

## FANS ARE GIVING RAY CONNIFF A PARTY. (The Evening News)

This was the heading of a short column in the newspaper "The Evening News" on June 9th, the column read as follows.

American bandleader Ray Conniff is in London for the first time in four years with a determination to join the tourist stampede. "This is just a pleasure trip," he says. "We're going to see Windsor Castle and take a trip down the river and maybe a little drive in the countryside. We've already seen Stratford-on-Avon, last time we were here."

There will be one break in the private programme before he and Mrs. Conniff leave on Monday. His fan club here is organising a party for him at the weekend.

### PARTY TIME.

The club party was planned for May of 1967, that's when Ray told me he would be over. This was great, I had a year in which to arrange everything, I could take my time in finding a hall, as this time we were really going to have the best. So I was content to start on the arrangements for the party during the summer months of this year. With-in three weeks of receiving the letter informing me that Ann & Ray were coming over in 1967, I received a hurried note from Ray, which calmly informed me that Ann and himself were arriving June 7th this year. Well, I read the note, and let out a yell of delight.

I think the whole house knew that Ann & Ray were coming over, in 2 seconds flat. But it took me awhile to come down to earth, then it hit me, it was now nearly the end of March and I had only a few months to arrange the party. In fact it was a few weeks really, as full details about the party had to go into the March edition of the club magazine. With-in a few days my friend and I were walking around looking for a nice suitable hall. We spent, nearly all the evening, walking around, going into Public houses and looking at different halls, but we just couldn't come up with a thing. Walking around like that, one sure gets to know their way around London. Finally we came to the Dominion cinema at Tottenham Court Road, next door to the cinema, we saw "The Horseshoe", it looked, from the outside just the right place we had been looking for. It just couldn't be more central, everyone would be sure to find their way there without any trouble at all. So we eagerly went in and saw the manager. Much to our surprise he had a room available for June 11th. We saw the room, it was just what we required, large enough to hold 150 - 200 people, so we booked the hall and confirmed the booking in writing the next day. I can't tell you how relieved and pleased, that after only one evening of looking, a hall had been found and booked.

The next thing was to book a projectionist, the next

day I phoned a place with whom I'd had contact before, regarding the showing of films. Luck was again with me, he was able to let us have the equipment and a projectionist for the party night. With-in a few days I was able to confirm the arrangements in writing. So far, so good, things were going well. The following day was a Saturday, so I called in at the printers and had special cards printed for the evening, they were to go out with the club magazine. Meanwhile I had written to Ray and told him the arrangements, hoping he would approve, luckily he did, so everything was going well.

I was able to finish the club magazine, including full details on the party arrangements, where, when and the time it started. I've never been more pleased to get a magazine completed. Time was pressing on and the last days of March were upon me. All the magazines were ready to be folded and packed off to members, all that was needed was the party tickets, by the end of the week, they were ready. So my friend and I spent a couple of evenings packing all the magazines, then dragging the four large polythene sacks around to the Post Office. Our local Post Office know me now, after 6 years they should and the people behind the counters always crack a joke when I go in with the sacks of packed, stamped club journals. Do you know, it's a really wonderful feeling, when the last sack has been left with the post office, it's a feeling of relief, even more so this time because the magazines were so late. I had already started to get letters from people wanting to know what had happened to the magazine. At last they had gone and what a surprise everyone would get when they opened this edition and found the party invitation. Well, during the weeks that followed I was snowed under with letters about the magazine but most of all about the party. People were so thrilled and delighted at the chance to meet Ann and Ray.

Besides dealing with the party arrangements and letters connected with the party, I had to start on the June edition of the magazine as I wanted to get this edition out before Ann and Ray arrived. I was determined that the

June magazine would be smaller, say ten pages. Whenever I say that the mag will be small, you can bet your life it never works out that way. So having worked like mad the full 17 pages were written and typed. It took over a weekend to print the maza-zines, so there I was looking like a refugee from the Black & White Minstrels again. Then for the next few evenings my friend and I stapled the magazines and then packed them, so by the following weekend the June edition were in the post. This meant that most people would receive them the day before Ann and Ray arrived. Meanwhile during the writing and printing of the June mag, I had gone to London a few times to see the manager of "The Horseshoe", checking and double checking all of the party arrangement. So life was more hectic than usual.

Finally the day arrived when I went to Southampton to meet Ann and Ray. It was all very exciting, I saw Ann and Ray every day during their stay here. A full report on the things Ann and Ray did while here will be in the December magazine. Before Ann and Ray arrived I had been dashing around getting the gifts for them.

It wasn't long before June 11th arrived. I had arranged with Jackie (who used to help me with the club a few years back) to borrow her record player. My friend Jeanne, (who helped me with the envelopes and the stapling of the magazines) and her parents, arrived in their car at 6 p.m., to take my mother and myself, plus the gifts and records etc., up to the hall. Was I nervous, I had butterflies in the tummy now. When we arrived at the hall Jackie was already there, so was the projectionist, with his equipment all rigged up. CBS Records had set up a display of Ray's LP covers. The hall was on the first floor, "The Russell Room", to the right as one entered the hall at the far end, a large bar had been set up. To the left of one on entering table and chairs were arranged. The room did look very nice. Already a few people had arrived. My friend Jeanne, had a list of names of the members and was positioned at the door to check off who had arrived and keep out gate crashers. Jeanne's first job was to cross off the names on the list of people already there, this she did and then took up her position by the door. Already people were arriving and the room was filling up, I went over and stood with Jeanne for awhile, club members introduced themselves to me when they arrived. But then unfortunately I could only say a quick 'hello' to everyone I met. I would have liked to have had a nice long chat to people.

Ann and Ray arrived at 7.40. p.m., with Derek Witt of CBS Records. Ann and Ray were seated at a table across the room from the entrance, this really had them seated centrally. Once Ann and Ray were settled, I made the presentations. This really wasn't as good as it could have been, firstly I didn't write a speech out, that was a mistake. Still I got by and then presented Ann with a bouquet of 2 dozen red roses, a blue silk scarf, 2 boxes of embroidered handkerchiefs. Then Ann and Ray were presented with a travelling alarm clock which is embossed in gold on the top with "Ann and Ray, from Club Members." Then Ray was presented with a leather writing case, a Sheaffer Rolled Gold biro, propelling pencil and a black Sheaffer pen. All these gifts were engraved in Old English Script with Ray's name. Together with refills for the biro and pen, Ray was given a Churchill Crown in a case.

Ann and Ray were so very, very pleased and thrilled and were so surprised with the gifts. Ann and Ray started to open their gifts, but they hadn't got very far before people were coming up to talk to them. Meanwhile the bar was opened.

The windows of the room were wide open to let some air in the room, because it was so hot. By now most of the DJ's and club members arrived. I've never ever seen so many DJ's from so many different radio stations under the same roof. I'll list them, Peter Alder, Bryan Vaughan, Ken Evans (RADIO LUXEMBOURG), Peter James (RADIO 390), Richard Palmer, David Sinclair (RADIO ESSEX), Larry Dean, Jerry Smethwick (RADIO ENGLAND & BRITAIN RADIO), Tim Yale (RADIO CAROLINE), Chris Denning, Norman St. John, Keith Skues (RADIO LONDON), Adrian Sainsbury (THE BRITISH FORCES BROADCASTING SERVICE), Paul Hollingdale and Colin Hamilton (BBC); Simon Dee called in during the showing of Ray's TV film to say 'hello' to Ray before he dashed back to the BBC to do his late night show. Other people there were, Mr Robert Knight (from the Eric Easton Agency), Gloria Bristow (of Gloria Bristow Promotions Ltd.), Barbara Hayes (of April Music), Sheila Carter-Dimmock (of the Episode Six group), Leslie Simmons (of Kenneth Hume Productions), Derek Chinnery (BBC Producer), Barbara Mead (of the Woman magazine), Mr. & Mrs Ken Glancy, the Head of CBS Records in Gt. Britain.

Ann and Ray were meeting the club members and signing autographs and meeting the DJ's. The time seemed to just fly by, I was busy introducing club members and DJ's to Ray and just going around seeing that everything was in order and saying quick 'Hello's' to people.

Staying in one place one minute and moving onto another the next. People were mixing in and chatting, helping themselves to food and drinks, the time rolled onto 9.15. p.m. Then Ray stood on a chair and we got some hush, the people stopped talking to listen to Ray. Ray had another chair near him, while he stood on one chair, I stood in front of him. The other chair was to act as a platform, as that was the one thing the hall hadn't got a platform, also I had forgotten to get a Public Announcement System, so Ray had to yell while talking. After all the talking he had been doing this was no joke, trust me to forget to get a P.A. System. Before Ray had climbed on the chair, his music had been going all the time in the background, now the room was quiet. Ray then introduced the DJ's one at a time to all of the club members, the DJ's took their turn in climbing on the chair

and having a little chat with Ray. Ray had something different to say to each DJ. Halfway through the introductions of the DJ's Ray mentioned that he was going to get me up on the chair, that did it, I went to move away, but being as I was right in front of Ray, he just stooped a little and grabbed me by the shoulders, so I couldn't walk away. Ray thanked all the DJ's for their marvellous help and for playing his records on the different radio stations. Each DJ received a tremendous applause when they got down from the chair. Then Ray introduced Kan Glancy the head of CBS Records over here. Next it was my turn to get up on the chair. I don't remember too much about what happened. I only know I just didn't know what to say and I was lost for words. Now it's all over I know what I should have said. Anyway, I know Ray said a lot of nice things about the club and the work put into the club. Then Ray told everyone that Ann and himself had picked up a little trinket in Mexico for me. The trinket was a beautiful ring, a Topaze which had an unusual setting, it's so beautiful. I remember everyone clapping, needless to say I just didn't know what to say, all I could say was 'Thank You'. Before I knew what was happening Ray had announced to everyone that I had an invitation to go over to America, as Ann and Ray's guest, I could go when I liked, how I liked and stay as long as I liked. I remember hearing

the thunderous applause and the cheers, but it took a few seconds for Ray's words to sink in. All I could do was just stand there on the chair with my mouth wide open and tears of sheer happiness filling my eyes. This was such a shock and the greatest surprise of my life. Words just failed me there and then. I still don't know how I can ever thank Ann and Ray, for making a dream come true, I said that then and I still say it. I remember getting off the chair, Ray helped me down and all I

could do was put my head on Ray's shoulder and try to hold back the tears of joy. During the evening club members had been taking photos and two people had been taping events at the party. Derek Witt called in a professional photographer who took some photos before the film show. At 9.40 p.m., the lights were put out and everyone made themselves comfortable on chairs, that were available and when all the chairs had been taken,



people stood around or sat on the floor to watch the hour long TV Show. The film was made four years ago. Ray was introducing the songs and conducting, he was so relaxed and joining in with the songs, his personality really shone through while he was conducting, he really enjoys his work and the orchestra and chorus were really enjoying themselves as well. It is such a shame that this film was not accepted for TV, as it's a great show. The opening theme was 'The Happy Beat', other tunes featured were, 'Brazil' (orchestra and chorus), 'Besame Mucho' (O&C), 'Deep in the Heart of Texas' (singers) (some of us watching the film joined in with the hand clapping), 'People Will Say We're in Love', 'The Way You Look Tonight', 'Oklahoma' (O&C), 'Golden Earrings' (singers and Ray playing the Clavietta), 'Heartaches', this was great as we saw Ray playing his trombone, it was marvellous, can he play that instrument. 'I'm Always Chasing Rainbows', 'Volare' with the Orchestra and Chorus; next came a really beautiful harp solo by Elaine Fenimore of 'I've Got the World on a String', it was great, I know quite a few people would like Ray to put this on record sometime. Then Vangie Carmichael and Jay Meyer helped with the rest of the 'Gang' sung 'Ma, He's Making Eyes at Me', then Vangie sang 'It's So Nice to Have a Man Around the House', halfway through, Vangie got Ray to join her for a duet, which was really great, this lad can sing as well. I know the club members would like to see this track presented

in the same way as on the film, on record. Then Ray and the 'Gang' did 'Memories Are Made of This' one version with words and then another without the words, Ray had us all singing along with him on the film doing the Ah, wah, dah and bahs with the chorus, in fact Ray went down by the screen and conducted us through the tune, which we all enjoyed.

Well, we can all say we've sung with The Ray Conniff Singers and have been conducted personally by the great maestro himself. After this Ray's theme tune of 's Wonderful' was played, 'Chopin 's B Flat Nocturne', 'Schubert's Serenade' and the closing theme "Concerto For Lovers'. Ray used an 18 piece orchestra and 4 girls and 4 boys in the chorus. All too soon the film was over. I know everyone was impressed and delighted to see Ray and the 'Gang' on film.

After the film was over, Ann and Ray had photos taken with the DJ's, club members and myself, by the professional photographer. After the photos had been taken, Ann and Ray chatted with club members for a while. Then Hr. B Mrs Glancy took Ann and Ray to dinner. At 11 p.m., Ann and Ray said 'goodbye' and left. For about half an hour I stood by the door and said 'goodbye' to club members and DJ's as they left. By 11.30 p.m., there were a few people left in the hall. A few more photos were taken by a club member, Tony Hare, of DJ's Bryan Vaughan, his wife and Keith Skues. Finally, everyone left and the bill was paid and I gathered up the

records and other belongings and went out into the fresh warm air, thoroughly worn out, but with the memory of an evening that I and many others will not forget for many years to come. For me it was an evening of a life time, with a dream wish made into honest reality, thanks to Ann and Ray.

Because I made such a remarkable hash of thanking Ann and Ray for the party, on the party night, I'd like to make the little speech now, in print, as it should have been on the actual night:

I would like to thank Ann & Ray, on behalf of everyone who attended the party on June 11th for holding such a grand party and for making it so enjoyable and successful. If it wasn't for Ann and Ray, such a party could not have taken place. Also we thank them for the years of pleasure that we have had over the years via the marvellous recordings. We look forward to many, many more years of 'Happy Listening'. Everyone in the club wish you both continued success in the wonderful world of music and hope you have many more hit records in future, be they singles or LP's. Also we wish you health and happiness in the future.

And I know everyone sincerely hopes that you will not leave it another four years before we can have the pleasure of welcoming you back to England.

GOD BLESS YOU BOTH  
(GAWD BLESS YER GOV'NER)

