

# 22 'First Ladies' In Plymouth Show

Twenty-two "first ladies" will come to Plymouth Nov. 1 in a fashion show that's the first of its kind in the Observer area.

The fashions will be authentic reproductions of original gowns worn by U.S. presidents' wives.

Modeling them, as stand-in first ladies, will be members of the Sarah Ann Cochran chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, sponsoring the show at 1 p.m. in the First United Methodist Church of Plymouth.

The sanctuary of the recently-built colonial style church will be the setting for the 22 intricate gowns of the Seeley-Deer collection.

"First Ladies on Parade" is the title of the event, which will include appropriate organ music by Mrs. Charles Lang of Plymouth and refreshments following the showing.

Tickets are \$3 and available from members of the DAR chapter. The church is located on North Territorial west of Sheldon.

The gowns, seasoned travelers because they have been in shows all over the country, are owned by Dr. and

Mrs. Edwin Deer of Birmingham.

This is the first time they have visited in the western suburbs, Dr. Deer said, and the first time that a DAR group has been the sponsor.

Sarah Ann Cochran members gathered last week at the church to be fitted into the intricate gowns by Dr. and Mrs. Deer.

"We all wondered if we'd be able to get into them," said Mrs. Virginia Bake, who will model Mrs. Sarah Polk's dress. "Thought we'd all be rejects. But they seem to fit very well."

The collection had its beginnings about four years ago when Mrs. Deer decided to reproduce 20 gowns as a fund raiser for the Republican Party.

She consulted dress designer or Donald Nagel, and the GOP's national finance committee agreed to underwrite the project.

Nagel and his partner, David Zeese, were given permission to go into the Smithsonian, Institute in Washington to sketch and photograph the 20 dresses selected.

Then patterns were made and materials selected. The work of recreating the gowns



was done by Margaret Remindino of Birmingham and Juan Horraz of Detroit.

After a year the Republican party decided to sell the gowns so "they came home to us," Dr. Deer said.

Since then they have been shown to dozens of audiences as fund raisers for hospitals, symphonies, and political parties. Copies of gowns worn by Mamie Eisenhower and Jackie Kennedy Onassis were added to the original 20.

Dr. Deer said the collection has been back and forth across the country three times and to Alaska twice.

Helen Tat's gown which will be modeled by Mrs.

D.H. Baumhart of Livonia, was described by Dr. Deer as the most expensive. Its heavy pearl beading was done by an 84-year-old woman, he added.

Mrs. John W. Armstrong of Plymouth, regent of the Sarah Ann Cochran chapter, is in charge of the event and her coordinating committee includes Mrs. Bake, Mrs. Donald Hiller of Northville and Mrs. Hugh Lafferty of Plymouth.

Mrs. Baumhart is in charge of models and Mrs. William Porter of Plymouth is heading ticket sales. Publicity chairman are Mrs. Albert Heindryckx of Plymouth and Mrs. Donald Stobb of Livonia.



MRS. RICHARD STUART, member of the Sarah Ann Cochran chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, is wearing a copy of Mary Todd Lincoln's inaugural gown. She'll model it in the DAR showing of "First Ladies on Parade" Nov. 1.

OTHER GOWNS to be in the historical fashion show in Plymouth are those of Frances Cleveland, modeled by Mrs. William Porter (left), and Julia Grant's dress, shown by Mrs. Kenneth Hulsing. (Observer photos by Harry Mauthe)

## Hollywood Revisited

### Niven Sees New Day For Films...

By MARGARET MILLER

Actor David Niven can look back to the glory days of Hollywood but he also looks ahead to a fine future for the movies.

"Entertainment on the screen is just so great when it's good that people aren't going to give it up," he told the Livonia Town Hall audience last week.

Despite the havoc that television caused the industry, and despite the current prevalence of sex and violence in films, the suave actor said, "I think it's going to be all right."

"People are sensibly turning to local control to keep the films they don't want out of their neighborhoods," Niven said.

"The best control is at the local box office. And theaters are making changes - they're getting smaller and I think soon they'll be offering baby-sitting, so people can continue to enjoy an evening out at the movies."

Opening the 1972-73 Livonia season, Niven gave the women a bird's eye view of "that piece of American folklore - ancient Hollywood" and then brought the story of movie-making to the present day.

He also gave a light history of his own career as an actor and had comments about an assortment of film luminaries who have been his close associates.

In the era of the 1930s with its huge studios and top moguls, Niven said, the system was "to find an actor or actress - not necessarily good but one who would appeal to the public - and give that personality a well-insulated buildup."



"LOVE THESE BEGINNINGS and endings" sighed Mrs. Norbert Dittmar, Livonia Town Hall president, when the debonair actor David Niven gave her a kiss at the start and finish of his lecture. Then he obliged one more time for our photographer, Bob Woodring.

"These people became gods and goddesses - they really did," he said.

"They were worshipped, put on a pedestal by the public. The studios had literally dozens of people working for each star to make sure he always showed to his best advantage."

Today, he said, we find many better actors and actresses, but their role is different where the public is concerned.

"There's no continuity of work that the studios gave," he explained. "It takes a long time to become well-known all over the country and without the buildup today's professionals have a problem."

the many screen tests I had made he recognized me and put me under contract," he added.

Niven, who won an Academy Award for "Separate Tables," said he'd have to rate Deborah Kerr, his co-star, as his favorite leading lady.

"She's such a marvelous actress and so generous," he said.

He added that in over 60 pictures he shared stardom with "only one stinker - Gina Lollobrigida."

"She's an old-fashioned Italian actress," he said, "always an hour late and with an entourage of hair-dressers and the like."

"I only hope I'll never get so broke I have to work with her again."

Other film greats he mentioned were Errol Flynn and Mae West. Of Flynn, he said: "I knew him very well and you always knew exactly where you stood with him - he'd let you down."

Mae West, he added, "made me uncomfortable when I went for a job interview by having me take off my coat and then my shirt. I didn't get the part."

The Town Hall women who attended the celebrity luncheon in the Mayflower Meeting House kept Niven busy autographing copies of his recent book, "The Moon's a Balloon."

He told them he now lives in southern France with his second wife, a native of Sweden, and two adopted daughters.

"And I make one picture a year," he added. "We recently finished this year's - it's a joke version of Dracula and I hope it doesn't haunt me."

He added that the big extravaganzas have to be a thing of the past. "If you put 10-million into a picture you have to get 20-million at the box office - and no picture is going to make that much," he said.

Niven, a professional soldier in his native Britain before coming to Hollywood, said that in order to become a god or goddess of that era "you had to be an extra and get lucky."

"I got lucky when I was stark naked," he said, and then explained to the ladies that Douglas Fairbanks Jr. had mistaken him for an old friend and he had met producer Samuel Goldwyn in a sauna.

"Then when he saw one of

## m. m. memos

Last spring our university daughter reported a minor tragedy on campus. Right in the middle of final exams, Daylight Saving Time arrived and the students lost a whole hour of cram time.

It didn't seem fair, she said, that the hour couldn't be retrieved until fall. The kids needed it then.

So now it's fall and time for Michigan's first Daylight Saving Time in several years to exit. And I confess to a well-remembered confusion.

First, there was figuring out just when it is that we do whatever we have to do with our clocks. On that score Daughter No. 2 did some research for her school paper and assured me it's Saturday night.

Then, which way the clocks? Well, we lost an hour of

sleep (or studying) back in the spring so we must get it back now. So I guess we set the clocks back.

But will this make mornings lighter or darker? Not so important to me as it used to be, since no one walks more than a block to school by the dawn's early light.

Will afternoons end earlier or later? More important - lots of after school activities.

And how can I find a simple method for keeping track of all this? Probably hopeless.

Guess I'll just have to be an hour late for everything Sunday. Or is it an hour early?

-Margaret Miller

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## Olivia Recalls Contract Row

By LORRAINE MCCLISH

Olivia de Havilland greeted her Town Hall audience saying "The years do pass and the pounds do accumulate. Thank you for recognizing me."

She was the opening headliner for the Farmington Town Hall series who came to Northland theater to tell the highlights of her career which stretched "From the City of Stars to the City of Lights."

Her acting career started with a part in "Midsummer Night's Dream" that ultimately brought her to Warner Brothers Studio for a screen

test in the morning and a contract signing that same evening. She assumed she had been called to Hollywood because of her dedication to Shakespeare, but her very first picture with that studio was a slapstick comedy called "Alibi Ike" and starred Joe E. Brown.

She likened Warner's studio to "a well run model prison farm." She called her contract a "seven year term."

She made reference to "serving my time," and "when they let me out on parole."

Her first real run-in with Jack Warner came when she was asked to play the part of

Melanie in "Gone With The Wind," the movie she still thinks of as the high point in her acting career, in spite of two subsequent Academy awards.

She was able to do this largely, "but as more and more rumors kept circling of the success of the picture, the madder Mr. Warner got." Their arguments over her parts eventually led to her suspension, which in turn led to a lawsuit, filed by her, that jockeyed back and forth in the courts with re-trials and appeals.

She ultimately won the suit in behalf of every contract player in the movie industry

that stands today on the law books as "The de Havilland Decision."

Of her friendship with Errol Flynn during this time, she said, "When I first met him I did what any one of you ladies would have done. I fell promptly in love with him." He in turn played jokes. On one occasion she found a long dead snake between the folds of her voluminous petticoats, fastened to the hoop under her skirt.

She mentioned ESP (extra sensory perception) and mental telepathy several times and said she had

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