

**Joan Mondale:
Superwife even
mows the lawn**

**Andy Williams
backs Claudine**

**Texas quints:
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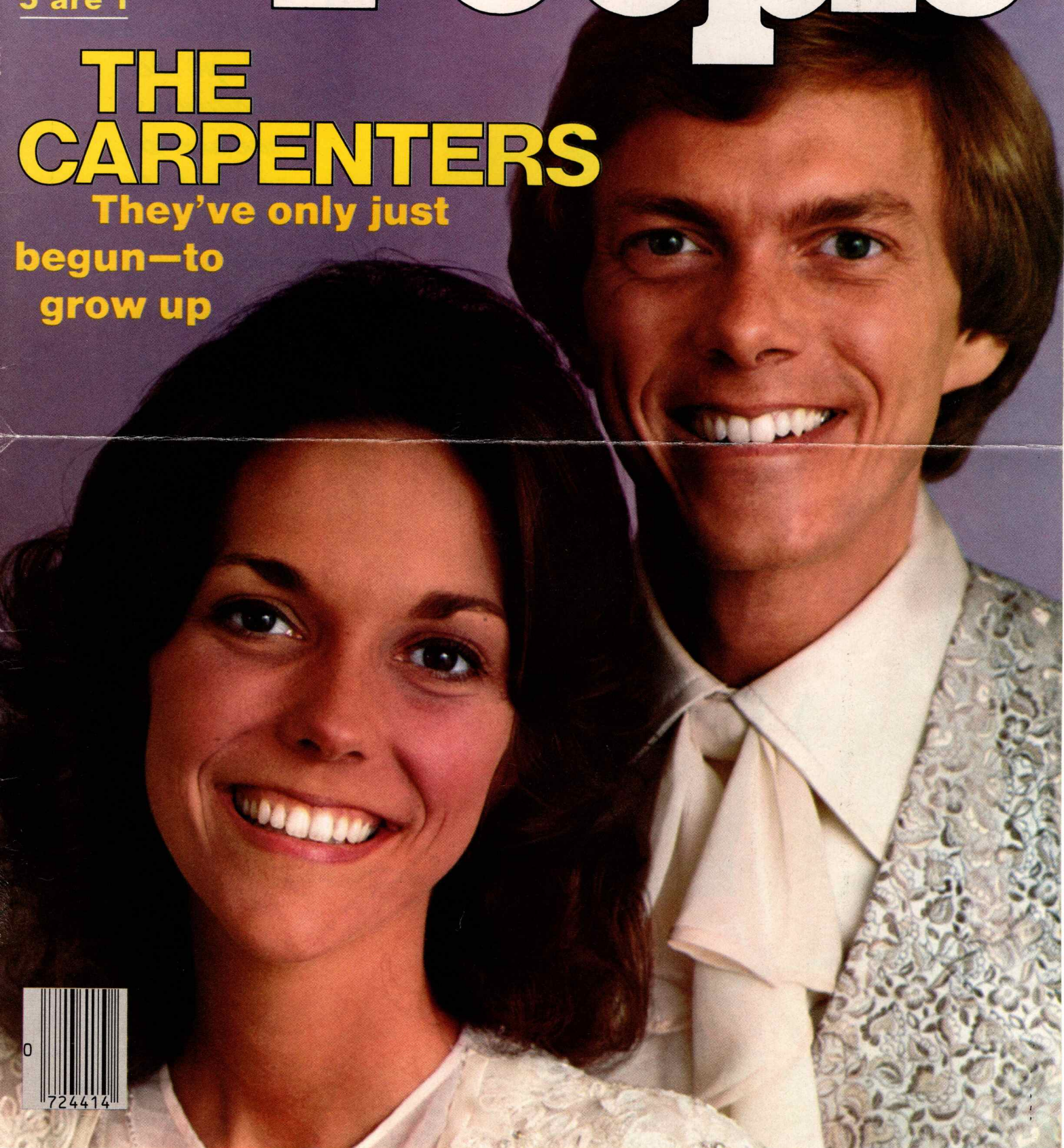
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August 2, 1976 • 50¢

People

weekly

THE CARPENTERS

**They've only just
begun—to
grow up**



**KAREN & RICHARD CARPENTER
AREN'T AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD:
THEY NEED TO BE IN LOVE**

FOR A
SONG



Karen and Richard Carpenter share identical smiles, blighted romance, a thing for iced tea and giant TV screens—and monster sales of 30 million records.

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The First Lady was presumably fair game, but would CBS's Morley Safer have asked Mrs. Agnes Carpenter how she'd react if her daughter, Karen, had a premarital affair? Or—damn the double standard—what if her son, Richard, were messing around? The singing Carpenters are probably the most popular brother-and-sister act since Fred and Adele Astaire. But it is their curse to be grooved in a middle-of-the-road musical bag and life-style at odds with much of their own generation.

Richard, 29, lived at home with his folks (in suburban L.A.) until two years ago. Karen, 26, is just now in the process of moving out. Bette Midler has rudely parodied their Goody-Four-Shoes persona in her show. A deejay, figuring they were too pure to be real, once charmingly asked Richard in a phone interview if their thing was incest. And, for their contemporaries, perhaps the most ruinous rap ever laid on them came at a White House performance in 1973 when Richard Nixon hailed them as "Young America at its very best."

In truth, the Carpenters now fess up, neither of them is a virgin. Both favor legalization of marijuana. "It's no worse

than alcohol," observes Karen, an iced tea freak herself. But, as Richard protests gloomily, the two of them just can't kick their "squeaky-clean, milk-drinking image. We make Pat Boone look dirty." And, unfortunately, dirty is in these days. Movie porn queen Andrea True moans an explicit piece of trash—*More, More, More*—and it becomes a gold record. She will almost certainly never have another one; yet Andrea is getting more, more, more attention than the Carpenters, who simultaneously collected their 17th gold wall plaque for their current LP, *A Kind of Hush*.

Among the previous 16 are half a dozen bona fide standards, including two composed by Richard, *Top of the World* and *Goodbye to Love*. The Carpenters' first two hits, *Close to You* and *We've Only Just Begun*, are now memorialized as names of apartment house complexes they built in L.A. They also have interests in a baby carriage company and at one time owned a shopping center. But they have toured as many as 250 days a year along the way, and their lives were not as silky or upbeat as their art.

They were hardly immune from the debilitating, disorienting effects of the

road. "Several years went by," as Richard put it, "and we lost contact with any personal life—it all become professional, and we were losing our identity." "It was sickening," adds Karen. "Suddenly it wasn't fun anymore." Last year it finally all got to her. Though she usually has to diet to keep at her playing weight of 110, Karen dropped worrisomely to a gaunt 90 pounds. Quickly, they canceled a tour to Europe and Japan and a command performance for Queen Elizabeth—their first blown gigs in six years. Karen was suffering from "physical and nervous exhaustion," and it took two months of bed rest at home to recuperate.

Then when they got back into business, the Carpenters fell into another hassle and their first bad press (except from the rock critics) ever. Seems they fired their opening act at Vegas, Neil Sedaka, who was upstaging them. Lately they've made peace—putting Sedaka's *Breaking Up Is Hard to Do* on their last LP. And this year the Carpenters have also gotten their own live act together. Reports Richard: "Nobody ever told me to get rid of my Dutch boy haircut or Karen to cut her bangs. By the time I woke up, our act was boring." It has been restaged by Joe Layton, who ironically also directed Bette Midler's raucous extravaganzas. Among the few hold-over numbers are a drum solo by Karen and Richard's rendition of *The Warsaw Concerto*.

Young Rich did after all study classical piano in his early teens at the Yale School of Music. The Carpenters, only children of a printer, lived in New Haven until 1963, when they moved to the L.A. suburb of Downey. "I never missed the East for a day," says Richard. An unathletic, nearsighted boy (he wears contacts on stage, thick specs off), Richard was turned on first by Libera's TV show, then by what he calls his "Three B's—the Beatles, Beach Boys and Burt Bacharach." Karen got into music when she enlisted in her high school marching band in Downey to get out of gym. "I couldn't stand track at 8 a.m. or a cold pool, so they put me in the band and gave me a glockenspiel. It was a horrendously smelly instrument tuned a quarter note sharp to the band. But it was percussion and it got me on the drum line."

Two years later, with a friend on bass, the Carpenters won the 1966 Bat-



"We are each other's best friend," says Karen. "There's a confidence that grew from respect for each other's talents."

Photographs by Steve Schapiro

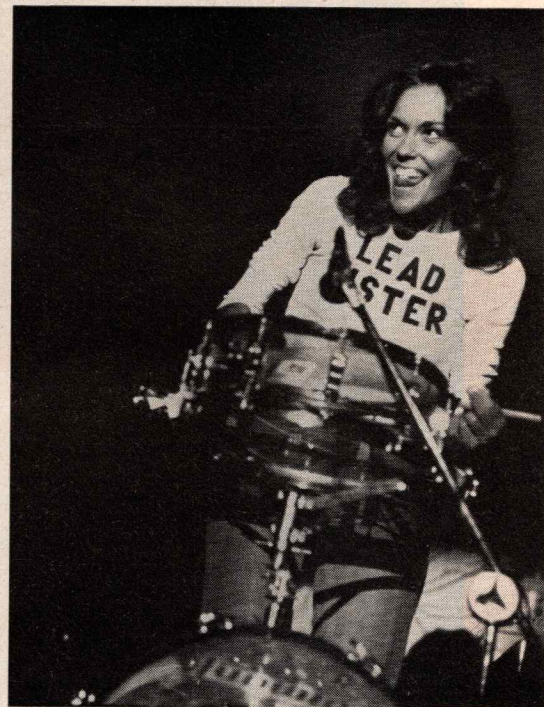


Karen has bounced back big from her two-month collapse abed. "As an act," she says, "this is it."

tle of the Bands in the Hollywood Bowl. They beat out hundreds of competitors but couldn't parlay it into record success until 1969. Along the way, with various groups, they played everywhere from the Whiskey a-Go-Go to Disneyland. Karen and Richard then trimmed down to heavily overdubbed duos—they now often record 12 vocal tracks—and were spotted and signed personally by A&M Records president Herb Alpert. Richard, whose canny orchestrations and keyboards added lush backing to Karen's rich and soothing alto range, had two straight goldies. They also won the 1970 Grammy for Best New Artists in contention with other rookies like James Taylor and Elton John.

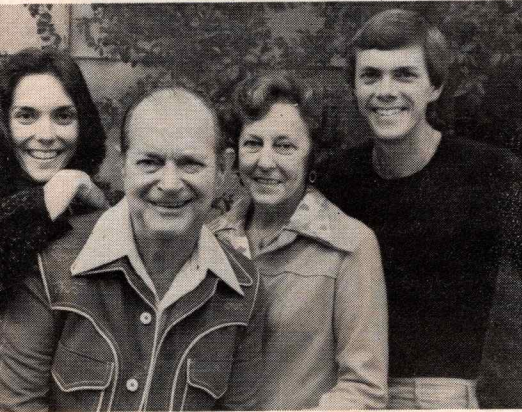
Richard clearly has a golden ear for

Ann-Margret? No, Karen falsiefying herself as a '50s teen queen for a 'Grease' spoof in which Rich motorcycles onstage.



"The sticks have always been a pleasure," Karen coos. Their regular drummer is ex-Mouseketeer Cubby O'Brien.

The Carpenters' dad once had to work a double shift to support their musical ambitions. Now, the kids have bought their parents a new home complete with artificial waterfall.



BONNIE SCHIFFMAN

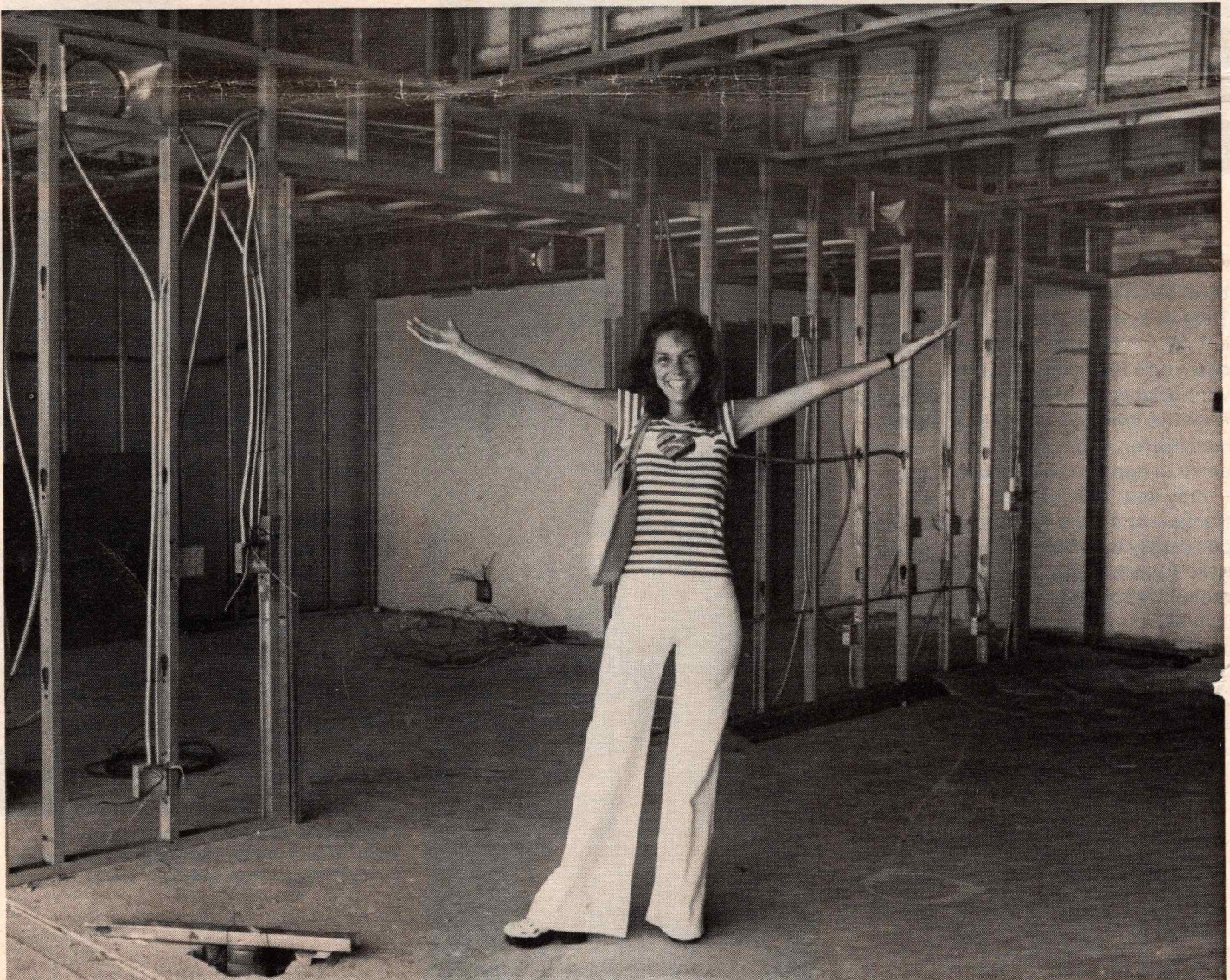
Karen's condo needs work but it's hard on tour. "Just try dealing with your decorator from Japan by phone," she says.

the commercial, if he is not quite, as collaborator John Bettis anoints him, "a full-on genius, the Gershwin of his age." Bettis, a classmate of Richard's during his brief stay at Long Beach State College, is the lyricist on all of Carpenter's compositions. Richard, in his own defense, notes, "Our music shouldn't be compared to rock. It's pop, and it's progressive in its own pop way. We're not your average 'easy-listening' act by any means. Easy-listening artists will only record what has already been done."

Bettis admits that their latest work, the single *I Need to Be in Love*, is "autobiographical for all three of us," meaning Karen, too. Both Carpenters are between romances. His fling with his ex-manager's daughter, Randee Bash, is kaput, and Karen's last on-and-off affair ended six months ago. She's distracting herself, when not on the road these days, renovating a condominium in Century City. Her bedroom, like the living room in Richard's tract home in Downey, is being designed around a seven-foot-wide Advent TV

screen. Both Carpenters are video addicts, with a couple of sets burning all day. Other sublimations include needlepoint for her, French wines and 13 cars for him.

Both think love could be around the corner. Karen, who hasn't had time to read *Mr. Right Is Dead* (among other books), says, "I still firmly believe The Guy is going to show up." Like Richard, Karen is counting ultimately on having a family outside music. "It's really hard to meet people in this business. But," she cautions, "I'll be damned if I'll marry somebody just to be married." Richard complains that "with my girlfriends now and then Karen pulls the old 'She's-not-good-enough-for-you' Jewish mother routine." Richard, Karen admits, tends to be more tolerant of her choices. "There are fewer of them," she says. "I have a harder time finding somebody. The problem is we were growing professionally during the years most people were concentrating on being a person. That," Karen declares, "has to change." ROBERT WINDELER



A CARPENTER TIES THE KNOT AND FINALLY THAT SONG'S FOR KAREN



Karen shows off her garter to matron of honor Frenda Leffler and her 3-year-old twins, Andrew and Ashley.

When Karen and Richard Carpenter—one of the most popular sibling singing acts in recording history—cut *We've Only Just Begun* 10 years ago, they gave thousands of American newlyweds a favorite first-dance tune. Yet to the Carpenters, its message remained an elusive dream. Though both had had love affairs, neither could seem to find a mate. But last week in the Crystal Room of the Beverly Hills Hotel, a 50-member choir finally sang that song for Karen, 30, as she waited to join her man at the altar. Her choice: Southern California real estate

tycoon Thomas Burris, 39, member of the Reagan finance committee and the boyishly handsome divorced father of an 18-year-old son. "He's just the type of guy I was looking for," said Karen after the vows, resplendent in a white gown of mousseline de soie modeled on an 18th-century riding ensemble. "He's strong and at the same time gentle, and he gets along fabulously with my family." (Burris had not been really aware of the Carpenters' music, but he probably knew the monstrous apartment complexes they owned called Close to You and We've Only Just Begun.)

Karen's mother claims credit for pushing her daughter out to a dinner party at the chic Ma Maison restaurant



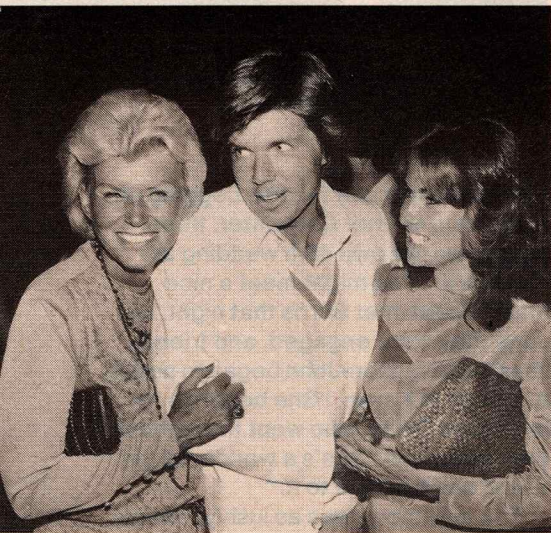
Olivia Newton-John makes a neat catch of the bridal bouquet. Did Karen's wedding make her envious? "Yes," she admitted.

last April when she felt like begging off. "Go," said Mother Carpenter, three days after her own 45th wedding anniversary. "You might meet a nice man." Karen met Burris that night, by June they were engaged, and friends like Olivia Newton-John began to notice a change in Karen. "She began to relax," says Olivia, who wept throughout the ceremony. "She's a wonderful girl—and she beat me to it."

The ceremony was as lushly romantic as the Carpenters' oeuvre. As the groom stood at the altar, the scent of gardenias mixed in the air with the



The bride displays one of Lotusland's more credible smiles, flanked by Richard, groom Tommy Burris and their Hollywood-scale wedding party, including Tommy's son Mike (far right).



"Karen needs Tommy's kind of stability," says friend John Davidson, stabilizing singer Jane Morgan (left) and John Denver's wife, Annie.

strains of John Bettis' and Richard's latest composition, *Because We Are in Love*, which they wrote for the occasion. During the ceremony, which was performed by the Rev. Robert Schuler, Richard sang a moving wedding prayer. Then there was a sit-down luncheon for 450 capped by a five-tiered chocolate cake, which Karen duly sliced for her man, unimpeded by her new 10-karat pear-shaped ring.

After a South Pacific honeymoon they will return to a two-and-a-half-acre estate in Bel Air—and their work. "We're both business-oriented," says Burris. "She likes her career and I like mine." Karen admits that while cutting their 10th album during the courtship, "I wasn't really concentrating—for the first time in 11 years." Did she worry that Mr. Right would never come along? "I was beginning to wonder," she blushed when the wedding was over, "but I waited, and look what I found." **KATHY MACKAY**



A hint of things to come? Dorothy Hamill turned up with long-time beau Dean Paul Martin, who joked that weddings make him "nervous."



California's Republican Lt. Gov. Mike Curb, whose sister introduced Karen and Tommy, takes to the dance floor with wife Linda.



Herb Alpert (with wife Lani Hall), who signed the Carpenters to their first contract in 1969, beamed: "It's beautiful to see Karen this happy."

Jo Jo Starbuck, recently split from quarterback Terry Bradshaw, finds a kindred spirit in the bride's still unmarried brother Richard, 33.

