"Being married to a Negro is... just different."

The pretty Denver housewife who groped gingerly to express her thoughts, might have said something similar if she had been married to a Frenchman or a Brazilian.

But honey-haired Mary Louise, 27, is married to a slim Negro transportation worker, aged 36, who is as dark as she is fair.

Mary Louise was born and reared in a small town in Missouri where prejudice—all kinds of prejudice—was as native as the southern drawl.

Jim grew up in Lawrence, Kan., where, he recalls, he attended integrated schools.

They met and fell in love in Kansas City, Mo., where mixed marriages are unlawful. In fact, to discourage any such "hanky panky," the police of the area were apt to pick up any white-colored couple which appeared to be courting.

WHEN THEY decided to marry, they moved to Denver. ("Denver's good—California's better," they agreed.)

The couple sat in the attractive living room of their East Denver home and considered 4½ years of marriage.

On the rug their son, Jim Jr., 3, kneelt, absorbed in plaiting wriggly figures out of pipe cleaners.

"I just told them that was what I was going to do. "Actually, mother is reconciled to it now. I took the baby back to visit, and she loves him dearly. She calls us—Jim talks to her on the telephone—and we hope that sometime she'll come to visit us."

"I tell her that our door is always open to her," Jim said.

Jim and Mary Louise were working in the psychiatric department of the hospital when they met.

"We seemed to get along," Jim said. "We had a lot of fun on the job."

Jim liked her so well that one afternoon he asked her for a date.

"I agreed to go out for cocktails," Mary Louise recalled.

"Then you changed your mind," Jim added.

"Did I?"

"Then you changed it again," he reminded her.

THAT WAS 1956. Soon they were seeing each other once a week, then oftener. They went to movies, an occasional nightclub, to friends' houses.

"She'd always drive her car, and I'd drive mine. Then we'd meet somewhere," Jim said.

"We were especially careful about it if we were crossing the Kansas border (to visit Jim's parents), because it would have been very easy to pick me up on a trumped-up white slave charge."