

Sweet Song of Home



Dorothy Collins and Raymond Scott have not only The Best in Music but the best of marriages as well

By: Dell Chandler

Happy circle of triangles: Three goals—music, marriage, parenthood. Three in the family—Dorothy, Raymond, Debbie—up till now! After time out for brand-new baby, Dorothy will resume her stage career.

The best part of working together is going home together. Raymond Scott pays this heartwarming compliment to his wife and working partner, Dorothy Collins, thoughtfully, even gravely. "We've worked together for more than twelve years, been married for six, been parents for three and a half years, and life together gets better all the time." And now Raymond, who was musical director for *Your Hit Parade*, and his partner Dorothy, who was the *Hit Parade's* featured singer for seven years, are together once again. This time, on *The Best in Music*, CBS Radio's Sunday-afternoon songfest. These two musical bright lights are doing what they like best—making beautiful music together.

Chatting with them in their lovely North Hills home in Manhasset on Long Island's swank North Shore, of a quiet, day-after-the-show afternoon, you know how sincerely Raymond means what he says of his pretty, talented wife. There is so much understanding, so much devotion to good music-making—whether it be singing, composing or conducting—that one talks easily for the other.

Did they have any rules for getting along in this triple-threat, triple-treat intimacy of work, marriage and parenthood? "It's simple," says Raymond, "no screaming allowed. Courtesy in marriage, as well as in business, goes a long way." Dorothy agrees that dark-haired vigorous Raymond is amazingly even-tempered for a finicky, hard-to-please musician. But she adds her own intensely feminine, quietly perceptive opinion: "There is no competition between Raymond and me."

The interview takes place only shortly before the birth of their second child. Dorothy is chic in her simple black silk chemise, brightened by a white organdy collar and a twin-heart diamond pin (a gift from Raymond). She says, however, "The chemise is all right for now, but I'm not so sure I'll wear one after the baby comes." Raymond affects horror even at the possibility: "Hide her beautiful figure in a sack?"

You quickly understand why Dorothy is so easy to live with, work with. She is completely feminine. She can imply a compliment with a look, or a way of paying attention, and needs no gushy words. She generously acknowledges Raymond's infallible musical judgment, his broad intellectual interests. For her own talent, she insists, "I've been lucky." It is for Raymond to explain: "Whatever Dorothy can do well, she

Singer Dorothy Collins and composer-conductor Raymond Scott are the husband-and wife stars of CBS Radio's *The Best in Music*, Sunday, 1:05 to 2 P.M. EDT.

plays down as being easy. In our high-pressure business, Dorothy has never been forced into the brassy role of tooting her own horn. People succumb to her charm and toot for her."

One reason for this is that Dorothy so obviously loves whatever it is she is doing. "I love to sing. I always have. Being back on radio, after all these years on TV, is like slipping out of a pair of tight shoes. They're fashionable 'while you're wearing them-but, boy, is it nice to get them off for a while! Radio is like a pair of bedroom slippers. You can relax. You can just go ahead and sing. There's nothing between you and your song-no TV cameras to worry about, no props. You don't have to think about how your hair looks. You only have to think about your song. It's the difference between making a production out of singing-which can be an exciting challenge-and the pure, simple pleasure of singing in the bathtub."

How-in an entertainment world of sharp-elbowed, fast-moving, ambitious and talented girls-does one girl, as soft and sweet as Dorothy, bubble to the top? Yet Dorothy's career keeps reaching new heights. In night-club engagements at the Thunderbird in Las Vegas and the Copacabana in New York, a brand-new, sophisticated singing personality has emerged. And Dorothy has shown herself a fine actress in such varied roles as high-spirited Laurie in "Oklahoma!", the dream struck Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz," the ill-starred Magnolia in "Show Boat." And all this happens to a young woman whose main ambition in life is to be a good wife and mother.

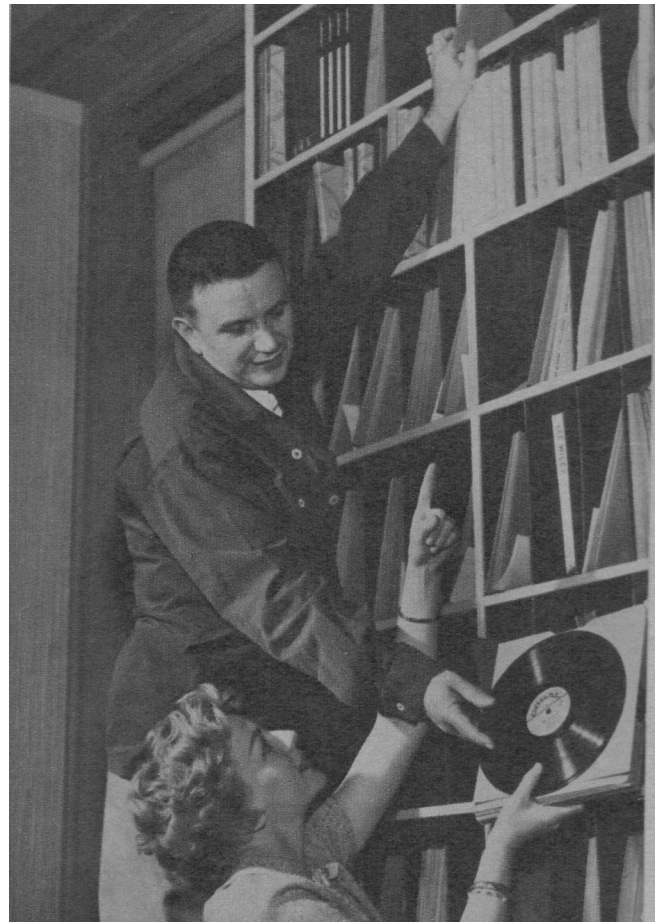
You only have to see Dorothy with Raymond and their precious Debbie to know that this is no mere pose. "I have always been very happy in my work. But I'm just ecstatic when I'm home. I guess I've always been lucky." That's Dorothy's explanation of how a young Canadian high-school girl, who happened to love to sing, got to be one of America's entertainment favorites.

As the darling of *Your Hit Parade*, Dorothy made herself known and recognized all over the continent. The dressy shirtwaist blouse, with its chic ribbon tie, her neat, narrow-but-not-naughty straight skirt, her flat-brushed smooth hair set a style. But now, with the uncommon sense and good taste that stamps everything she does, Dorothy notes, "It would be silly to try to look like a schoolgirl forever."

Raymond, who prides himself on being tough-minded and analytical, has a slightly more complicated explanation for Dorothy's success: "First of all, I think you *can* fool people when you're on TV, but only if you make occasional guest appearances. With just a three-minute exposure to the TV audience, once every couple of months, you can put across any personality you want to. But you can't fake and pass yourself off as a nice, warm, decent human being-if you're not-when you're on for a half-hour a week, week after week, year after year. If you're the kind of person who doesn't really give a whoop about anyone, the public very quickly isn't going to give a whoop about you. Dorothy has that warmth.

"Another thing," he adds, shaking his head in wondering, admiring bewilderment, "Dorothy and my in-laws weave some kind of magic on even tough, hardboiled customers. People can't ever do enough for them. Everybody always wants to protect them . . . or take care of them ... or help them."

Raymond marvels over how much magic the gentle Dorothy has worked on him. For all his youthful enthusiasms and boyishly rugged good looks, Raymond is a shrewd businessman, a first



Records: Dorothy's one interest is singing or listening, but Raymond's home workshop has equipment for everything—including recording.

-rate, highly respected musician with a dozen movie scores, and a couple of hundred musical compositions to his credit, from pop tunes and jingles to light classics and show tunes. Therefore, what he has to say about Dorothy's influence on him is even more touching: "Dorothy is sensitive and loving. Just being around her, you get the feeling that the nicest thing in the world is to make someone else feel good. Her affection and love warm our house and protect Debbie and me like some kind of good-luck charm.

"Dorothy has made me notice and respond to experiences that, ten years ago, I wouldn't have even realized were happening around me. There wasn't much kissing in our home when I was a kid, so I still can't get over our little Debbie. She kisses and hugs us and goes around distributing 'I love you's' like some royal princess sharing her fortune with her subjects-and somehow, by her giving it away, everybody gets richer. That's what comes of living with Dorothy. Why, she's even changed my taste in music. I like sentimental music more than I used to."

Raymond's influence on Dorothy has been on a professional level: "I don't worry about pleasing the whole world with my singing. I find that, if I please Raymond, I will please everyone else." And Raymond adds, "Dorothy can now tell, just as fast as I can, whether a number needs more work." People who work with them agree. Dorothy, in her own way, has become just as much of a perfectionist in music as Raymond is. ("And, boy, is that ever something!" as one of his musicians sighed.)

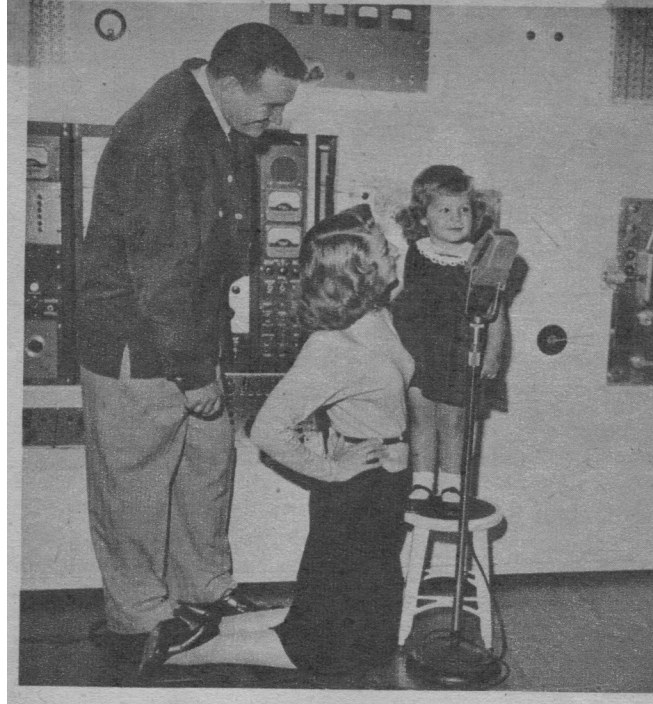
Once three-and-a-half-year-old Deborah Scott enters the living room, there is no mistaking the biggest influence in both Raymond's and Dorothy's life. Debbie, with her light golden-brown hair and shining short bangs, is delicious to look at-the latest Paris fashions never got a better debut than Debbie in her tiny accordion-pleated red skirt, with its white cotton chemise-type over blouse, no more than a scant six or eight inches of skirt showing. She is also a delight to know.

Poised and friendly, she is eager to show the visitor the microphone that stands alongside the baby grand piano. And the music writing stand "that my daddy made," she points out with solemn childish pride. "Come," and she holds out a dimpled small hand, "let's play 'Hide Behind the Curtain.'" In this game, she hides behind the beige antique satin ceiling-to-floor drapes. Then you introduce her and she sings-triumphantly-any one of the hundred songs for which she knows the words as well as the music.

Dorothy is no great theorist about children ("just love 'em") but here, too, you see her practical, warm outlook. Debbie's keen musical gifts are encouraged-but, at the first sign that she's getting silly and taking over the living room, she is brought back in line with a soft reminder from her mother. Quickly and good naturedly, mother and daughter are back at one of their favorite pastimes. Between them, they do all the parts in shows Dorothy has played-Debbie has seen them all. "When I go on the road," says Dorothy, "it's hard on Raymond because I take Debbie with me. He manages to visit for long weekends. Sometimes for a whole week. And that helps. I couldn't bear to be alone, away from *both of them*, for so much as a day."

It is almost comical to watch Raymond trying to restrain himself when he speaks of Debbie. "When she was less than a year old, she could imitate Dorothy's voice and style so well-not only grandparents, but even impartial strangers, could recognize it. You know, by the time she was three, she could sing a song she'd heard only once or twice. She knows all the verses of '76 Trombones,' and it isn't even Dorothy's record.

"Once, I decided to really test her," Raymond continues, "to see if she just had a freak memory or real musical sense. I was out driving with her one afternoon--it must have been near Christmas, otherwise I don't know why I was humming 'Jingle Bells.' Debbie sang it right after me. I sang it again, this time a half-step higher. Again she sang it right after me ... also a half-step higher. And all this time she was just looking out the window playing it real cool. I repeated it six times, a half-step higher each time. And each time, cool and without seeming to make a special point of it, Debbie sang it exactly as I



did. She's got a wonderful beat, Dorothy's swing and resonance. The kid's fantastic," he ends helplessly.

"Debbie," says Dorothy. "is just thrilled with the idea that *she's* going to have a baby. She says"-here Dorothy laughingly imitates her daughter's high childish voice -" 'I'm going to teach it my songs and I'm going to play ball with it and I'm going to put makeup on her when she grows up.' I suppose it will take her some time to adjust to the real baby, but sometimes even grownups have to make believe for a while before they can accept the truth," Dorothy remarks realistically.

Long before she had any children. Dorothy expressed the hope that she would have sixteen children. "I know it sounded crazy, and that was before Debbie, but even now, I hate to think of having less than four-God willing," she adds simply. Impressive proof of how much mother love can come in a small package.

The Scotts live in a huge house, entirely surrounded by eleven acres of land. Happily, grand as it is, it doesn't have that decorated-down-to-the-last-ashtray look which makes you think "who decorated it" instead of "who lives here." In the corner of an enormous rose Aubusson rug were the scattered cardboard jigsaw puzzle pieces of "The Three Little Bears."

Dorothy loves her home because it is roomy and sunny-and mostly because, with the eight-room basement, there are almost enough rooms to keep up with Raymond's numerous hobbies and jobs. With what amounts to a small-sized recording studio at home, Raymond can work here much of the time. In this way, Dorothy enjoys the best of two worlds working with Raymond and being home with Debbie.

Guiding visitors through the house, Raymond gets them through the cathedral high living room, with its heavily carved credenza and comfortably upholstered turquoise couches, in jig time. But, when they get to the basement, he slows down to a real inspection-tour pace. "I dabble in electronics, photography and furniture designs," he says, "and all of it helps me with my music. I'm not worried about spreading myself too thin. It's better to have a lot of interests than be a one-track specialist. "

He shows one room with only small electronic parts on the shelves, and another devoted solely to large electronic parts. Why does he even need *one* electronic part? "Well," Raymond explains, "suppose I wake up early one morning with an idea for some new musical instrument. It might be too early to drive into New York for a particular item. And maybe I couldn't find it in New York at all. Maybe I'd have to send to Chicago. That might mean a wait of four or five days. When I have an idea that's hot, I want to try it out, right away. With the equipment I have here, I can."

Raymond has invented a Clavivox, which looks like a foreshortened piano but sounds almost human. His Videola--a complicated cross between a TV camera, a Movieola and a tape recorder--makes it easier to compose background music for the movies. These are just two of his many inventions. After getting his brain-children from the drawing board to the living room, Raymond has no further special interest. If others want to market it, it's okay with him, but his kicks come in thinking them up.

In room after brightly lit room stand staggeringly neat stock piles of gadgets, dials, sound parts, recording equipment, arranged on counter tops, hung on pegs, filed in steel cabinets, hidden behind sliding doors. "I make use of it all," Raymond says with pride.

Dorothy's interest in what goes on in this underground laboratory is less than overwhelming, but Raymond points out, "If Dorothy thought I needed her down here, she'd sit down here eight hours a day. Maybe she'd do crossword puzzles, but she'd sit. She'll do anything to make someone she loves happy."

The endless spread of shining black-tiled floors and well-lit counters is elaborate but by no means a way of showing off. The Scotts live in comparatively simple style. Apart from one or two big parties a year, most of their entertaining is dinner at home for a few close friends. Their favorite restaurants are quiet



places where the accent is on food and service, not noise and table-hopping. "Once in a while, when I want to see celebrities or if we've some business to do, we go to Sardi's. I've been to night clubs just four times in my life-if you don't count the times I've played in them."

Only Raymond's workrooms aren't the least bit simple. "With everything neat and cheerful, nothing down here will ever get to be junk." Raymond's idea is that money should be spent on "anything that will make the sun seem shinier." And he can think of more ways than most people to make the sun seem shinier. For example, an elaborate photography darkroom that he may use only three times a year! "But, boy, if you felt like working, you'd feel good working in here, wouldn't you?" After walking along corridors of beautifully waxed floors and past yards of handsomely paneled cabinets, the visitor finally comes to one room that is bare. "For radar-the equipment hasn't come yet," Raymond murmurs apologetically.

"Maybe I would mind the many hours Raymond spends in his lab," Dorothy says, "if he went to an office, came home and then disappeared again. As it is, if it makes him happy, it suits me. Raymond is the kind of man who thinks all the time. What do I care what he thinks about-just so long as it isn't about other women?"

Dorothy is so understanding, she thinks that friends who tease her about not having a part in Raymond's forthcoming musical, "Hat in Hand," are off on the wrong track. "I wouldn't want a part in it. I want to be the composer's wife. When the show opens in New Haven, I want to be there, being nervous for him."

To someone else, a weekly radio show, making records, putting her husband's ingenious commercials on tape, might seem a heavy schedule for a young woman expecting a baby! And looming ahead, after a brief four weeks out for baby, is the taxing lead in "Oklahoma!" which Dorothy does in St. Louis, come August.

Plans beyond that? "I won't make any. I just want life to go on as it is," Dorothy says, knocking on wood. "Not because I think it's all peaches and cream-but because, with all its problems, it's been good and I know I've been lucky." What Dorothy doesn't know-and would be surprised to find out-is that others think just knowing her has made *them* lucky.