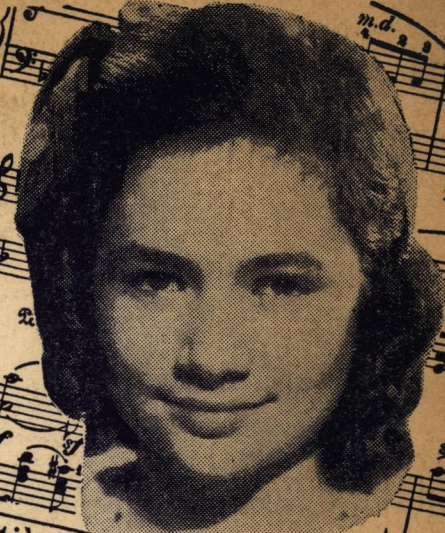


THE TRUE LIFE STORY  
of

*Meriam Cooper*



ECOSSAISES

Piano Solo

Ludwig van Beethoven

Concert Arrangement by

Ferruccio B. Busoni

Superior Ed. 1828.

Edited and fingered  
by Hans T. Siefert

Une Tabatière à Musique  
A Musical Snuff-Box  
VALE-BADINAGE

Automaticamente (♩=80)

Piano

and Lively

Spring Song

Allegretto grazioso.

F. Mendelssohn Op.

Edited and fingered by  
Louis Oesterle

Piano

Moderato

Oiseaux de passage  
Birds of Passage

Anatole Liadow, Op.

SOLFEGGIETTO.

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach

Revised and fingered, with exact pedal signs,  
and arranged for LEFT HAND SOLO *ad libit.*  
by A.R. PARSONS.

Non troppo vivo.

Non troppo vivo.

LEFT HAND SOLO.

Andante (♩ = 112)

Fantasia I

*"The Gifted Child"*

By  
SHIRLEY COOPER



With much gratitude to  
Uncle Click.

Love From  
Meriam

With many thanks to my dear  
friend Papa Click.

Affectionately  
Saundra



## CHAPTER I



### TITLES

"THE FINAL TEST" BY ELVA HORSMAN

PREFACE

LIFE BEGINS WITH MUSIC

REMARKABLE MEMORY

"YOU'RE A VERY LUCKY MAN"

"BUY MORE STAMPS AND BONDS"

FIRST NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

PLAYS OWN COMPOSITIONS

"THE SONG OF THE SIERRA VISTA"

"FAREWELL TO JEFFERSON"

SIX YEARS OLD AND TWO SONGS

"BABY'S LULLABY"

"THE MOTHER AND HER BIRDS"

"OSCAR, THE EDUCATED FISH"

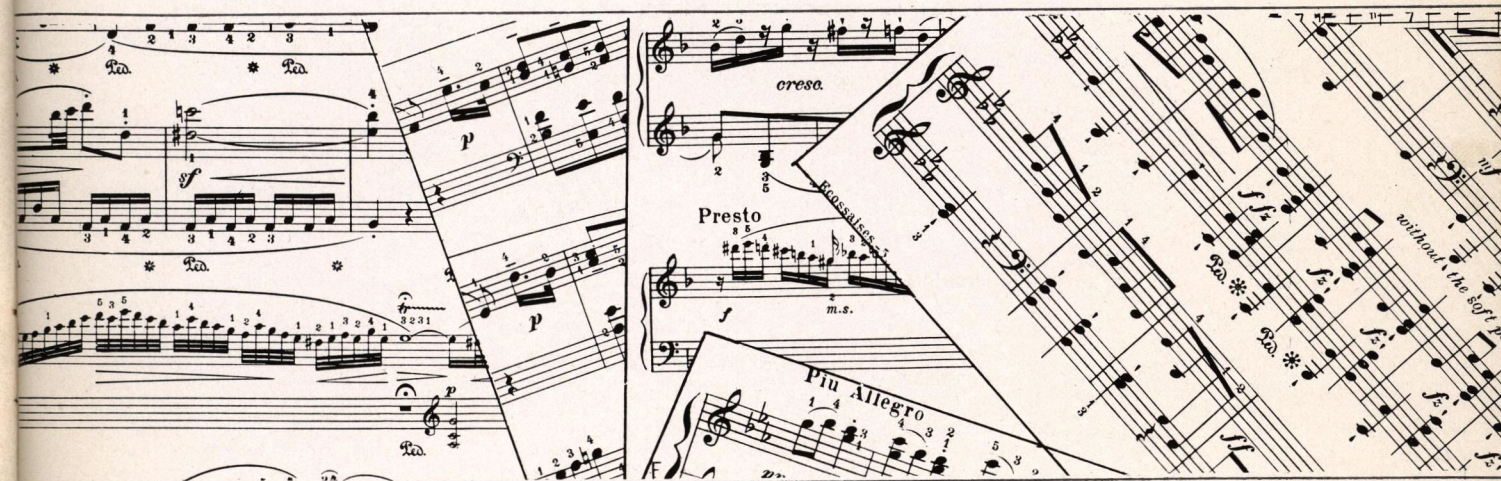
SEVEN, AND DEFINITE MUSIC ABILITY

MUSIC FIRST, THEN SHE PLAYED

COMPOSED TUNE WHILE SHE TAKES A NAP

WISHING WILL MAKE IT SO

LIKES TO WRITE





One day I found a beautifully expressive poem in the Visalia Times-Delta. It is entitled "The Final Test." I will be very happy if Meriam will always live up to the theme voiced in the poem, whether she becomes a great artist or not.

## THE FINAL TEST

By ELVA HORSMAN

Sometime when I have finished,  
Every class in life's great school,  
Will there be upon my record,  
Shining clear, The Golden Rule?

Have I sought the hidden purpose,  
In the tears I shed on earth?  
Did I tread the path of courage?  
Did I seek the things of worth?

Has my faith survived true trials?  
Have I always done my best?  
Was my motto to give service?  
Could I pass the final test.

For what matters isn't money,  
Neither great success nor fame,  
But the effort toward perfection,  
And the way we played the game.

## Preface

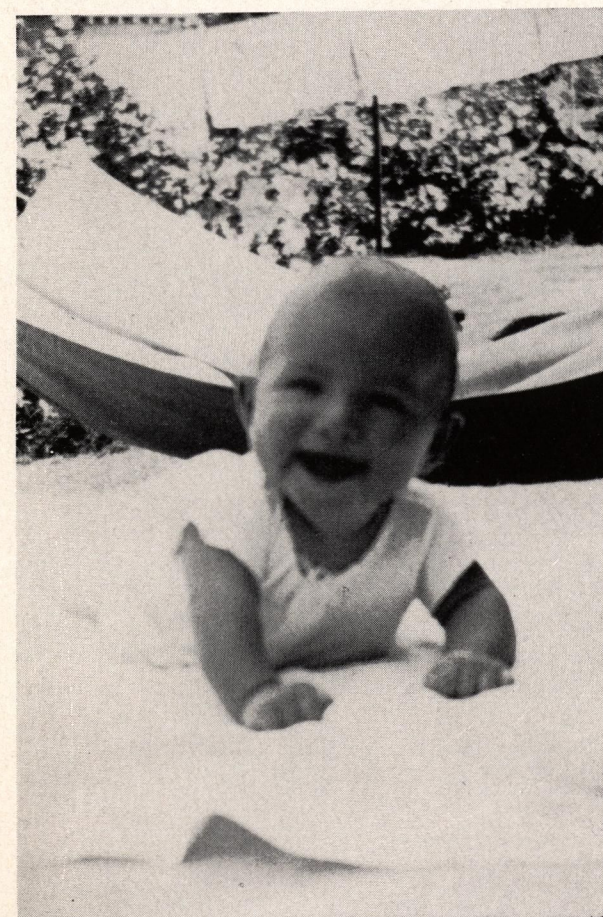
As fleeting as the sands of time are baby footprints and tiny finger smudges. They vanish with each day. But as the days revolve into years, memories of babyhood and childhood remain with us as wonderful treasures. That is one of the mysteries of life which helps to soften its harsh impacts.

People are always asking me about our remarkable daughter, Meriam. That brought about a decision to record her many achievements in a little book. I have always kept the records of those accomplishments in her baby book, scrap book and music composition book.

When she was two years old, Meriam had her first experience with the Press. She was interviewed by reporters from the Visalia Times-Delta, the Fresno Bee and the Chicago Daily Forward and the newspapers published stories about her extraordinary faculties.

Irrespective of her accomplishments, Meriam is living proof that really good people cannot be spoiled by praise, because we, and her many admirers, always openly praised her for being such an outstanding child. She has remained just a plain, sweet little girl, normal in every respect and talented to a point merging into inspiration. She has made, and more important, she has retained many friends.

Meriam is so active-minded that learning to do things comes natural to her. It would be almost impossible to suppress it, even if we wanted to. Her life appears energized to an existence of attainment.



*Her First Picture. Meriam taking a sun bath when she was three months old.*

### *Life Begins . . . With Music*

Meriam was born in San Francisco, the City by the Golden Gate, when I was 26 years old and she made her advent into the world to the strains of music. Her birthday is March 31. She was named after my sister, Marilyn Schultz, a beautiful girl who died at the age of 22 but will live forever in our memories.

Before Meriam was born I loved to listen to music and I especially liked to go to dances. I spent the last few weeks before her arrival at the home of my brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Salmirs. He was leader of the Tanforan Orchestra. The very night Meriam was born the orchestra was practicing in the house, so she was actually born to music. Her maternal grandmother is Mrs. L. Sabel. Her maiden name was Strauss and she lives at 1725 Fulton street, San Francisco. She has an uncle, Johann Strauss, who lives in Flint, Michigan.

### *Remarkable Memory*

Almost from the exordium we recognized that she had a remarkable memory and possessed a rare ability to learn. She began to say words when she was five months old. At nine months she was enunciating entire sentences. When she was 18 months old she could not only spell 12 words, Mama, Daddy, Baby, Yes, No, Pet, Supper, Sally, Papa, Cat, Dog and Mat, but she could also read the words. She could rattle off the ABC's, count to one hundred, draw pictures, sing songs, especially, "The Good Ship Lollypop" and recite poems. Her favorite poem was "The Night Before Christmas." It was a versatile beginning.





*Meriam's Mother, Shirley Cooper.*

#### *She Liked to Spell Big Words*

Big words were easy for her, and when she was two years old she readily spelled Electricity, Metropolitan, Prescription, Hippopotamus, Carbon-Tetrachloride and the makes of all automobiles, words offering impediments to children her age. As soon as she learned a new word, she wanted to know how to spell it, and when she once learned to spell the word, she never forgot it.

#### *Memorized Long Poems*

When she was three she memorized a four-verse poem, a difficult one. It was called "Conscious Ignorance." She recited it at a farewell reception given by the South Side Parent-Teacher Association for Miss Margaret Hansen, who was retiring after a long service in the teaching profession in Visalia.

#### *Given the Stanford Binet Test*

It was during the third year that she was given the Stanford Binet Test at the San Francisco State Teachers College. She astounded everyone by receiving an I. Q. of 156. I was told at that time that she was mentally ad-

vanced for her age and it was only natural for her to do things like older children.

Meriam experienced her first interview over the radio when she was four. She was interviewed by Chas. P. Scott, station manager for KTKC, Visalia. He asked her questions about world events and how to spell difficult words. Of course she was asked to spell carbon-tetrachloride. It looked very much like she was destined to become a Quiz Kid. But the muse of music, one of the nine, intervened and at the advanced age of four and one-half she decided she knew enough about spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic and asked me to teach her to play the piano.

I knew little about music but I began to teach her to play little nursery songs, with her right hand only, and by a very simple method. Her musical aptitude unfolded rapidly and she was soon making up her own bass and memorizing the pieces. I also discovered that she had absolute pitch, a gift for a musician so rare that only one person out of several thousand possesses the ability. Even if she was in another room she could designate any note that was sounded.



*Meriam's Father, Maurice Cooper.*



*Namesake . . . Meriam's Aunt*

#### *Her First Piano Lesson*

She was so enchanted by music that we decided to let her take piano lessons. She began studying with Mrs. C. W. Whiteside of Tulare when she was five and one-half years old and six months later she was composing. She has composed over 50 tunes, including "Conyer School Song," "Jefferson School Song," and "Sierra Vista School Song." The last two pieces were patriotic numbers entitled "Buy More Stamps and Bonds" and "You're a Very Lucky Man." She also wrote words to them. The first number was played at the Jefferson School operetta in May, 1943 and was sung by the chorus under the direction of Miss Estelle Seabourn, the school's singing teacher. Although Meriam had already left for Los Angeles to continue her music, Miss Seabourn sent her a letter of thanks.

"You're a Very Lucky Man" was presented at the Jefferson School on May 19, 1943. It follows:

### YOU'RE A VERY LUCKY MAN

*Words and Music by MERIAM COOPER*

You're a very lucky man  
 'Cause you live in a land that's free  
 You can go where you want and have a good time,  
 And you have your liberty.  
 Now our Country is at war, and it needs every one like you,  
 So get busy now and help Uncle Sam, this is what you should do.  
 You should buy war bonds and pay your taxes,  
 Get a job right now to beat the Axis;  
 You should raise a Victory Garden with vegetables and fruit,  
 Buy more Stamps and Bonds, instead of that new suit.  
 So get busy now and help your country,  
 Every stamp will help to buy a gun.  
 And some day you will be glad that you have done your share,  
 And you'll have the things you want when peace is won.



*Her uncle, Johann Strauss and her two cousins, Lena and Eva.*





Meriam's Uncle, Sam. He is a musician and also an acrobat.

## BUY MORE STAMPS AND BONDS

By MERIAM COOPER

If we all buy bonds and pay our taxes,  
We will win the war and beat the Axis.  
Each and every one of us should make a start,  
Let us all get in and do our part.

Now our grand old Country needs our help,  
There are many things we'll do without.  
But if we work real hard and do our share,  
We'll have no time to sit and pout.

Let us all get busy and buy some stamps and bonds,  
Our country needs our help in every way.  
Let's do without some things we really want,  
Share our country's burdens every day.

Then I'm sure this war will soon be over  
And we can have the things we did without.  
And when all the world is free again,  
Then everyone can laugh and shout.



First Girl Friend was Norma Levi, Meriam's cousin.

(From the Fresno Bee, Sunday, March 24, 1935.)

## VISALIA GIRL, 2 CAN SPELL, ADD, PHONE GROCER

VISALIA (Tulare Co.) March 23.—Most boys and girls learn to spell in school. Some never learn to spell at all. It is different however,

is tucked snugly under the covers with her.

Some of Meriam's admirers have suggested an intelligence test for her but her parents, while proud of the accomplishments of their little daughter, are careful to guard her from being considered a child prodigy. They declare she is a normal youngster who likes her vegetables, her playmates and her spelling and adding.

(From the Visalia Times-Delta, March 30, 1935.)

## VISALIAN, THREE YEARS OLD TODAY IS CHILD PRODIGY

When Meriam Cooper, who this afternoon is celebrating her third birthday anniversary, is old enough to go to school, she is going to be a real problem for educational authorities, because Meriam can already outshine primary grade students.

It wouldn't be a bit surprising but that Meriam could start to school when she is old enough, and complete her first year, several grades ahead of children her same age. At her present rate of progress, she could be ready for high school before she is nine or 10 years old, and high school should only take a couple of years.

Meriam is the small and only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cooper of 601 South Conyer street, but she asks enough questions for half a dozen children. She is celebrating her birthday anniversary this afternoon by playing games with a number of her small friends and is also enjoying a large, gaily decorated birthday cake.

The child prodigy has shown such unusual tendencies recently that she may be given a test to determine her mental rating, and until the test is made, her rightfully proud parents can only sit back and answer the questions she frequently asks.

But Meriam's age means more than it would to most children who have just turned three years, for she can pronounce practically any word written down or spelled for her, she can say her ABC's, an accomplishment made when she was 18 months old; count, read numbers, draw pictures, sing songs, especially "The Good Ship Lollypop;" do simple arithmetic problems in adding, recite a long list of the telephone numbers of her friends and a good many business establishments in town.

Her favorite little trick is spelling the names of cars. The manner in

which she came by this accomplishment was an early indication that she was not an ordinary child. Much earlier in life she plagued her parents with questions as to the names of cars she saw and upon being told, wanted to know how they were spelled. Her questioning nature extends to the names of people she meets. She wants to know immediately how each name is spelled.

At the present time her parents make the statement that she probably can spell no less than 100 big words, which include hippopotamus, medicine, Chevrolet, bicycle, elephant, Chrysler, metropolitan and Mississippi, besides a myriad of small words.

Otherwise, Meriam is quite a normal girl. She likes to play with the neighbor children, she likes her dolls, tricycle and likes to play with



with brown-eyed Meriam Cooper, 2-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cooper.

Meriam can spell the names of all American automobiles and even of some parts of the mechanism. Her repertoire includes such jaw-breakers as Mississippi, bureau, hippopotamus, electricity, prescription and Christmas.

When she was eighteen months old she could rattle off the alphabet and count up to thirty. Now she can count up to 100 and multiply by tens up to 1,000. In fact, her mother says she was reciting the alphabet, spelling and counting before she was able to walk.

The little Visalia girl answers the telephone and even orders groceries by telephone for her mother. She can remember any telephone or street number after hearing it once and pronounces the names of visitors after they are spelled for her.

Despite her phenomenal advantage in letters and figures over children of her age, Meriam is a normal, healthy child who loves to play with her companions and who has a particular affection for her little rag dog, Mitzie. She lacks the ordinary child's fear of the dark but refuses to go to sleep unless Mitzie



At 18 months she was a regular Quiz Kid, willing and ready to answer questions.



## A LITTLE FAIRY DANCE

*Meriam's first composition,  
written when she was six*

Words and Music by Meriam Cooper



puppies, but her idea of games is reciting nursery rhymes and asking for general information.

At her birthday party today were Dorothy, Evelyn and Shael Uroff, Norma Levi, Esther Furst, Dorothy Newman, Jerry and Stewart Gavzy, and Jeanette and Cecil Kline, and you can bet that she can spell all their names.

## She Likes to Play Her Own Compositions

Meriam entertained with musical numbers and her own compositions at the B'nai B'rith District No. 4 Convention, which was held in Santa Cruz in June, 1942; at the Hotel Californian in Fresno, before the Business and Professional Women's Club, for the Women of the Moose, the Lions Club, the Royal Neighbors, the State Employee's Association and at the Fox Visalia Theatre. It was at the Fox that her subsequent triumph, her first Home Town Recital, took place in March, 1944.

She played her 'Song of the Sierra Vista School,' at the Fox Theatre on the Kiddie Club Program and won the



Third Birthday Party. Meriam was so tiny she had to sit in her high chair.

Meriam, when she was three years old

first prize. Pupils of the Sierra Vista School applauded her warmly. Here is the song.

## "THE SONG OF THE SIERRA VISTA"

Words and Music by MERIAM COOPER

Hail! Sierra Vista, the best school in the town.  
Hail! Sierra Vista, we come from all around.  
Fight! Sierra Vista, fight for what is right,  
Our school will always be the best,  
So fight, Sierra, fight.

Hail, Sierra Vista, we're for you one and all.  
Hail! Sierra Vista, we'll gather in your hall.  
Fight! Sierra Vista, for your flag so true,  
Our school has just been built for us,  
And it will see us through.

Hail! Sierra Vista, we love our teachers, too.  
Hail! Sierra Vista, our friends are all so true.  
Fight! Sierra Vista, fight from morn till night,  
Our school must always win the game, so fight  
With all your might.







*She Always Liked Birthday Parties. This picture was taken at Billy Goldberg's birthday party.*

She won another prize on the Kiddie Club program, presenting a combination number when she was six. It consisted of "Minuet from Don Juan," by Mozart; "Habenera from Carmen," by Bizet; "Sailing the Waves," her own composition and a song and tap dance number, "Little Skipper." She was dressed in her little skipper costume for the occasion.

Meriam wrote "Farewell to Jefferson," a song. Meriam played the song at the end of two school terms she attended at Jefferson and June Ray Thurman, her friend, sang the words. Here it is:

### "FAREWELL TO JEFFERSON"

*Words and Music by MERIAM COOPER*

Farewell dear friends, and Jefferson too,  
Another year of school work is through.  
We all had fun and work was play,  
Each hour of every happy day.

We'll miss our friends and our teachers, too.  
They are the friends that were so true.  
Farewell dear friends and Jefferson too,  
Our work's all done, so farewell to you.

Farewell dear friends, until the next Fall,  
At Sierra Vista, we'll see you all.  
Sometime in June, we're leaving you,  
Farewell dear friends, our work's all through.

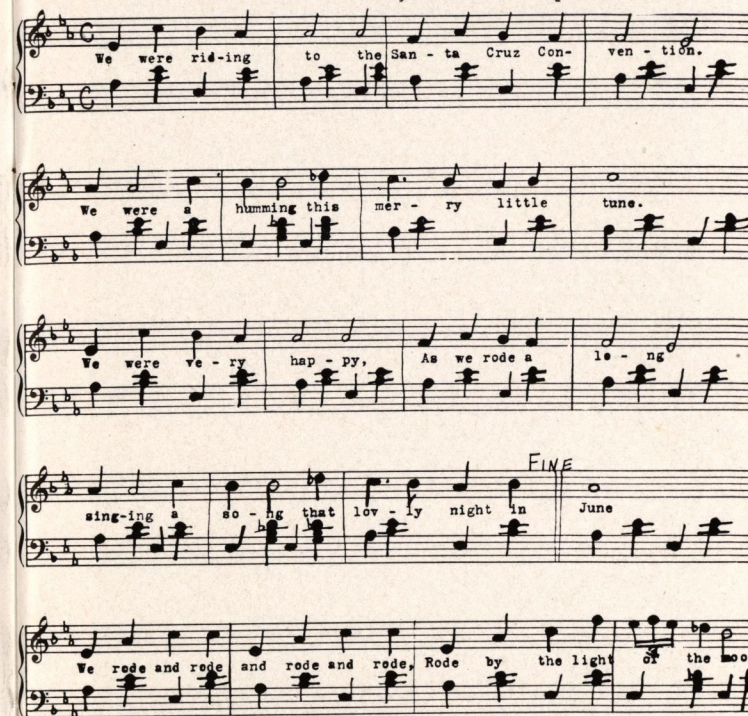
Farewell dear friends, and Jefferson too,  
The best school that we ever knew.  
Farewell dear friends, and teachers all,  
To Sierra Vista, we'll go next Fall.

*Four years old and still a Quiz Kid. She spelled big words and answered questions over Radio Station KTKC*



### ON MY WAY TO THE CONVENTION

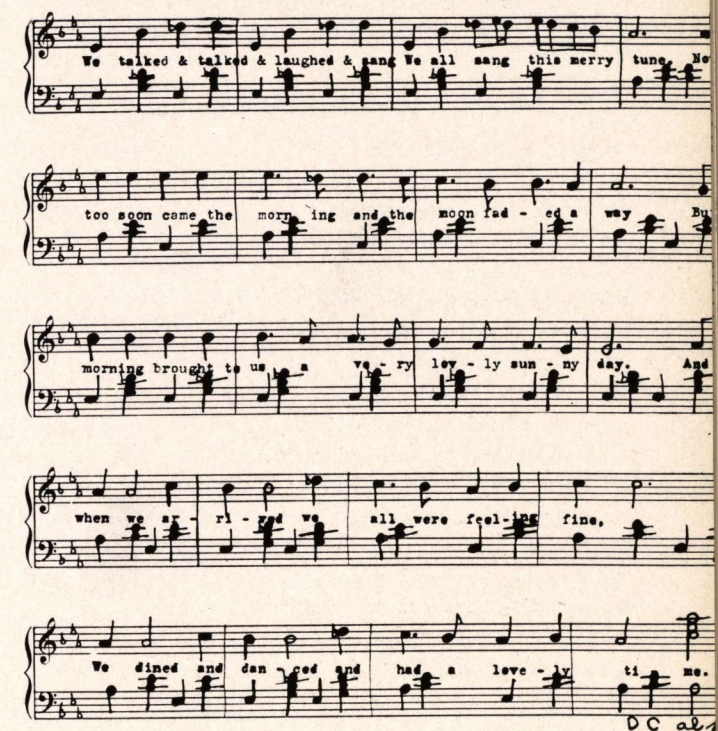
*Words and music by Meriam Cooper*



*Six Years Old . . . looking a little on the serious side.*



Dedicated to Herman Lewkowitz, Grand Lodge President of the B'nai B'rith. Written in 1940 when she was eight years old.



### Six-Years-Old and Two Songs

When Meriam was six-years-old she wrote two songs, setting the words to music. One she dedicated to Wanda Jean Whiteside, her first music teacher's little girl. Its title was "Baby's Lullabye." The other piece she dedicated to her mother, Shirley Cooper. Printed below is "Baby's Lullabye."

### BABY'S LULLABY

Go to sleep my baby dear,	Dream a dream my baby dear,
Go to sleep the sandman's here.	Dream of stars that shine so clear.
He is coming pretty soon,	Sandman's coming with his pack,
He will hum a little tune.	He will bring a great big sack,
Go to sleep and close your eyes,	Go to sleep and close your eyes,
You will be in paradise.	Dream a dream of paradise.

Here is the song she dedicated to her mother:

### THE MOTHER AND HER BIRDS

I have a little birdie	She sang a little bird song
She can fly up high.	To her birdies three,
If she flew and flew,	Tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet,
She'd nearly reach the sky.	She was happy you see.
She made a little bird nest	She taught them to fly up high,
For her birdies three.	Flip their little wings.
Then she took a rest,	They flew to the sky,
'Cause she was tired, you see.	And saw so many things.



Meriam wrote the music and words to this song when she was in the fifth grade at Jefferson School. She was inspired to write it by two little gold fish which were in the class room in a fish bowl.

## "OSCAR," THE EDUCATED FISH

Oscar is an educated fish  
Because he stays in school the whole day long,  
He learns his lessons very well,  
And he never, never does wrong.  
He wears a coat of red and gold,  
He has two little (popping) eyes,  
He swims all day in his glass bowl  
I hope he never, never dies.  
Oscar is an educated fish,  
He stays after school every day.  
In his glass bowl he eats and swims,  
He never goes outside to play.  
Now Oscar has a little friend,  
That I have brought to school for him,  
He's very happy now I guess,  
For now they both can play and swim.

### Seven, and Definite Music Ability

Meriam became seven and we received the first confirmation of that which we had long expected, that she had definite music ability. It came about when she was given a music test at Mills College by Mrs. Alma Schmidt Kennedy, teacher of Ruth Julia Slenczynski, who was a child concert pianist. Mrs. Kennedy was very much impressed with Meriam's musical talent, so much so, that she offered her a chance to earn a scholarship. We decided, however, that she was too young to be away from home.

There are numerous instances which revealed that music was just about the most important thing in Meriam's life. Here are a few of them:

We were spending the summer with my mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. L. Sabel, who did not have a piano. We visited Treasure Island during the Golden Gate Fair. She immediately made herself at home in the piano department at the Fair and picked herself out a little Story and Clark Treasure Island model spinet piano on which she played every tune she could think of. She seemed to be unaware that it was a public place and that people were watching her.

A well-known Oakland woman who was in the crowd, stood there and listened to her in amazement. She said her talent was remarkable and should certainly be developed. She gave her the address of a very fine concert piano teacher in San Francisco.

On her way home from the Fair, Meriam composed a piece which she called her "Treasure Island Melody." In it she described her trip to the Fair, the ride on the street car, the boat ride, walking up and down the stairs, listening to the band play during the lunch hour, her piano playing at the Fair on the little spinet piano and the side show. She wrote the piece later without the use of a piano.



*Seven Years Old . . . Meriam likes to wear her hair in curls. Here she is all dressed up, ready to go to Mills College to take her music test. She is sure she will pass.*

### Music First, Then She Played

On another occasion we took her to visit some friends. Although there was a child present, she paid no attention to anything but a piano which was in the corner of the room. She played the piano about an hour, then, after she had satisfied herself with music, she spent the rest of the time playing with the little girl. The next day her grandmother purchased a piano for her to play on during her visit.

### Composed Tune While She Takes a Nap

One afternoon she was taking a nap. A short time after going to bed she begged me to let her get up and use the piano. She said she had composed a new tune which she called the "Minuet in G." When I let her get up, she went to the piano and played the tune. Then she wrote it in her music note book. She played the piece later on several programs.

### Wishing Will Make It So

She was never allowed to study popular music, although when she was very young she liked it very much. It was an arduous task to keep her from playing popular music because she could play every tune she heard, by ear, after hearing it just once.

Her favorite song was "Wishing." Whenever she was about to do something important she would sing and play the song. It seemed as though "Wishing Would Make It So," and she invariably accomplished whatever she tried to do.

### Studied With Noah Steinberg

It was also when Meriam was seven that she took lessons from Noah Steinberg of San Francisco. Steinberg came from San Francisco to Fresno, met his pupils there, and gave advanced master courses. He is a highly rated pianist and teacher of the Bay District and is a well-known concert pianist, having played in Europe as well as in this country. Meriam was very fond of her teacher and never tired of making the long trips to Fresno to take her music lessons.

### Likes to Write

Even before she went to school she could write well, and liked to write short stories and letters. Whenever she went to parties, shows, visiting or on her vacation, she would remember everything that happened and the next day she would write a short story in her story note book. She described everything that had taken place. She likes to make her own greeting cards with pictures and writes her own verses on them.

### Meriam Typed This Letter to Her Father When She Was Nine:

Visalia, California  
July 17, 1941

Dear Daddy:

I received your letter. I do not remember you kissing me goodbye. But I guess you must have.

I am glad you are having a good time there. I would like to be there too. I miss you very much and I hope you will come back soon. When are you coming back? Don't forget to stop in San Francisco and bring Lorraine.

Tonight we are going to eat at Mrs. Desser's house. We get invited out every night for supper. I wish you were here.

When you are away mama doesn't have much for dinner. For meat she has bacon, weiners, liver, sardines and liver-sausage. We will probably have other things like that. Today we will have liver-sausage.

Mama is taking care of the lawn. She waters it every day before I go in. She lets me water it too. She comes here to the shop at least once a day, sometimes twice. She always has to open the safe for something when she comes down here.

Well I guess I have to stop now I haven't anymore to say.

With love from mama and myself.

MERIAM

Meriam wrote another letter. It was when she was three years old and it was written to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. With the letter she enclosed some money for "The President's Birthday Observance." She was very proud of the answer and always considered it one of her most cherished possessions. This is the reply she received:

White House  
Washington

February 10, 1936

My dear Meriam:

The President has received your letter of January thirty-first and has asked me to assure you of his appreciation of your thoughtfulness in sending some of your money to help the crippled children.

He sends you his very best wishes.

Very sincerely yours  
M. A. LEHAND  
Private Secretary

Meriam Arlene Cooper  
805 East Main Street,  
Visalia, California

### She Had a Piano Pupil

Meriam has already had actual experience in teaching the piano. When she was nine years old she began to teach a 13-year-old girl, who went to the Sierra Vista Junior High School.

The girl was playing third grade music when she moved away to make her home in Long Beach, and she played piano selections every Friday night on the Friday Nite Talent Club programs.

### Wants To Be a Concert Pianist and Composer

Although she says she likes to teach music, she also says she prefers to be a concert pianist and composer when she grows up. It looks as if she will get her wish for "Wishing" will make it so.

Meriam wrote many stories when she was a little girl. I have the original stories in her scrap book collection.

### At Five Years Old She Wrote:

#### APRIL FOOL DAY

A little girl took piano lessons. One day she said: "I no longer want to take piano lessons." Her mother said: "You don't have to. I'll tell the piano teacher not to come." Then she said: "April Fool, I'm just fooling you."

### When She Was Five:

#### POPPY DAY

Yesterday was "Poppy Day." The Veterans of the World War make the flowers and the ladies sell them. And the men wear them on their coats. They are pretty flowers.

### Another Story, at Five:

#### THE STORE

There is a store a block from my house. It has lots of candy and ice cream. I go to the store every day and bring home lots of candy. I like to go to the store.



## MINUET IN G

Music composed by Meriam Arlene Cooper  
(Written in 1939 when she was seven years old)

Moderato

FINE

DS

When She Was Six Years Old She Wrote:

### VACATION TIME

Friday was the last day of school. We stayed until eleven o'clock. We made a vegetable man and the teacher read to us. I got promoted and I got all O's this time. My daddy promised me a bicycle.

When she was seven years old:

### TAKING PIANO LESSONS

Every Tuesday I go to Fresno to take piano lessons. I take a half hour. My teacher's name is Mr. Steinberg. I get three new pieces. I like the variations the best. I want to be a piano player when I get big.

Meriam drew pictures under the originals, illustrating each story.

## CHAPTER II

Dedicated to

## The Friday Night Talent Club

### MY BOOK OF MEMORIES

Words and Music by Meriam Cooper

Six years old . . . 1938

Let me pre - sent you with this book My pic - tures in it

too. Just put it in a ti - ny nook and keep it just for

you. For eve - ry thing worth while I've done is

in this book for you. And when I have much old - er

grown, Just look the pag - es through.

DC al fine





*Entertainers . . . Friday Nite Talent Club. Left to right: Frances Bufkin, Texas beauty; Rosalie Beamish, a singer and dancer and Patty Ann Clore, acrobatic entertainer.*

## MEDIUM FOR EXPRESSION

Every effort was made to associate Meriam with other children who had talent and it was when she was five years old, and while she was taking piano lessons from Mrs. C. W. Whiteside, that we formed the Friday Nite Talent Club, an organization that has filled a distinct need in Visalia. Some of the most talented youngsters of the community belonged to this club. One of the first members was Frances Bufkin, who as a juvenile entertainer made a big hit with her singing and dancing. She was seven years

old when the club came into being. She also played the piano, gave dramatic readings, entertained on the radio, and was president of the "Fox Kiddie Club" of Visalia.

Some of the members who joined later were June Ray Thurman, whose versatility led her to popularity because she could not only sing but was a tap dancer, pianist, violinist and accordionist. Mary Elaine Campbell, promising pianist; Frances Larson, accordionist and celloist; Ann Shidler, pianist; Patty Ann Clore, acrobatic dancer; Gwendolyn Harmonson, singer; Paul Leslie, violinist; Dianne Petersen, pianist. Billy Goldberg, violinist. June Davis, singer; Dolly Straton, pianist; Rosalie Beamish, singer, Betty Swank, pianist, and Gladwyn Fryer, singer.

Besides providing a medium whereby the children could entertain, the club resulted in establishment of long-standing friendships.

The Friday Nite Club was just like a big party for the talented youngsters and at the same time, they developed their varied talents. Refreshments were served after the programs.

The club had its own orchestra which opened and closed the program and the group won recognition by playing before many local lodge gatherings. Frances Bufkin was the singer, June Ray Thurman the accordionist, Paul Leslie the violinist and Meriam played the piano. Each program was closed by the orchestration of "God Bless America." Meriam's home became the scene of many gatherings each Friday evening as the members met to sing, dance, recite poetry and play musical instruments.

On one occasion some of the members of the "Friday Nits Club" entertained for "The State Employee's Association" at the Moose Hall in Visalia on September 13, 1941, with a variety program.

Paul Leslie made a splendid master of ceremonies.

Frances Bufkin and June Thurman entertained with song and tap dance numbers, Patty Ann Clore performed acrobatic feats, Rosalie Beamish sang and Meriam played piano selections and her own compositions. Their presentations were greeted by enthusiastic applause from the adults and their efforts were rewarded by a check with which they purchased United States Defense Stamps.

Mrs. Ray Thurman wrote a poem, especially for the Friday Nite Talent Club. It was first introduced when it was recited at one of the club gatherings by June Ray Thurman. Here is the poem:

## THE FRIDAY NIGHT CLUB

By Mrs. Ray Thurman

You can't guess why I'm so happy,  
Nor the reason mother hurries about,  
I'll tell you, it's Friday evening,  
And we intend to go out.

It isn't so far where we're going,  
Just about four blocks or so,  
But we're always anxious to get there,  
For a good time awaits us, we know.

Now this is how the evening begins,  
We line up a program so fine,  
Meriam takes the piano part,  
And I, June, take the accordion for mine.

Then Paul joins in with his violin,  
And Frances leads out with a song,  
We all join in a jolly chorus,  
And merrily we roll along.

Then one by one we entertain,  
With piano, song and dance,  
To an audience that's more thrilled,  
Than they were with their first romance.

At last the program is ended,  
Mrs. Cooper leaves the room,  
But she's only gone to the kitchen,  
And we know she'll be back soon.

With cookies, drinks and ice cream,  
And everything that's nice,  
The refreshments are so wonderful,  
We have to thank her twice.

Now if you have an evening,  
When you're feeling sad and blue,  
Just drop in at the Friday Nite Club,  
And we'll find a cure for you.

The children and adults thoroughly enjoyed the Friday Nite Talent Club gatherings, because they formed an important part in our lives, enabled us to make strong friendships and allowed the children a natural field of development for their many talents.



*Another Friday Nite Talent Club entertainer, June Ray Thurman, Kentucky Belle.*



## Friday Night Talent Club Orchestra



The famous Friday Nite Talent Club orchestra. Left to right: June Ray Thurman, Meriam Cooper, Frances Bufkin and Paul Leslie.

(As Published in the Visalia Times-Delta)

## MEMBER OF FRIDAY NIGHT TALENT CLUB



Meriam Cooper, 10, pictured here, is one of the members of the Friday Night Talent Club which meets at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cooper, 601 South Conyer street.

The club is just like a party for talented Visalia youngsters who participate in its functions.

## Talented Youngsters Of Visalia District Develop Abilities At Talent Club Meets

Talented Visalia children look forward to participating in the informal meetings of the Friday Night Talent Club, held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cooper, 601 South Conyer street. At one of their recent gatherings, they were entertained by Meriam Cooper, outstanding young pianist.



## CHAPTER III

### MERIAM'S CONCERTS. GARY IS BORN

#### TITLES

PROPER ENVIRONMENT

MERIAM AND SAUNDRA . . . FRIENDS

GARY COOPER . . . A MILLION DOLLAR SMILE

MERIAM'S FIRST CONCERT

SECOND RECITAL

ASSOCIATED PRESS RECOGNITION

SPECIAL PERMITS FROM BOARD OF EDUCATION

REVIEWS OF FIRST HOME TOWN CONCERT

POEM: "MERIAM'S FIRST HOME TOWN RECITAL"  
BY FRANCES BUFKIN

EDITORIAL RECOGNITION

HER FOURTH CONCERT

CONCLUSION



*Saundra and Meriam, taken in the spring of 1944 just before Meriam came to Visalia for her first home town recital. Saundra came along, too, to hear her little friend play.*

### Proper Environment

Although Meriam's friends considered her an accomplished pianist when she was 10 years old, we knew she could do still better if she was surrounded by a musical environment. Her home background was musically weak, as we were not proficient in music, although we had an appreciation of it and the kindred arts. We realized she should be surrounded by a musical atmosphere, stabilized against a background which would allow her natural genius to mature and unfold.

It was as if by fate that the opportunity came. Marvin Maazel, a famous concert pianist and his remarkable daughter, Saundra, a child concert violinist, comprising an unusual and gifted father-daughter team, came to Visalia for a concert sponsored by the Tulare-Kings Counties Civic Music Association. We were so amazed by the way they performed that we immediately made arrangements to have Meriam live and study at the home of Mr. Maazel in Los Angeles. It was no ordinary undertaking but Meriam's

display of talent so impressed the musician that he agreed to guide her musical destiny.

#### *Meriam and Saundra . . . Friends*

By living in the Maazel home where she not only has the opportunity of studying with a very fine musician and the benefit of association with another fine musician . . . Mrs. Maazel is also an artist . . . she has the constant companionship of another girl about the same age, Saundra Berkova Maazel. Saundra is one of the greatest child violinists in the United States. She has played before large audiences with veteran-like poise and assurance and with a great feeling which completely captivates her mature audience. I heard Saundra play just once and I think she was marvelous. She played "The Bee," by Schubert with such accuracy and speed it was amazing and the way she played "Londonderry Air" will live forever in my memory. She stood before her audience, in complete se-



renity, and was completely in her artistry. Part of the time she played with her eyes closed. She looked like a beautiful vision. My eyes could hardly believe my auditory senses. Saundra should be an inspiration to every child in America who is interested in music. She has proven an inspiration to those old enough to realize what a true genius she is and she is obviously not diurnal in her career.

#### *Agreeable Association*

Saundra and Meriam get along well together and they like to play with dolls, animals and games. Meriam plays with children of any age. She is well liked and has many friends and she is not spoiled despite the fact that for most of her life, she was the only child. We always praised her when she did things well. She was always expected to accomplish unusual things and she usually lived up to expectations.

Meriam is not the vivacious type of child but just a happy, contented youngster who is very easily pleased. She takes her time about doing things and then does them well. I believe it is really fortunate that she is the quiet type, otherwise with her active mind and remarkable ability to learn and retain that which she learns, it might be injurious to her health.

It was difficult to let her leave home, even at the age of 11, but we realized it would be a transcending oppor-

tunity for her. At first she hesitated about leaving as she had never been away from home before, even for a day. I told her it was up to her to make the decision. Then she received a letter from Saundra. Saundra asked when she was coming and told her she could hardly wait to see her. Meriam became excited and said she wanted to go right away. She told her friends and teachers she was leaving Visalia for awhile. There was nothing left for us to do but let her go.

#### *Gary Cooper . . . a Million Dollar Smile*

We were expecting a new arrival and this made it easier for us to face the occasion. The new child was a boy. He was born June 16, 1943, and we named him Gary. It wasn't only because our last name is Cooper, but because I think Gary is a marvelous actor and a very fine person. If our little Gary grows up to be anything like his namesake we will be well pleased. He is also named after his grandmother whose name was Gertrude Cooper.

Gary is just the opposite of what Meriam was when she was a baby. He's a strong, lively little fellow and actually jumps out of my arms. We brought him from the hospital when he was four weeks old. When we left him on the bed for a few minutes, we returned to find he had turned himself half way around. We never left him alone on the bed again.



*Gary Cooper and his million dollar smile, shown in his first picture at six months old. He has musical hands and exceptionally long little fingers. He likes to sit between the radio and piano and listen to music.*

When he was three months old he was trying to crawl. We had to put pillows around him to keep him from going all over the room. He would get up on his hands and knees and give a little jump and get where he wanted to. He could crawl well at five months. At six months he sat in his high chair and stood up in his play pen.

When he reached the age of seven months he could say "wow wow" and "daddy." He didn't talk quite as early as Meriam, but he'll get by anyway, on his million dollar smile. He's an adorable little baby with redish brown hair, big brown eyes, curly eyelashes, a little pug nose and he's always smiling and friendly. He is always hungry.

He likes his cod liver oil, orange and tomato juice, vegetables, cereal and egg. He likes his bottle best. He is proof that a healthy child is a happy child. He has never been sick and I have never given him medicine.

#### *Our Hopes for Gary*

We hope Gary will have musical talent also. When Meriam comes home and plays the piano, Gary is fascinated by it and it makes him very happy. He has unusual piano hands and exceptionally long, little fingers. He loves to sit on my lap and tries to play the piano. Even sitting in his high chair he thinks he is at the piano and tries to play a tune on his high chair tray. The picture (page 22) taken in his high chair shows his unusual musical hands. Gary was one year old on June 16th, 1944.

#### *Gary Is One Year Old*

Gary has reached the age of one year. He is no longer hungry all the time, but is very fond of sweets. His face brightens up when you mention something sweet to eat. He really has a sweet tooth.

He walks and crawls all over the house. He has learned a few more words. He can say "daddy," "mama," "bow-wow," "bye-bye," "no no," "Gary" and "jello." He tries to say sister and fish. He can also imitate a baby crying, and waves his hands bye bye and does the usual things a baby his age does.

He wants to go bye-bye all the time and likes to play in the sand box and go on the swing. He still likes music. He crawls over to the piano and tries to play on it. He also has a toy music box and xylophone which he likes to play.

#### *Grandparents Proud of Their First Grandson*

Gary's maternal grandfather and grandmother were very happy when Gary was born as he was their first grandson. They have five granddaughters, Meriam is the youngest. Gary's grandmother came to Visalia when he was born and helped arrange a dinner party given by his father, to celebrate his arrival. Dr. H. M. Ginsburg and Rabbi David L. Greenberg of Fresno came to Visalia for the Christening ceremonies.

Gary's paternal grandfather was unable to attend his Christening. He is almost 70 years old but he is very active and works every day. On Sunday he goes swimming in the icy waters of the San Francisco Bay. He says people



*Gary, at one year old and he hasn't lost his winning smile. Walking is a cinch but a little fellow has to stop and rest once in a while. His first birthday anniversary was June 16, 1944.*

can't grow old if they exercise properly and take good care of themselves.

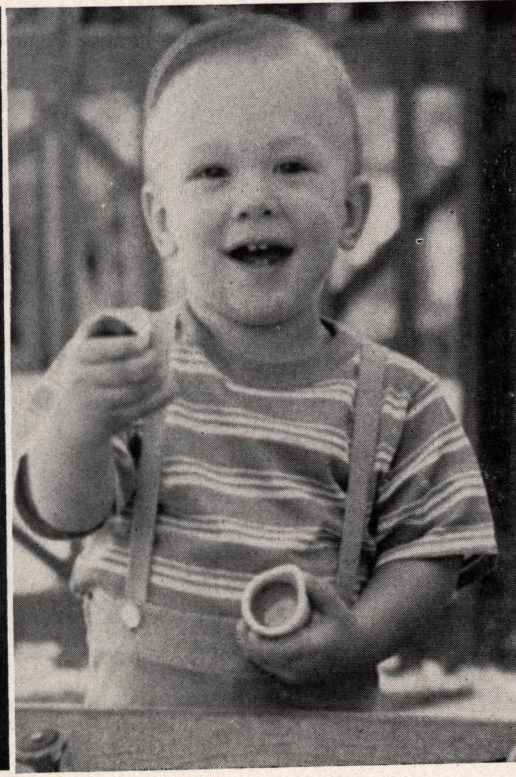
#### *Paternal Grandparents Did Not Live to See Gary*

Gary's paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. A. Cooper, both died before Gary was born. His grandmother lived until Meriam was five years old and she was very proud of





*Mrs. Gertrude Cooper,  
Gary's paternal grandmother.*



*Playing in the sandbox,  
a favorite recreation for Gary*



*Mrs. L. Sabel, maternal grandmother*

Meriam and her accomplishments. At that time Meriam already played tunes on the piano.

Meriam resembles her paternal Grandmother both in looks and disposition. Mrs. Cooper was a very lovely person and was much loved by all her grandchildren, relatives and her many friends. She lived to the age of 74. Meriam still remembers her grandmother and is sorry Gary did not get to know her.

#### *Baby Brother*

Meriam simply adores her baby brother and it is hard for her to part from him when she has to go back to Los Angeles. She comes home every few months to visit us and her little brother. We have had to promise that we would move to Los Angeles when the war is over. She loves the people she is living with, but she also loves her home and baby brother.

## GARY HAS LEARNED HOW TO WALK, AND DADDY IS PROUD AS PUNCH

*By Mrs. Shirley Cooper*

Daddy is taking it easy,  
Since he rented part of his shop,  
He spends more time at home with Gary,  
Eats plenty of ice cream, and drinks soda pop.

Gary is feeling just fine,  
And has learned how to walk,  
He says a few more words,  
And he thinks he knows how to talk.

He keeps us both real busy,  
Picking up his toys all day long,  
When he's a very bad boy we spank him,  
He doesn't understand what he has done wrong.

We had some pictures taken of Gary,  
On his first birthday,  
They are in the book for you,  
That we soon shall send your way.

He is now one year old,  
And his daddy is "Proud as Punch."  
Every day exactly at twelve,  
Together they have lunch.

Daddy goes to visit Meriam,  
Whenever he can spare the gas and time,  
She was very happy that he came to her fourth concert,  
And they both had a very lovely time.

Meriam gave her fourth concert,  
At the Olga Steeb Conservatory,  
She will be home in September,  
Which will complete the final chapter to my story.

She is making her second home town appearance,  
At the High School Auditorium soon,  
For the benefit of the War Relief in Italy,  
And will be given September 17th, on a Sunday afternoon.

# Meriam's First Concert



*The first concert was given in Beverly Hills at the Louis Pasteur High School, six months after Meriam started her studies under Marvin Maazel. Date of the concert was November 24, 1943.*

After guidance from Marvin Maazel for only six months, Meriam gave her first concert at the Pasteur Junior High School in Los Angeles on November 24, 1943. She played 12 different numbers, all from memory, and was enthusiastically received. She gave her second concert in Los Angeles on March 10, 1944, at the Lorena Street School.

Meriam's third concert was her first home-town concert, and was an outstanding success. It was given at the Fox Visalia Theatre on Sunday, March 26, 1944 and after the theater was completely filled, there was a line nearly a block long, outside of the theater. Meriam was very disappointed that the theater couldn't hold everyone and that people were unable to hear her play. She will probably give four concerts during the first year she is in Los Angeles.

#### *Brilliant Future Predicted*

Her teacher predicts a brilliant future for Meriam. We are not too much surprised at what she has accomplished in music in such a short time because we had confidence in her and because we knew what a remarkable memory she possessed.

Meriam likes to sit at the piano in her spare time and improvise music and compose tunes. Although she disliked practicing when she was living at home, she actually likes to practice now and this she does, mostly in the morning. I believe that although a person may be born with talent, it must also be developed. I don't believe in punishing children to make them practice. They must be made to see that music is a very beautiful and important thing in life and that it is really worth the effort. Meriam was endowed with an appreciation of music.

The right environment is of the utmost importance in the musical progress of any child.



First Recital  
by  
MERIAM COOPER

at  
PASTEUR SCHOOL  
5931 West 18th Street  
Los Angeles, California

Wednesday, November 24th, 1943, at One p. m.

PROGRAM

Sonata No. 20 G Major	Beethoven
Fur Elise	Beethoven
Eccossaises	Beethoven
Allegretto	Hayden
Solfeggio	Bach

Prelude No. 6	Chopin
Prelude No. 7	Chopin
Prelude No. 20	Chopin
Waltz No. 9	Chopin

—Intermission Five Minutes—

The Cuckoo	Daquin
Birds of Passage	Poldini
The Tap Dancer	Maazel

Miss Meriam Cooper is eleven years of age and comes from Visalia, California. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cooper, heard Marvin Maazel in concert and arranged to have Meriam study with him. That she has been able in six months to memorize a program for public performance speaks most encouragingly for her musical career.

Meriam is also an excellent student in school.

(From Visalia Times-Delta,  
November 30, 1943)

Young Visalia  
Girl Gives  
First Recital

Appearing in her first recital at Los Angeles recently a young and talented Visalian, Miss Meriam Cooper, 11, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cooper of Visalia, was well received.

The recital was presented at the Pasteur School and was given last Wednesday. She played "Sonata No. 20 G Major"; "Fur Elise," and "Eccossaises," all by Beethoven; "Allegretto," by Haydn; "Solfeggio," Bach; four Chopin compositions, "Prelude No. 6," "Prelude No. 7," "Prelude No. 20" and "Waltz No. 9" and "The Cuckoo," by Daquin; "Birds of Passage," Poldini and "The Tap Dancer," by Maazel.

The Coopers heard Marvin Maazel in a concert and arranged to have the Visalia girl study with him. She started with the basic fundamentals of her course in the middle of May, 1943, and has been able in six months to memorize a program for public performance.

Her recital was well-received at the Pasteur School and among those hearing her were Maurice Cooper, who spent Thanksgiving Day with his daughter and Shirley Salmirs, a Bakersfield school teacher and a cousin of Miss Meriam Cooper.

SECOND RECITAL

Meriam's second recital was played at the Lorena Street School, 1015 South Lorena, Los Angeles on Friday, March 10, 1944, at 2 p. m. It was divided into three parts. For the first part she played "Fantasia No. 1 D Minor," Mozart and "Sonata, OP 49 No. 1," Beethoven.

Part II consisted of "Spring Song," Mendelssohn; "Warum," "The Prophet Bird," and "Knight Rupert," all by Schumann.

(March 11, 1944)

Gives Second Southland Recital;  
Prepares for Home-Town Recital

LOS ANGELES, March 11. (Associated Press) — Meriam Cooper, 11-year-old pianist from Visalia, appeared yesterday in her second recital, and her teacher said she was preparing for a concert in her home town later this month.

Meriam played at Lorena Street School. Her teacher, Marvin Maazel, with whom she has been studying here for six months, said her repertoire includes smaller musical classics and that, in his opinion, she shows great promise as a pianist.

Her first concert here was at Louis Pasteur High School. Meriam, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cooper, will make her Visalia appearance in the Fox Theatre March 26, Maazel said.

"Meriam has a lot of talent," her teacher said. "She is adept at a number of difficult pieces, but I have not permitted her to attempt the most difficult musical forms as yet."

"She is not ready for radio work, but I am sure that she will develop into an artist of high quality. Her progress has been most encouraging, and she shows a tendency to essay pieces which would be much too difficult for the average pupil. However, we are being careful not

Part III comprised "Medicine Song (Sioux Indians)," Philipp; "Dance of Spain," Iturbi; "Musical Snuff Box," Liadow; "Tango in D," Albeniz and Tarentella," by Maazel.

Because Meriam was a very young little musician, the program attracted attention from "The Press" and as a result the Associated Press carried a story on the concert on its leased wires covering all Associated Press newspapers on the West Coast. The story, as it appeared in Meriam's home-town newspaper, follows:

to let her progress too rapidly, for in musical training this is frequently a mistake, and can hamper her ultimate achievement as a finished pianist."



Meriam's second recital was at the Lorena Street School in Los Angeles. It brought a story on the Associated Press wires.



## Speaks On Music

Meriam was selected by her class to represent her room and make a little speech on music when the Parents and Teachers met at the Louis Pasteur High School. Here is what she said:

"Parents and faculty. You have just heard about the Social Living, Math, Physical Education and Art Departments of our school, all of which are most necessary and important in educating the boys and girls. But we also have other subjects, one of which I am especially interested in. It is the Music Department.

"Here, under the careful guidance of our music teachers, Mrs. Kline, Mrs. Guernsey and Mr. Klarck, we learn to understand fine music and to do three part singing of lovely songs.

"This course in B7 will help us to qualify for one of the school glee clubs, or perhaps for instrument class and orchestra.

"I believe all of us hope that some day we may take part in at least one of these musical activities. Our class will be very happy when we can invite you to attend a musical program, when some of us will sing while others will play their favorite instruments in the orchestra.

"Remember we will be working hard with our music and looking forward to having you as our guests."

### SPECIAL PERMITS FROM BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Los Angeles Board of Education, recognizing the musical talents of Saundra and Meriam, gave them special permits to attend school in the afternoons only, thus allowing them to devote the mornings to music. They are both excellent students and like school.

Meriam concentrates deeply when she is practicing, but when she is through she plays with her jacks, dolls, games and friends and puts her music completely out of her mind. If you should say anything to her while she is playing, she will probably reply: "I'm not interested in music now. I'm busy playing." She is always humming a tune while she plays.

#### *She's a Happy, Healthy Child*

She is a happy, healthy child of eleven. She has her moments of rebellion, but they are brief and she is soon cheerful again, so she is really not opinionated. Meriam

loves parties and likes to play the piano for company. She especially delights in serving refreshments after she entertains.

She is very seldom ill and has never been given medicine (since she was six years old). She likes fruit juices and especially cares for spinach, meat and chocolate candy. I occasionally let her have some candy after meals. I don't think a little candy is injurious, in fact I think it keeps spirits up and helps morale. Children are very active and a little candy is refreshing.

#### *Main Dislike Is Chewing Gum*

Meriam dislikes chewing gum, tomatoes and milk. She will drink her milk and eat tomatoes because she is told they are good for her, and will make her grow big and strong, so she will be able to stretch octaves easier, but she will not chew gum no matter what anyone tells her.

She is like most other children. I have to bribe her occasionally, but I don't think that does any harm. I think children should be rewarded when they make a special effort to do something real well. If I promise her anything, I always keep my promise. I think that is very important. She believes in telling the truth. She says that is the motto of the Girl Scouts and she's a Girl Scout, being secretary of her troop.

#### *Outstanding Pupil*

She is in the seventh grade at the Pasteur Junior High School in Los Angeles. She is an outstanding pupil in school and receives excellent grades in every subject. It takes very little effort for her to learn something. When she was nine she learned to typewrite by the touch method in a month's time, and typed letters for her father.

*This is a reproduction of the cover of Meriam's program for her First Home Town Concert.*

# MERIAM COOPER

*"A very young pianist, rapidly gaining musical prominence."*

HER FIRST HOME TOWN RECITAL



ONE PERFORMANCE ONLY

Doors Open at 1:15 P. M.

AT 2 P. M. SHARP

## FOX Visalia Theatre

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

MARCH 26



# First Home Town Recital

Meriam showed such remarkable progress that Mr. Maazel decided to let her return to Visalia and make her first Home Town appearance. The facilities of the Fox Visalia Theatre were secured for the concert, an afternoon one. Long before the concert the theater was filled to capacity and at concert time, several hundred people were unable to gain admittance.

(From the Visalia Times-Delta, Monday, March 27, 1944)

## Meriam, Very Happy Over Concert Reception; Sorry Many Were Turned Away

Refreshing as Sunday's spring day was yesterday's piano recital, the first major home-town concert offered by the home-town girl, 11-year-old Meriam Cooper and she received a real home-town ovation.

The largest auditorium in this section of the valley could not have accommodated the crowd which turned out for the big event not only in Meriam's life but in that of the community as well. Persons qualified in music freely and warmly praised her presentation, and the poise and assurance she displayed helped captivate her audience.

Meriam was to have started playing at 2 p. m. and through the doors of the Fox Visalia Theatre, which opened at 1:15 p. m., flowed a steady stream of persons . . . boys and girls, music teachers, music lovers and those who knew Meriam when she was a smaller girl than she now is. When the theater was completely full, hundreds were left outside. Meriam wasn't the least bit uneasy as she stood in the wings of her home-town theater while the crowd came in and filled the seats, and she was sorry that she couldn't play for everyone.

Then she played her program: "Fantasia No. 1, D Minor," by Mozart; "Spring Song," Mendelssohn, and "19th Sonata" and "Eccos-saises," Beethoven, as part I. This was followed by "Allegretto," by Haydn; "Medicine Song," Philipp; "Knight Rupert," Schumann, and "Solfreggio" as part II and the concert was concluded by "Birds of Passage," Poldini; "Musical Snuff Box," Laidow; and "Tarantella" and "The Tap Dancer," by Maazel . . . her 'own Maazel,' her guide.

The applause was generous after each selection and the final ap-

plause was accompanied by the presentation of flowers, armloads of them which virtually blanketed a happy little girl, but failed to bewilder her the least bit.

### Presents Maazel and Saundra

Then Meriam stepped to the microphone and presented Marvin Maazel and Maazel's little daughter, the talented little violinist, Saundra Berkova, and Meriam's little roommate, playmate and friend. Saundra had been anticipating the concert as much as Meriam and it was her wish that she come here for it.

The concert won the genuine approval of the audience. "Spring Song" was played with a feeling far advanced for a little 11-year-old girl. "Allegretto" and "Knight Rupert" were played very nicely and "Musical Snuff Box" found high favor with the audience and "The Tap Dancer" was a good selection for the conclusion.

Meriam was a true little artist on the stage and received the deluge of flowers graciously. But after it was over with, she hustled back into the theater with Saundra to see the color cartoon and the picture, "Lassie Come Home," and when she joined her family, the Maurice Coopers, and the many persons who stopped by after the show in the Cooper home she talked about the picture rather than about her concert and she and her little friends played games and relaxed after a busy day. She also

spent her time playing with her baby brother, Gary.

Meriam started her music when very small and one of her first teachers, Mrs. C. W. Whiteside of Tulare, was in the audience. Meriam was about five and one-half years old when she studied under Mrs. Whiteside. When Meriam was about nine years old she took lessons from Noah Steinberg of San Francisco. Steinberg came from San Francisco to Fresno and met his pupils there, where he gave advanced master courses. He is a highly rated pianist and teacher of the bay district and is a well-known concert pianist, having played in Europe as well as this country.

Meriam went to Los Angeles last Spring, less than a year ago, and after a brief visit here she will return with Maazel and Saundra to Los Angeles, continuing her musical instruction and her school studies. She is very interested in school, too.

(Press Clipping)

## Many From Out-Of-Town Here For Concert

There were numerous out-of-town persons in Visalia yesterday to attend the first home-town piano recital of Meriam Cooper and after the concert many of them dropped by the Maurice Cooper home. Some of the visitors are family members and stayed overnight.

It would be impossible to list everyone.

A few here for the event were

Mrs. L. Sabel, San Francisco, Meriam's grandmother; Mr. and Mrs. George Uroff, Los Angeles, former Visalians; Mr. and Mrs. Dave Levi, Fresno, uncle and aunt; Mrs. Harry Kline, Kerman, aunt; Mr. and Mrs. I. Borne, Hanford; Mr. and Mrs. E. Menders, Mr. and Mrs. M. Levin and Herman Berlad, Tulare; Mr. and Mrs. M. Smith, Lindsay; Mr. and Mrs. L. Porton and Mr. and Mrs. Dave Porton of Dinuba (they

arrived at 1:30 p. m. but were among those unable to get inside the theater); George Federman, Tulare; Mr. and Mrs. I. Pius, Hanford; Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Cook, Mr. and Mrs. M. Zall, Mr and Mrs Bernard Zall, Mr. and Mrs. I. Neuman, Mrs. S. Bassen, and Mrs. Yetta Furst, Tulare.

Early in the evening some of the visitors and guests were joined by Mrs. R. T. Bufkin, Mrs. Evelyn

Brown, Mrs. B. Blair, Mrs. R. Thurman, Mrs. Joe Finni and Mrs. J. Janelli and listened to an impromptu program of singing and playing presented by June Ray Thurman, Frances Bufkin, and Edward Janelli. Sandra Hill and Saundra Berkova and Marvin Maazel were also onlookers, as some of the members of the Friday Talent Club entertained.

*This poem was written by Frances Bufkin on the day she attended Meriam's First Home Town Recital.*

## MERIAM'S FIRST HOME TOWN RECITAL

By FRANCES BUFKIN

It was on a Sunday gay,  
And everyone was anxious to hear Meriam play,  
Her Concert was scheduled to start at two,  
But looking at the crowd, that would never do.

They came from all over near and far,  
Some wondered how they got gas for their car,  
The Theatre was jammed, clear to the brim,  
And Meriam looked so cute and trim.

And when she walked upon the stage,  
She looked calm and sweet for one her age,  
"Fantasia" by Mozart, was first on her list,  
And the pleasure it gave, was not to be missed.

The number of pieces she played was eleven,  
The magic of hearing them would lift you to heaven,  
My favorite of all was the "Musical Snuff Box,"  
And a picture she made with her dark curly locks.

Her excellent teacher was Marvin Maazel,  
And people said she played remarkably well.  
The applause at the close was a terrific din,  
As Meriam's first concert came to an end.



*The notes, on the printed program for Meriam's First Home Town Concert, had the following to say:*

## MERIAM COOPER . . .

In the middle of May, 1943, Meriam started her piano study under the guidance of Marvin Maazel. Her progress was so satisfactory that she appeared in her first concert last November at the Louis Pasteur High School in Los Angeles, presenting a program of 12 classical compositions. On March 10 she played her second concert, a new program of 11 numbers, at the Lorena Street School and was enthusiastically received by several hundred children and teachers. In the past nine months Meriam has memorized close to 30 compositions in addition to her good work in school and her lessons in French and harmony. A successful career is predicted for Meriam who looks forward eagerly to her first concert in her home town of Visalia.

Marvin Maazel, pianist, has appeared as a piano soloist in principal cities of the world. He is the father of Saundra Berkova, 11, violinist. Saundra is Meriam's companion and close friend. Saundra Berkova and Marvin Maazel will be remembered by members of the Tulare-Kings Counties Civic Music Association as the unique father and daughter combination heard in Visalia in one of the highlight performances last season.

*Rarely is editorial mention made of a child musician and even more rare is this the case when the newspaper is commenting about someone from its own town. However precedent was broken by Meriam's Home Town Concert and the following editorial appeared on March 27, 1944, in the Visalia Times-Delta.*

## BREAKING OF A TRADITION A TRIBUTE TO A COMMUNITY

The attendance at yesterday's home-coming recital of an 11-year-old Visalia girl not only breaks what amounts to a long-established precedent—that a home town is disinclined to recognize ability early in the career of some member of its community, but it does more than that. It demonstrates that Visalia and its surrounding communities of Tulare, Hanford, Exeter, Lindsay, Woodlake, Three Rivers and Dinuba have a big place in their hearts for the finer things of life, one of which is music.

Hundreds who came to the concert were unable to hear it because the seating capacity was overtaxed.

The large audience reflected not only a desire to pay recognition to a very little home-town girl for her efforts thus far in the music world, but the almost endless patience of the hundreds of music teachers, individual and throughout the school systems; the encouragement that numerous parents are giving their children in their music studies; the appreciation that has been developed by the bringing of good concerts to Visalia at seasonal intervals and the work of leaders of music groups who realize how really good for the mass as a whole is music.

Visalia, and the whole area, is to be congratulated, as well as the very young pianist who is well on her road to musical recognition.

## HER FOURTH CONCERT

Meriam gave her fourth concert at the Olga Steeb Conservatory of Music, 3839 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, on Monday evening, July 10, 1944.

Mrs. Edward G. Robinson and son attended the concert and there were also other artists and music critics in the audience. Meriam was very happy that her former school teacher and singing instructor, Miss Estelle Seabourn, who taught her in Visalia but who is now living in Los Angeles, was present.

Miss Seabourn was very proud of the progress Meriam is making with her music. She was especially impressed by Meriam's ability to play forcefully—and with such clarity of tone and by her remarkable memory. She said Meriam had developed exquisite poise and she knew that she would always retain that charm which is a great part of her.

The following is a reproduction of the program for the Fourth Concert:

You and your family are cordially invited to the

## FOURTH PROGRAM

by

MERIAM COOPER

at

Olga Steeb Conservatory of Music, 3839 Wilshire Boulevard

Monday Evening, July 10th, 8:15 p. m.

## —Program—

### I

Three Inventions	.....	Bach
	Nos. 1 - 4 - 8	
Gigue	.....	Bach
Minuet	.....	Mozart
Sonata No. 6	.....	Beethoven
	(Allegro - Allegretto - Presto)	

### Intermission

### II

'Tis Raining	.....	Homer Grunn
Waltzing Doll	.....	Poldini
Fox Trot	.....	Philipp
Minuet	.....	Paderewski
Tarentella	.....	MacDowell
Valse Grotesque	.....	Bortkiewicz

Meriam Cooper, aged eleven, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Cooper of Visalia, California. She started studying piano with Marvin Maazel in the middle of May, 1943. She gave her first recital in November, 1943, and her second in February, 1944. She also played before a full house in Visalia at the Fox Theatre, having more than 1400 people in her audience and about 300 unable to gain admittance. The interest of the community in her home town for Miss Cooper's concert should be a splendid incentive for her continued progress.

## WISHES COME TRUE

Meriam always wished to give a concert in the High School auditorium, where all concert artists give their programs, and on September 17, this wish came true. The Italian Catholic Federation of Visalia, of which Mrs. J. D. Finni is president, extended her an invitation to play a benefit concert. It was a successful concert, and helped provide money with which to buy clothing for destitute people of Italy.

A newspaper review of the concert had this to say: "An audience, made up of music lovers, gave a receptive ear and a big hand to Meriam Cooper, at the Visalia girl's fifth piano concert and the second she has played in Visalia . . . Miss Cooper provided this community with its first music treat of the season. She played with an emotion not commonly displayed by a child pianist of her age and she graciously accepted the applause and bouquets of flowers."

She played 14 numbers, "Sonata No. 3," Minuet from "Don Giovanni," "Allegro from Quartet in F," Mozart; "Air and Variations on Harmonious Blacksmith," Handel and "Sonata No. 6," Beethoven, for the first part of the program. Then followed "Song of the Lark," "Chanson Triste," "Chinese Dance" and "Waltz of the Flowers," all by Tchaikowsky. The final part of the concert included "Country Gardens," Grainger; "Liebesfreud (Love's Joy)" Kreisler; "Butterfly," Grieg; "Fox Trot," Philipp and "Tarantella," Maazel.

Meriam was very happy to be able to play for such a good cause and looked eagerly forward to the event. There is every reason to believe that the rapid, astonishing progress which has been noted from concert to concert, will be maintained in subsequent ones within the next few months.

Some people may think that we are sacrificing a great deal by sending Meriam to Los Angeles to study music as she has to be away from home for so long. We do not look upon it as a sacrifice because anything you derive such great pleasure from, as seeing your own child develop into a gifted and talented musician, is really not a sacrifice, and is worth all the effort we have gone to.

The poem at the beginning of this book expresses more clearly than words our wish for Meriam. We will be very happy, always, knowing that Meriam always tried to do her best.





Meriam was literally snowed under with many beautiful bouquets presented to her after her first home town recital in Visalia in March, 1944. She accepted them on the theater stage with a poise that characterizes her and is shown here as photographed by a newspaper cameraman, with a few of the flowers, just after the concert.

*Meriam Cooper*

FINIS