

Mark Slade marries his Dream Girl



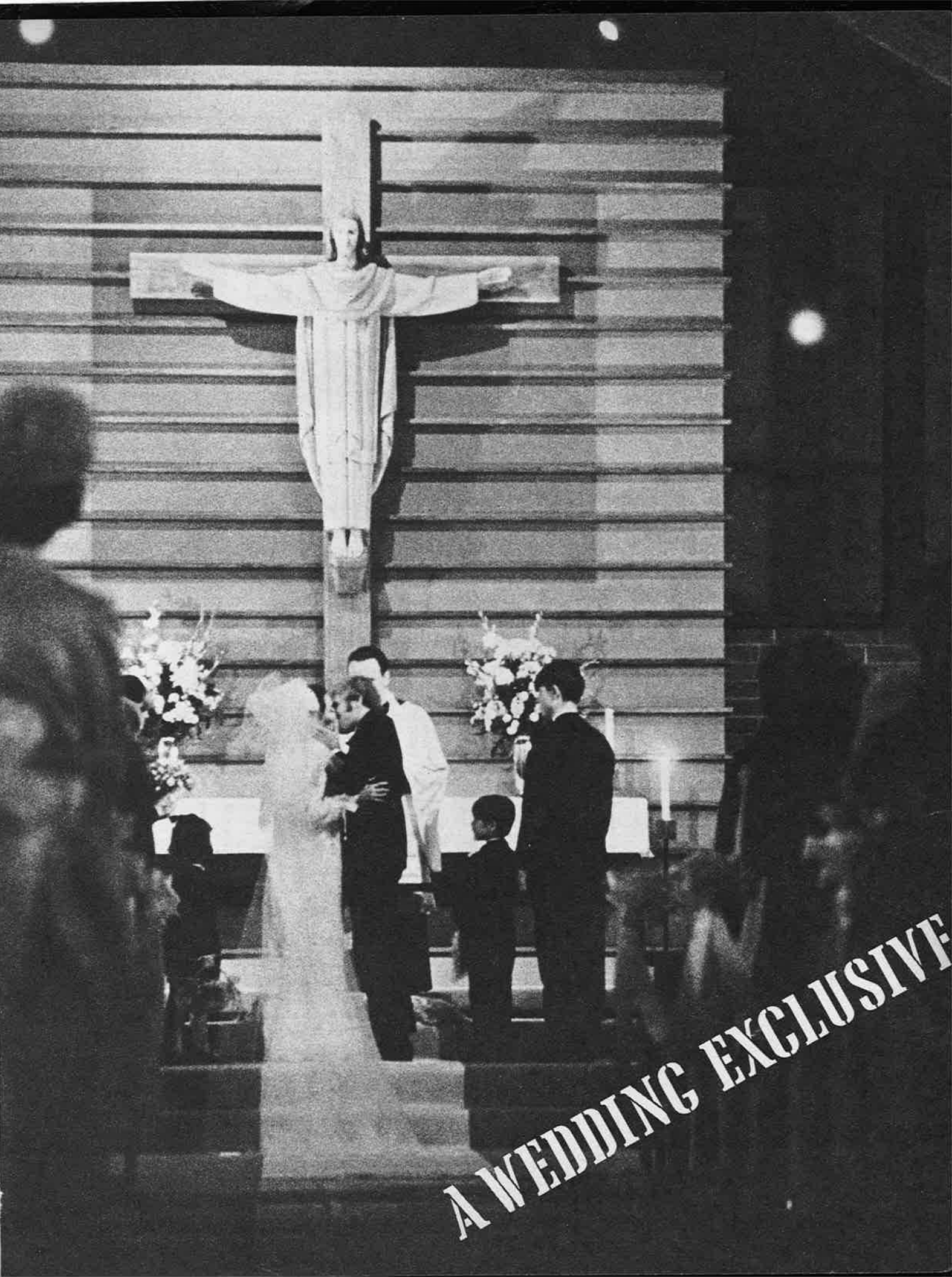
Mark's step-father helps him dress. And Melinda's father walked her down the aisle. By now, their jitters were gone.



Melinda's mother helps her dress. And no one else in the whole world has a wedding gown like Melinda's.



When Melinda Riccilli became the bride of Mark Slade, she looked like a doll—quite literally—for her wedding gown was inspired by a dress her favorite doll had worn when Melinda was just a child. Crocheted of a fine, silken-sheened, white wool, the gown was lovingly wrought by Melinda's grandmother, Mrs. Mary Valentino, who worked for two months on the tiny medallions from which it was fashioned. "When I was a little girl," Melinda explains, "my grandmother crocheted a dress for my doll, and I thought it was so pretty I've always said I hoped she'd crochet a dress for me to wear when I (Continued on page 64)



A WEDDING EXCLUSIVE

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continued



married." Since Mrs. Valentino lives in Ohio and Melinda lives in California, the grandmother only had the bride's measurements and not the bride herself as a guide for her loving work of art.

But when the dress arrived in California, it fit perfectly. "Yes," Mrs. Valentino concedes, "I was worried about the fit, and it was a lot of work, but I was glad to do it. I only have two granddaughters."

Melinda and Mark were married on January 6 at St. Michaels and All Angels Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, following an engagement which has lasted almost a year. They'd known each other six months when they became engaged in February of 1967. As soon as he met Melinda, Mark asked for a date—but not with her.

"My roommate and I were having dinner with a friend of Mark's," Melinda recalls. "Mark came in, was intro-

duced and asked my roommate to go out with him." The roommate agreed but then couldn't keep the date, so Melinda kept it instead. And that was the beginning of love.

Mrs. Valentino remembers that she first met Mark in March of 1967 at a formal engagement party and that she was vaguely troubled by the prospect of an actor in the family. "But," she says philosophically, "what matters is whether they love each other. Some people marry plain working men, and their marriages don't work out. So if Melinda and Mark love each other, it really doesn't matter to us what kind of work he does."

Melinda comes from warm-hearted, Italian Catholic stock. Mark is of stern, New England Congregational lineage. And while their backgrounds and heritage complement each other nicely, their religious differences called for a compromise when they began to consider a



Melinda grew up Roman Catholic and Mark, New England Congregational. They chose St. Michaels and All Angels Episcopal Church as a "nice balance" and they may join it. Melinda's family says, "We all pray to the same God." (opposite page) Among guests: (above) Henry Darrow dancing with his wife; (below) Adam West with Linda Cristal. The formal wedding picture (this page) included (on bride's side) Melinda's grandparents, brother, parents; and (groom's side) Mark's parents and brother.



place to be married. An Episcopal service, they reasoned, would provide a nice balance between the traditional Congregational and Catholic rites.

"We saw St. Michaels and All Angels," Mark says, "and liked the outside, so we went in and met the minister, the Rev. Weaver Stevens. We met with him four or five times before the wedding and we like him a lot. In fact, we like him so much we may join that church."

Melinda's family accepted the Episcopal wedding without complaint. "We pray to the same God, after all," Mrs. Valentino points out reasonably.

Like most happy couples on the verge of marriage, Mark and Melinda were nervous during the final days before the wedding. Melinda works as a publicist (for the very firm which handles Mark's publicity) and two days before the ceremony she was still at her desk. "I haven't

had time to get my shoes," she wailed. "And I'm not sure what flowers the attendants will carry. I want them to carry lavender chrysanthemums, but I'm not sure we can get them." All those last-minute details.

Mark spent the day before the wedding taking his mother and stepfather, Mr. and Mrs. Esmond Crowley, who'd come out from Massachusetts, and his brother, Frank Crowley, to Marineland. At eight o'clock that night actors Tom Simcox and Buck Taylor were picking him up for one last bachelor fling, and the bridegroom elect was apprehensive. "I'm nervous," he said getting right to the point. However, the tension wasn't to last.

When the wedding ceremony took place the next day, the bride and groom were outwardly calm and radiantly happy. They even enjoyed the beautiful rites.

With her gown—which is (Continued on page 74)

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MARK SLADE



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destined to become a family heirloom—Melinda wore a long net veil which fell from a simple white satin bow. Her flowers were an old-fashioned bouquet of white rosebuds. Her attendants wore deep blue velvet and did carry the lavender chrysanthemums Melinda wanted.

A special significance was added to the double-ring ceremony by the fact that

Mark was married with his grandfather's ring. Melinda's ring is a wide band, fashioned like a golden chain.

After a week long honeymoon, Mr. and Mrs. Slade moved into a San Fernando Valley apartment and reported back to their respective jobs. Melinda admits that helping to handle her husband's publicity may be ticklish business: "I think it's going to be difficult."

She doesn't elaborate, but you can tell she means, "There's no way publicity can do Mark justice."

She could shout the news from the housetops but would that suffice? How could she find the words to say how much she loves him, how happy they are together and how altogether wonderful he is? —ANDY WOOD

See Mark in "High Chapparral," Sundays from 10 to 11 P.M., EST, over NBC-TV.