

Life's lemons don't sour author



Life's inequities can be funny if viewed from the right perspective. Irene Kampen's readers can identify with as well as chuckle at some of the experiences she relates.

By CAROL MAHONEY

Although she wrote the book on which television's "The Lucy Show" was based, Irene Kampen has never met its famous star. The novel, "Life Without George," provided the material for Lucille Ball's second TV comedy series which is currently in reruns.

"I have never met Lucille Ball or, as I prefer to put it, Lucille Ball has never met me," Ms. Kampen told her audience at a Troy Town Hall meeting last week.

Nevertheless, Ms. Kampen has a fondness for the actress. "No matter where and whenever the show is shown, I get a royalty check. I love Lucy," she said, putting great emphasis on the word love. "Nobody loves Lucy like I do," said the author who has written 10 books which poke fun at life's mishaps.

Ms. Kampen traces the beginning of her career as a writer of humor to the event which preceded it. Living in a small town in Connecticut with "Mr. Right," she said she had no other ambition than to keep a dust-free house and bake blueberry muffins. This lifestyle ended abruptly one day when her husband ran off with her best friend.

"And her house was teeming with dust," she added.

As her audience laughed sympathetically, she said, "It all happened a number of years ago and

I'm not bitter about it. I did learn one lesson though and that lesson is, DON'T DUST."

With no husband and no job, Ms. Kampen still had a mortgage payment to make and a child to support. "So I did the only thing I could do. I wrote a book about how hilarious it all was," she said dryly.

AFTER detailing the trials of life without the husband she fictitiously renamed George, the author went on to write several more books about her subsequent experiences.

Preparations for her daughter's wedding provided material for more hilarious prose. She asked the mothers of brides in the audience to relive with her those tension-filled moments before the wedding.

"You mothers of the grooms," she directed, "can do just what you did during all the preparations — nothing."

Another of her books, "Are You Carrying Any Gold or Living Relatives?" details her adventures on a trip through Soviet Russia.

As the owner of a Siamese cat, Ms. Kampen was surprised to find that commercial pet foods are non-existent in Russia. "Russian cats must catch Russian mice or starve," she said.

She advised Americans to take certain basic necessities with them while traveling in Russia. A sink stopper was one. "The Russians have invented the sink, but not the stopper," she said.

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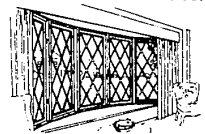
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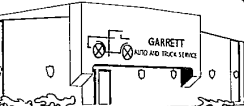
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