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Paper Radio

A talk with the lady who told Nixon off

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(A continuing feature by the noted KDAY radio newsman)

The Ray Coniff Singers were supposed to entertain at the White House Friday night, but one of the singers did more. As the singers walked onto the stage, Carol Feraci pulled a folded sign from her dress, hung it over the music stand, and walked over to the microphone. As the White House guests gaggled over the sign — which read, "Stop the Killing" — Miss Feraci then began addressing the President:

"President Nixon, stop bombing human beings, animals and vegetation. You go to church on Sunday and pray to Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ was in this room tonight, you would not dare to drop another bomb. Bless the Berrigans and Daniel Ellsberg."

As Miss Feraci later recalled it: "President Nixon was sitting about twenty feet away in the front row, almost directly in front of me. He seemed stunned. He had a smile on his face when we walked on stage, which he never lost during the next three minutes."

The program for the affair indicated that the Ray Coniff Singers would render "Ma, She's Making Eyes at Me." And the words to that song were certainly somewhere in the back of Miss Feraci's mind, if not the President's, as she uttered her little protest.

"I was looking at the President all

the time. That was the man I had to talk to."

Ma, she's making eyes at me.

"He never changed his expression. He stayed smiling for the entire time I was on the stage."

Ma, she's awfully nice to me.

"He never moved. He never uncrossed his legs or uncrossed his arms."

Ma, she's almost breaking my heart.

"While I was talking to him, I heard things like 'ohhhch' and 'oh nooo.' The people just couldn't believe what was going on."

But there was mostly anger and resentment in that White House gathering. The hushed protests subsided as Miss Feraci rejoined the Ray Coniff Singers, and the audience applauded politely after they finished their first song.

Then Ray Coniff took the microphone to address the President. He said, "Mr. President, the first part of this program was as much of a surprise to me as it was to you." People started applauding. Not only the White House audience, but also members of the Ray Coniff Singers. And then from the audience came a shout: "I think you ought to throw her out." More applause.

They threw her out.

Coniff approached Miss Feraci and asked her to leave. There was more applause as she did so.

It was the high point of Carol Feraci's singing career. She had

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been a professional singer for eight years and had done several recording dates with Coniff. Two weeks ago she was called and asked to perform for the President. At first she refused, saying that so long as Mr. Nixon was continuing the war, she could not go to Washington and sing for him.

But when I got off the phone, I thought it over. And it occurred to me that I was throwing away a great opportunity to really say something. Right there, face to face with the President. So I called back and said I'd like to do the job.

Throughout the day last Friday, things kept occurring around Carol Feraci to bolster her courage. During a rehearsal break, the singers were

taken on a special tour of the White House.

"And I was really flabbergasted. Because everywhere we went in the White House, all that was discussed were the expensive pieces that were in there — how much everything cost. And I thought, what does all this mean? When there are people who are starving, and when we are burning people and blowing up people, all of the things in this place don't mean anything. And I knew then that what I was going to do was absolutely right. I was going to help make the screams of the Vietnamese people heard in this country."

It was all a rather peaceful protest too. No security guards came running up to the stage. No sirens went off. No guns were drawn. And says

Miss Feraci: "I was glad that nobody tried to shove me out of the way. I didn't get violent in any way. They were just very stunned and couldn't react."

Miss Feraci is a Canadian although she has lived in the Los Angeles area for the past eleven years. Had she thought that her act might affect her alien status in this country?

"Well, I couldn't see how it could mean, if this is really a free country, don't see how anybody would deport me for speaking my mind about killing people. You know, people come to this country to take advantage of freedom — supposedly."

And what about Carol Feraci's attempt to take advantage of freedom — does she believe her unscheduled performance had any impact on the President?

"Yeah, I think it had an impact on him. I don't think he slept very well that night, for one thing. I think the President is probably saying at this point, 'You know, I can't go anywhere anymore, not even in my own house but they're here telling me that I shouldn't be killing people.'"

"And I think that's great."