, could make a line like that sound convincing.

If this proves anything at all, it establishes beyond a doubt that Noah Webster will never make a radio playwright—not if he tries for a thousand years.
 The line quoted a few paragraphs above may not be good drama, but it's good sense.

I'm willing to bet that if embattled couples would resort to the dictionary in an emotional crisis, the divorce courts would find time to take a half holiday now and then.

Take, for example, any fighting couple toward the end of the third or fourth round. They've hurled all their uncomplimentary adjectives at one another, and are well along in the second or third or fourth or fifth stage of the fray, when dispensa and rolling-pin are exchanged. Suddenly they remember the battle cry of linked incompatibility. But instead of shouting "I want a divorce!" at each other, they adjourn to the living room or library, where a copy of the dictionary reposes, aloof and untroubled by family squabbles.

With one accord they lean the f'll they find what they are searching for. Then they read in unison: "I want a legal dissolution in whole or in part of the marriage relation by a court or other body having competent authority."

THESE would be called off right I fight. No emotional crises in the world could survive a line like that. Noah Webster may be a fourth-rate dramatist but he is a first-rate reconciler.

Fortunately for NBC dialers, there are Vicki Vola and James Krieger who turn out the "I Want a Divorce" dramas, or if there are, none of their dic-tionary talk ever gets as far as the mike.

Dictionary dramatists don't get very far on the air or elsewhere. They have the biggest vocabularies known to civilized man, but they get so badly lost in a tangle of verbiage that they never do succeed in finding their way back into the open.

In pleasant contrast to these word-lust wanderers in forests of verbs and nouns and adjectives are such writers as Donald Henderson Clarke, Hugh Willey, Peter B. Kyne and others whose sketches come to the dialer in the "I Want a Divorce" series.

When you dial one of those re-corded bouts you may settle down to a dozen minutes of civil action. What though the scrap always ends in a truce with a reconciliation instead of a knock-out? There is always plenty of excitement while it lasts.

The term "bout" is here used in the figurative sense, of course. The blow is all verbal, though no less effective for that reason.

Here the question arises as to why, with all these embattled spouses vociferously declaring that they want a divorce, not one of the dramatic sketches ends in a separation or the warring couple. The only possible answer is that the principals in these domestic dramas



Vicki Vola reads riot act to James Krieger

don't really want a divorce. They merely try to do.

Fair-minded judges and other long-headed students of human nature have been proving the truth of this statement ever since divorces were invented, and have been putting that truth into practice for many years.

Long before radio was recognized as a dramatic medium a series of "I Want a Divorce" dramas in real life had a long run in the chambers of Superior Judge Graham of San Francisco County. Judge Graham was known as the Great Reconciler and his court was often referred to by myself and others who covered the court best, as "the Court of Broken Hearts." Judge Graham, with his common-sense advice, brought about the reconciliation of countless couples who thought they wanted a divorce.

IAST Fall when I listened, in company with other Bay region radio editors, to a "preview" of the drama that was to be the first of NBC's "I Want a Divorce" series, I was forcibly reminded of the days when I covered the court beat in San Francisco.

The sketch, written by Carlton E. Morse, might well have been based on one of the reconciliations brought about by Judge Graham years ago.

In Morse's sketch Vicki Vola and Vernon Wilson were heard as a young married couple, whose marriage, after five years, seemed on the verge of an unhappy termination. The trouble in their case was that they had become involved with a crowd of thrill seekers who were trying to find release from boredom. The husband and wife, both seeking a divorce, were brought together in the chambers of a judge who was known as "the great reconciler." The judge, played by Lou Tobin, convinced the two that happiness was still possible for them in the married state and that they did not really belong in the crowd with which they had allowed themselves to become associated.

Since the "I Want a Divorce" series opened last October, the portion of the NBC files devoted to these programs has gradually assumed the appearance of the records of a Benz divorce court, with one notable difference. Instead of recording the granting of a divorce decree, each of these files copies records a reconciliation and the manner in which it was brought about.

There is for example, the record of the broadcast of November 17, which reads as follows: "When a couple of war buddies get together after about 20 years of absence, the result is quite salubrious for the boys, but not necessarily so for the wives. In fact, one particular reunion stirred one marriage to the brink of disaster, and that's the theme of the drama 'I Want a Divorce' broadcast from San Francisco, Wednesday, November 17. . . . Novelist Hugh Willey, guest scripter of the sketch, starts his play with one divorcee and almost ends up with another. Bill has replaced his old-fashioned wife with a flashy, stylish wife No. 2. Joe was getting along all right until he saw what sort of wife Bill had set out when the two wives are placed side by side in a night club the external comparison is even more devastating. "A little beauty treatment for Joe's wife works wonders and the marital ties are saved as trouble maker Bill and Bill's wife leave for home."

TWO QUOTE further from the files: 1. "Novelist Peter B. Kyne is the name author who contributes the second true-life drama of the series. "I Want a Divorce" to be enacted by the National Players in San Francisco and broadcast October 26. "Having reached the top in the literary fields of the novel, the short story and the motion picture, Peter B. Kyne at 57 is now branching out into radio script writing. "Kyne's opening contribution to 'I Want a Divorce' expands a familiar enough theme—that of the home wife who tries to manage her husband's business. This particular wife is an excellent household executive, but when she attempts to put her favorite theories into practice in her husband's office, even to the extent of firing the efficient secretary, dire results ensue. Tragedy is averted in a clever, typically Kyne final twist."

Another excerpt from NBC's "I Want a Divorce" files outlines one of Donald Henderson Clarke's dramatic sketches as follows: "The story concerns a marriage which heads for the rocks when hubbly forgets to come home on his wife's birthday. Complicating matters is the fact that the wife's best friend is married to one of those husbands who never forget anything."

"There's a surprise ending—a happy ending, yes—but it doesn't come until the wife has been given up by friends to decide on a quiet divorce."

Arnold Maguire's script for November 3 is recorded in the archives as follows: "Maguire's play is based on the conflict between home and patients in the life of a busy young physician. Forced to choose between his arduously-ill daughter and his even more dangerously sick old patient, the doctor makes a difficult choice which almost leads to the divorce court. A sensible mother-in-law and the timely action of the patient's wife combine to save the marriage."

THESSE are but a few of the many "I Want a Divorce" series set forth in the "I Want a Divorce" series, typical of the illustrating individual marital problems and showing that divorce is not always a necessity."

Among the National Players heard in these dramatic sketches are: Helen Kreeb, Monty Marquet, Lu Tobin, Vicki Vola, Vernon Wilson, Carl Kroeckel, Charles MacAllister, Charles Gerard, Dixie Marsh, Marjorie Smith, Gilbert Morgan, John Grover, Montgomery Mohr, Natalie Park, Trina Morris, Joyce Cole, Lois Austin, Phyllis Jane Neumann, Pearl King-Tanner, Davis Kenner, Jack Crowden, James Krieger, Mary Ellen Herrick and Donald Willey.

Providing entertainment to and the sole accomplishment of this series. Fan mail indicates that the programs have in many instances assisted listeners in working out solutions of their own marital difficulties.

"I Want a Divorce" is apparently turning out to be a success for reconciliation.