

Cronkite and Crocker at 'Cake Control'

By Art Buchwald

The one thing you can say about CBS News is that it always goes with the experts. When Neil Armstrong and his crew took off for the moon they hired Wally Schirra to sit next to Walter Cronkite and provide an astronaut's knowledge of what was happening.

Last week CBS announced it had hired Lynda Bird Johnson Robb to handle the color commentary for Tricia Nixon's wedding. At the same time the broadcasting company also signed up Miss Betty Crocker to do the commentary on the wedding cake.

The decision was made after the controversy over the baking of the cake became the major issue of the wedding and dwarfed the actual marriage ceremony.

Miss Crocker will be seated next to Walter Cronkite during the nuptials.

"Good evening. This is Walter Cronkite and seated next to me at Mission Control is Betty Crocker. We are now waiting word if Tricia Nixon and Eddie Cox completed the first part of their mission, which is to get married. As you know, the couple has been blacked out on the dark side of the White House, and all we can do is sit here and hope and pray everything will turn out all right. Betty, after the couple complete their marriage vows, what will be the next step?"

"Walter, the next step is when they come out of the camera blackout; Tricia and Eddie will have to cut the wedding cake. This could be a very dangerous moment, although the couple has practiced it many times."

"Betty, we have in our studio a seven-foot replica of the wedding cake. Would you explain to the audience what problems Tricia and Eddie will have to contend with?"

"Well, Walter, as you can see, the wedding cake is over six feet high, weighs 350 pounds, and has four tiers of pound cake and two dummy tiers of cardboard. The trick here is for Tricia and Eddie to cut into the pound cake without disturbing the dummy tiers. If Tricia miscalculated by a quarter of an inch and cut into the dummy tiers, the whole cake could fall down, and people would have to eat it off the floor."

"That's something I imagine Tricia and Eddie don't even want to think about, Betty. What are the other hazards they face in this crucial moment of the wedding?"

"Walter, the wedding cake has obviously been tested in rehearsal, but no one is quite sure what will happen when the couple actually cuts into the real one. Some experts predict that the inside will ooze out as soon as the crust is penetrated."

"Could this oozing be fatal, Betty?"

"No, Walter, because there is a backup system for just such an eventuality. If the cake started to ooze, the White House staff would go on red alert, and the guests would be handed soup plates instead of flat plates for the serving of the cake."

"Betty, we have heard so much lately about the instability of the wedding cake. Do you think these reports have been exaggerated?"

"Yes I do, Walter. Many different recipes were tried before the National Cake Agency arrived at this particular model."

"Now, when you are dealing with something as unknown as a wedding cake, you're bound to have different opinions as to what is the best type. You may have to sacrifice egg yolks for weight or butter for budgetary reasons. But the important thing is 'Does the cake work? Will it serve the function for which it was constructed?' If it does, this may be a big breakthrough in the baking industry, and one that every American can be proud of."

"And what if for some unforeseeable reason it doesn't work, Betty?"

"Then I think for the safety of the guests, they would have to abort the wedding."

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Special Service

People from all over the country gathered here yesterday and sang at services for Warner Lawson, Howard University's late music dean and the first black man ever to conduct the National Symphony. Story on Page B8.

Bridge	B 6	Ann Landers	B 6
Crossword	B 6	Show Times	B 8
Health	B 6	Television/Radio	B 7