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DOLORES IS THE NAME

BANG off, when I saw it in 1YA's advance programme for Saturday, November 23, the name Dolores Ray didn't look to me like one I might find carved into the trunk of a pohutukawa tree round the eastern beaches or on Rangitoto. A studio recital by Dolores Ray, soprano. At 1YA they gave me a telephone number and a brief account: "BBC singer and first artist in television; toured with ENSA and got out of France with a bang on the head two weeks after Dunkirk, narrow squeak; served in WRNS; friend of Tommy Handley; sang with Denis Noble; married a New Zealand naval man and is now living in Auckland with her husband and two children; this will be her first broadcast for us. What's she singing? The Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria*, that thing of Cyril Scott's and *Chiribiribin*; sings Puccini magnificently. That do to go on with?"

I said it would do, thank you, and dialled the number to ask to speak to Mrs. K. D. Hall; from her voice I was sure she must have been at school at Cheltenham, but I asked her later and found I was wrong: it was Roedean and after that Brussels—chiefly because her mother wanted her to speak French well and had herself been at school in Brussels.

We arranged that she should come across from the naval side of the harbour and appointed to meet over coffee. Had she a photograph? Yes, she had an old scrapbook.

"But I don't know what you look like and you don't know what I look like," she said.

I assured her I'd very easily find her and I did—as it happened there was only one other person about at the time, but even if there had been twenty it would have been just as easy to tell which was the young English wife of a New Zealand naval man—smart hat, smart suit, smart shoes, and a big book of clippings under her arm.

"A Good Nannie"

The first photograph that fell out of the scrapbook was of a family group: "That's the christening photo, that's



Dolores Ray with Susan

Susan," said Mrs. Hall. It showed Lt.-Commander K. D. Hall and Mrs. Hall (in the uniform of an officer of the WRNS) with Susan wrapped up in a shawl.

"So you were still a WREN when Susan was born?" I asked.

"Well, I was in the WRNS, but I wasn't a WREN, as I had my commission by then. A WREN is technically a member of the WRNS of non-commission rank."

"But Susan?"

"Oh yes. That was quite usual. In fact you couldn't get your discharge except for some extraordinary urgency. It worked perfectly well as long as you had a good nannie. And I was very lucky with mine."

THE second photograph (in a newspaper clipping which was stuck into the book) had a large headline above it: **PERFECT FACE FOR TELEVISION.** A glamorous photograph indeed, with a tale below of Miss Ray's first meeting with the television make-up expert who made ready to do her greenish-yellow gilding and found it unnecessary: "You have," she told Miss Ray, "the ideal skin for lighting purposes; you don't need any make-up." So then, and again since the war-time ban was lifted and television broadcasts began again, Miss Ray has always appeared with none but her normal make-up, even to her usual lipstick.

From a glance through the book I found that Miss Ray had been very busy touring and singing on the stage in London and for the BBC ("at three guineas a minute, not bad at all!" she said) from 1934 onwards till 1940, when she joined the WRNS.

"And what's the story about your escape from France?"

"There were a dozen of us in France with the Will Hav show and we got a bit stranded after Dunkirk and when the others were ready to take off from Cherbourg they decided to leave me behind because of my growling appendix and a bash I got on the head from a flying brick or something when a bomb fell. I was concussed a bit, but not too much to know that hospital in France was a jolly unhealthy place to stay in. So I pulled a few useful strings and got out. And then we sat in Cherbourg in our transport full of wounded while the ships round us got thoroughly blasted. It took us four days till we were across—it usually takes eight hours or so; when at last we did move we certainly hurried, but we sat around for an awful long time first. No water, no food, not enough nurses and doctors and we all had to turn to and do first aid—first time I'd ever laid hand on a bandage. I decided then that if ever I had a daughter I'd have her taught first aid as soon as she could go to classes. And I will too."

"And what about your growling appendix?"

"Oh, it kept on growling, and I had it out when I got back, a bit later."

I asked Mrs. Hall if she was a member of a musical family and she told me that her mother, Ella Hall, now a teacher of piano, was pianist under Richter in the Halle orchestra; and her father, Charles Dalton (no relation of the present Charles Dalton of the BBC) was first violinist at the same time. "And they got married and then there was me."

The BBC pianist John Massey, whom she described as a perfect accompanist, was associated with Miss Ray in a great number of recitals and before the war they had tours of South Africa, Europe

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