

HE GOT HIS DOLLAR'S WORTH

One of the fascinating things about this mission office is that one never knows from what direction the next mission story will come. Most of our anecdotes in this Propagation of the Faith column are told by those very generous hearted missionaries who come to our office in search of much needed assistance in spreading the faith of Jesus Christ.

The source of today's story is quite different. Last Saturday afternoon Melinda Schneider became Mrs. Carney, and she and her Tim had a glorious wedding at the Church of St. John the Baptist in Hillsdale where they were surrounded by lots of family and scores of friends. Having known the bride's parents since they were young people in college, your scribe naturally was invited to the nuptial Mass, and then to an exciting wedding reception at a beautiful golf club nearby. The gala festivities had hardly started when the bride's Uncle Philip, a fine looking man in his middle 70's, told a most interesting story with an unusual mission angle.

Fifty-six years ago his parents, who would have been the bride's grandparents, left their home in Ohio and came east to settle in Rutherford, New Jersey. In those early days the senior Schneider family was comprised of three pretty girls and six hungry boys, then in their early teens. Papa Schneider certainly had to have a good job, and it was a very promising job opportunity that caused the Schneiders to abandon Ohio and settle in Rutherford. The senior Schneiders were very ardent Catholics and so were their nine children. The entire family was very faithful in attending Sunday Mass, and equally serious about making the St. Jude Novena at the local parish Church near their new home in Rutherford. But all of that was fifty-six years ago.

IT STARTED FIFTY YEARS AGO

Uncle Philip, the narrator of this unusual mission story, was the oldest boy in the Schneider household. This itinerant family had hardly settled in Rutherford when young Phil took himself to Mass one Sunday morning where he listened with great interest as the priest in the pulpit conducted very eloquently and very earnestly a campaign for Membership in the Society for the Propagation

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of the Faith. Of course there were Membership envelopes in every pew that morning, but young Phil was embarrassed and penniless, and could not even look at an envelope. Phil was poor because in those depression days all young men were feeling the pinch of "hard times". However. He distinctly remembered that the priest had said from the pulpit, "Fill out the envelope and put your name on it, even if you have no money." And then Father added, "And we will send a representative of the Society to visit you at your home."

This is precisely what happened. Grace Cole was the name of the Propagation representative, and she knocked one evening on the door of the Schneider home asking to see young Philip. That evening Grace carried in her hand the empty envelope which Philip had popped into the collection basket the Sunday before. As luck would have it, Grace was a rather comely young lady with deepset eyes and dark brown hair. As Philip discussed with her the Propagation of the Faith and her work for the missionaries, he began to develop a slight romantic interest in this Society's well chosen representative.

The streets in Rutherford could not have been very treacherous back in 1931, but gallant Philip thought it would be very unsafe for a young lady like Grace to go home alone. After he scraped up ninety cents plus ten, he put his mission dollar into the Propagation envelope and then volunteered to escort the young lady to her home simply to provide whatever security she might need. They chatted as they went and they stopped along the way for a Coke. Remember Cokes were a nickel back in 1931 and most understanding vendors were always ready to supply two straws with each Coke because young America was still feeling the sting of the serious depression.

Well, "the pause that refreshes", equipped with common straws, intensified young Philip's interest in the missions, but more importantly intensified his interest in the mission Society's very attractive representative. From those simple beginnings a lovely courtship developed. A year and a half later, Grace and Philip took themselves to the parish priest in Rutherford. They made plans for their marriage and a nuptial Mass of course. Then the years moved along swiftly, the last vestiges of the depression vanished, and a modest degree of healthy

prosperity settled down in the home of Uncle Philip and Grace.

The "Sauce" of the Story

It was only last Saturday evening at Melinda and Tim's wedding in Hillsdale that Uncle Philip and his wife Grace told this true story of their romantic start in life. Uncle Phil's tongue might have been loosened a bit by a whiskey sour, but his heart was sweetened and unrestrained as he related with great joy the fact that it was the Propagation of the Faith that brought him together with his loving wife.

Next year Grace and Uncle Phil will be 50 years married. They talk proudly and freely of their five grown children and without a bit of boasting will quickly show pictures of their fifteen grandchildren, all of whom seem to be doing very nicely. Grace and Phil still live in Rutherford and they will never cease being grateful to the Propagation of the Faith for the private propagation with which Almighty God has blessed their marriage for nearly 50 years .

Despite the greatness of the Propagation of the Faith, and its impressive status as a "Pontifical Society", we certainly cannot promise that a Membership envelope, when combined with a single dollar offering, will result in a romantic episode such as Uncle Phil described. But the fact remains that your Membership in this Pontifical Society will always be money well spent for the greatest cause on earth -- the salvation of souls in mission lands.