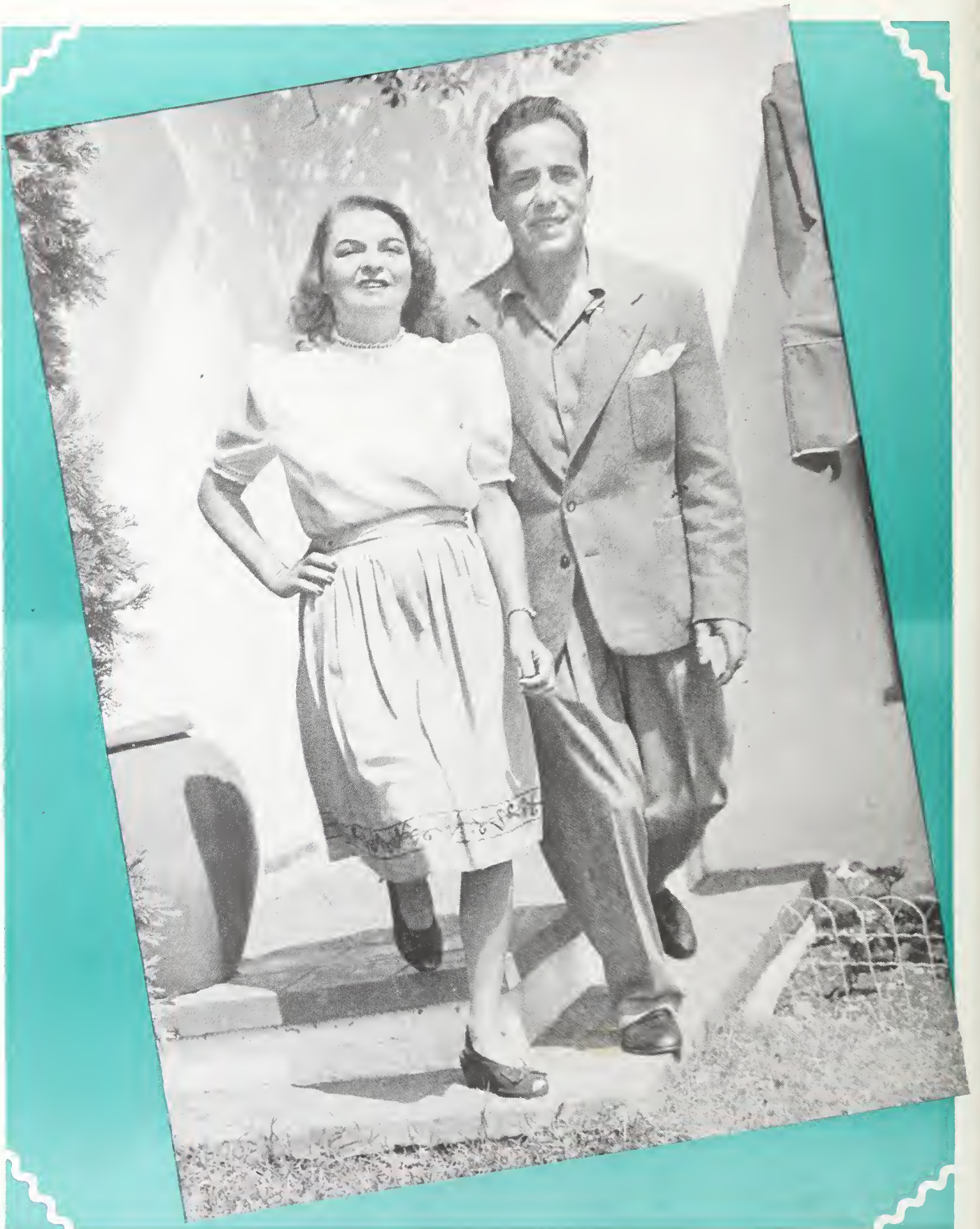


The Battling Bogarts



A bang-up story of Mayo and Bogie in which you hear vases crashing and voices yelling, and see one of the happiest black-and-blue wedding pictures in Hollywood

THERE'S something unique about the Humphrey Bogarts. It's their philosophy of marriage contained in the words of no less an authority than the master of the household himself. "We fight to stay married," grins Bogie.

The one deducible rule about the conflicts for which they are generally noted is that the fights seldom take place when no one is around. The Bogarts are at their best in the presence of an audience, though this statement should not infer that the engagements are faked in any way. It's just that spectators spur the contestants to greater effort, producing results which are cumulative in vehemence and sincerity.

Occasionally a battle will begin in public and end in the privacy of the Bogart home. One celebrated engagement had its inception at Madison Square Garden in New York, was carried on spasmodically at the "21" Club and then went into a series of dog fights about town before it wound up in the Algonquin Hotel where the Bogarts were staying.

This battle originated with no ap-

BY THORNTON DELEHANTY

parent stimulus, as so many others have done, and even to this day the combatants have but the sketchiest notion as to why it started. From the fragmentary reports of eyewitnesses it appears an argument started backstage at the Strand Theater where Bogie and Mayo Methot (Mrs. Bogart) had been making a personal appearance. Bogie wanted to go to a prize fight at the Garden, Mayo wanted to go to the theater with friends. They called an armistice and each went his separate way, agreeing to meet later at a night club. Bogie went to the fight alone to root for one of the pugs who was an acquaintance of his. Afterwards he visited the pug's dressing room. The pug had been pretty badly beaten up and while Bogie sat watching him have his face patched up he got an idea. He remembered that Mayo would be waiting for him at the swank "21" Club with her friends, who were of the snooty type. It occurred to him it might be rather quaint to bring his friend along. The

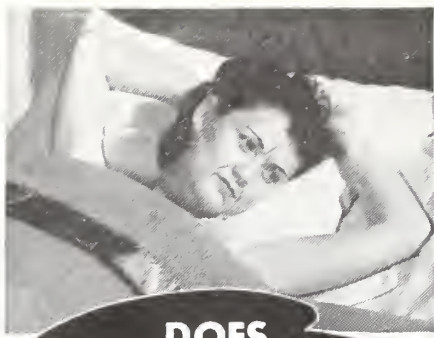
more he looked at the pug's bashed-in face and cauliflower ears the more quaint his idea became.

So into "21" marched Bogie and pal. Spotting Mayo and friends Bogie took the pug by the arm and marched him blithely to the table. Perhaps a trifle too blithely. Mayo sensed that this was something repulsively close to a rib. She tried to turn her back on the intruders, but Bogie put on his most elegant manner and chirped pleasantly to Mayo's guests, explaining elaborately that his companion, who up to that time had confined his conversation to "pleester meetcha" and a few other samples of Brooklynesse, was an old friend from Oxford now attached to the British Embassy in Washington. At that point Mayo rose in her dignity and, gathering up her friends, swept off to another table. No sooner had they got seated than Bogie and pal joined them, just as if nothing had happened. This performance was repeated several times, to the confusion of the headwaiter and the bafflement of the other guests. Finally Mayo swung at Bogie and (Continued on page 82)



Just for the record—Mayo and Bogie like music . . .

. . . like dogs, really love each other, despite their off-the-record workouts



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The Battling Bogarts

(Continued from page 31) the battle was on. Nobody is sure what happened next, except that when the debris was cleared away the contestants had departed, each in a different direction.

But the payoff came in the morning. Bogie arrived at the Algonquin in the early hours. Instead of going up to their suite he stopped at the desk and engaged himself a room down the hall, inwardly gloating over what he hoped would be Mayo's dismay on waking and finding him missing. Instead, when he got up himself around noon and went sheepishly into the suite he found their bedroom empty, the beds undisturbed. Mayo was missing. As he grabbed for the house telephone Mayo entered in nightgown and negligee. She had come home shortly before Bogie and, with the same idea, had engaged herself a separate room which, they discovered, was next to his. They burst out laughing and the battle was over, at least for the time being.

ONE of the lucky things about the Bogarts is that they are capable of laughing at themselves after the battle has subsided. No matter how murderous they may feel toward each other at night they can regale their friends by re-enacting the scene the next day. This is probably because each has the actor's point of view. A battle with them instinctively resolves itself into dramatic structure, ascending in waves toward a climax. When all verbal toppings are exhausted they resort to physical toppers. If, for example, Mayo throws a saucer at her spouse Bogie will retaliate with a platter, and so on.

Oddly enough they seldom do any great damage to each other. Damage, when it does occur, is apt to be accidental, as when Mayo let a telephone receiver slip through her hands and land on Bogie's face. This happened also at the Algonquin. The instrument was attached to the wall over the bed on which Bogie was peacefully resting. Mayo, in answering a call, let the receiver drop. The wire was just long enough for Bogie to get the full force of the blow. When the receiver hit him he leaped from the bed, both arms swinging. Luckily Mayo was able to duck before any serious harm was done.

Weapons are unrestricted in the Bogart feuds and are usually confined to the nearest throwable object. Sometimes the object proves not so throwable, as Mayo discovered the time she hoisted a large vase. When she hauled back her arm for the heave the weight of the vase threw her off balance and she fell over backwards, providentially saving Bogie from heaven knows what fate. At another time they were on their boat cruising to Catalina Island. Mayo was in the bow, ready to toss the painter to the dock. As Bogie maneuvered the craft shoreward he shouted some nautical instructions to Mrs. Bogart. He admits that perhaps his language was a bit sharp, or that the tone may have been peremptory. Whatever it was, Mayo was seized with sudden rebellion. Dropping the boat hook she picked up a life preserver and let Bogie have it right in his face. The craft, temporarily ignored by its captain and first mate, suffered a badly bruised bow when it hit the dock.

THE Bogarts have quick minds as well as tempestuous personalities. Sometimes their verbal exchanges come too fast. Each will break into the middle of the other's sentences, giving the words a

different meaning than intended. In explaining this peculiarity to me Humphrey gave an illustration of the way one battle actually started. Here's the dialogue verbatim:

Mayo: "I don't want to be a wife—"
Humphrey: "Darling, you're not a wife—"

Mayo (flaring up): "You apologize, you—"

Humphrey: "I'm not going to apologize . . ." (etc. etc. bang, BANG.)

This doesn't make sense unless you know how each sentence should have been completed. Mayo's opening remark was meant to be an endearing assertion that she wanted to be not merely a wife but more. Properly amended the next line would have read:

"Darling, you're not a wife, you're my everything" (or some such idyllic phrase). This Mayo have automatically eliminated Mayo's rejoinder and the fight.

One of the longest and most complicated battles on record took place over several days and covered an area from Los Angeles to Dodge City, Kansas, and return. The occasion was a special trip carrying a trainload of stars and newspapermen to the world premiere of the picture "Dodge City." This event had been widely publicized and at all stations along the way crowds jammed the platform to catch a glimpse of the celebrities.

SHORTLY after the train pulled out of Los Angeles station there were signs of fermentation taking place in the Bogart drawing room. A few friends had joined them and pretty soon an argument had started.

No one now remembers what the argument was about, but it served as a powder magazine for the entire trip. It so happened that almost every time sparks began to fly in the Bogart vicinity the train would pull up at a station and the next instant Mr. and Mrs. Bogart were out on the platform with the rest of the stars, bowing and smiling to each other in attitudes of connubial ecstasy while thousands cheered. The train would get on its way again and the fight would take on approximately where it left off.

Large-scale entertainments in the Bogarts' home are something that only a real fight fan could appreciate. They always start off decorously, but before morning the spirit of the affair gets into everybody, at about which time threatening voices call up on the telephone.

One of these affairs was attended by James Thurber when he was in Hollywood collaborating with Elliot Nugent on "The Male Animal." The Nugents were there, father and son, as were Mischa Auer, Louis Bromfield and many other distinguished representatives of society and the arts. The martial spirit which prevailed was illustrated in the remark of one bespectacled guest who rushed up to a horn-rimmed gentleman, took hold of his arm and said, "Let's fight with our glasses on." Thurber was so enchanted by that evening that he commemorated it later in a drawing which he sent to the Bogarts with the inscription, "Jolly Times—1939." It occupies a prize spot in their home.

Yes, "jolly times" is really how the Bogarts look on their life together. On the basis of their own admission, "We fight to stay married," they have made a great success of their union, which is more than can be said of a lot of other Hollywood couples.

The End.