

# Mrs. R. E. Wainerdi Lives Full Life — Job Calls —

By BOB PALMER  
Battalion Staff Writer

Mrs. Richard Wainerdi has not let life end on the operating table but continues to enjoy it to the fullest, serving as an inspiration to numerous handicapped people around the world.

"Whenever my husband or I hear of someone who has become handicapped, we write to them, telling that life does not have to end," Mrs. Wainerdi, who has lost her right leg to the hip, said.

"If there is any way that we can help them through that initial adjustment period, we try to do so," the Texas mother said.

Mrs. Wainerdi has found that just telling recent amputees that she married and had children after losing her leg to bone cancer helps their morale.

She and her husband, associate dean of engineering at Texas A&M, have started a shoe exchange.

"We have a file of names of people with only one leg and try to match legs and shoe sizes," Angela commented. "Whenever I get a pair of shoes, I send my spare one to my shoemaker."

Her shoemaker, Roberta Scott, also spends much of her time spreading the Wainerdi doctrine of "keep living." She has just returned from her second trip to Vietnam, entertaining servicemen who have recently had an amputation.

Mrs. Wainerdi helped give the Tulsa, Okla., native a boost, when she got Roberta entered in the Miss Handicapped contest as the candidate from Texas. Roberta finished second and was on her way to a career in show business.

Mrs. Wainerdi corresponds regularly with people like Roberta all over the country.

"EVERYWHERE we travel, even in Europe, we run into

people whom we write to," she commented.

She noted that some of her most enthusiastic correspondents are mothers of children who have lost limbs. Mrs. Wainerdi understands their problems because she lost her leg at the age of 14.

"I was in the hospital from the time I was seven until I was eighteen," she said. "I never missed a year of school, however, because I was in Children's Hospital in Buffalo, N. Y., and they sent tutors to each bed when we could not attend classes."

After graduation from high school, Mrs. Wainerdi attended Albright Art School and became a newspaper fashion artist.

"I HAD resigned myself to what I considered a realistic picture of my future life," she said. "I thought I was destined to be a career girl and never leave Buffalo."

"This was before the copy

editor of her newspaper, William R. O'Connor, wrote a story on her for Handicap Week. His story was carried in Performance, the government's magazine on the handicapped.

A research scientist, working on his doctorate in Oak Ridge, Tenn., read the story and wrote a letter to her.

"I got many letters about that story, but his was such a beautiful letter I just had to answer it," Mrs. Wainerdi remembered.

"Before I knew it, three letters would be waiting for me each day when I came to work."

WAINERDI drove all the way from Oak Ridge to Buffalo in the snow to see for the first time this girl to whom he had been writing to three times a day.

"Ten weeks after Dick came to Buffalo, we were married Angela recalled.

"It was crazy, but we just

clicked. Now we have two boys; Thomas Joseph, 9, and James Cooper, 7."

Wainerdi also takes an interest in his wife's work with the handicapped. He likes to design devices that make their life a bit easier.

"WE CORRESPOND with one girl, Joyce Cox, who has lost both of her forearms," she said. "She wanted to sew, so Dick designed a mechanical aid that let her."

Life is still not as soft for Mrs. Wainerdi as the thick carpets that cover the floors of her spacious home. She suffers a lot of pain, but "puts up a good front."

She is always tastefully dressed, paying special attention to her shoe, and has a continuous smile that shoves her ears back.

But the pain still sent her back to Methodist Hospital in Houston for more surgery Feb. 11.

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