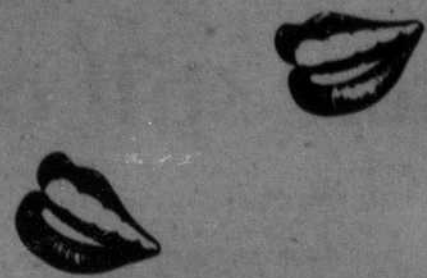


COMEDY



comedians stand up for northwest laughs

The father of stand-up comedian Robert Jenkins had an answer to every medical question. "Put ice on that. It will make the swelling go down." Everything, from hangnail to frostbite, pack it in ice.

In fact that's why Jenkins was born at home — his mother was packed in ice. From this chilly birth to Robert's adolescent questions about contraception, the answer was to pack it in ice. Now Robert glances down and says he knows the swelling could go down if he and his wife could only find enough ice.

Such outrageous answers to common problems gained Jenkins first place in the second Portland (and Oregon) Stand-up Comedy Competition on Saturday, held by the Comedy Connection at the Masonic Temple in Portland.

Jenkins said he felt his family and its problems gave him an edge on his competitors.

Finishing second was John Johnston who asked not to be called "just another bagpipe-playing comedian." Third was Jim Lyonais, who has done some television commercials. Fourth was Howy Kirsten who characterized his act as "goofy." Fifth was Portland State University student Dwight Slade.

The same comedians appeared July 22 at the semi-finals in Edison's Bar at the Factory, in Springfield. Another five acts were eliminated that night.

If family was funny for Jenkins, relationships were for the others. Johnston, beginning to pump up his bagpipe, said the next selection was in B-flat, like his girlfriend. Kirsten's idea of cheating, he said, was to switch hands.

Lyonais focused more on social roles and his job as a homemaker. He said men deny watching soaps, and they only own up to macho

shows such as Weekly Tractor Pull.

Johnston as television's Mr. Rogers introduced a special guest, his impression of a grinning and giggling Jimmy Carter who asked how the tiny trolley could take adults to make-believe land.

Much of their comedy material came from everyday life, but as seen through silly lenses by skewed minds. For example Slade told of help-

Reporter's notebook

ing out his biology professor by transporting four preserved brains. But when his car was rear-ended, he tossed them on the pavement and yelled, "Look at what you've done to my family!"

Though daily life is more the target for 80s comedy, in contrast to the trenchant satire of the 60s, an occasional social comment bursts out. Jenkins said he saw a bad accident on his way to the show. "But fortunately no one was hurt. But then, I left before the Portland police arrived."

Sometimes the comic vision is absurd. Slade observed that a number of bums occupied the Portland streets. "Is it a convention? Or do they lay eggs? I can just see them hatching at midnight. Their first words must be 'which way to the bus stop?'"

In addition to the \$1,500 Jenkins won, his position as top stand-up will win him the headliner spot on comedy programs that feature an emcee and a second comedian. As headliners, comedians can get three or four times more money for their acts.

Last year's winner Mike "Boats" Johnson was a successful headliner and has now moved to Seattle to further advance his act. Jenkins plans to move to Los Angeles to broaden his audience.

Though clubs specializing in comedy are only two or three years old in Eugene and Portland, they join those that have been in Seattle six years and San Francisco ten. The reasons for the growth in comedy were summarized by an audience member at last Saturday's competition, "I like comedy. I love to laugh; it feels good."

Humor also has a social function, according to Dan Bruno, a former teacher and now an actor with Eugene's On The Edge, an improvisational troupe. "Humor breaks down the barriers between people," Bruno said.

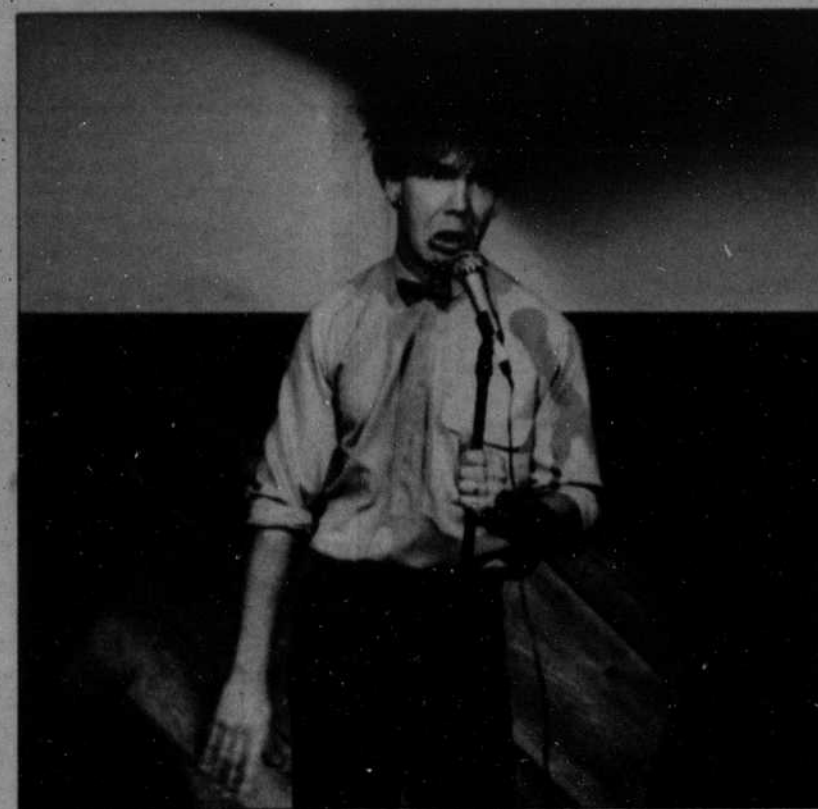
Whether they wanted to break down barriers or just feel good, the Eugene-Springfield audience has encouraged Edison's to hold over On The Edge's gig for three more weekends and schedule an evening of open-mike amateur comedy every Monday night.

The Comedy Connection, sponsor of the stand-up contest, is based at The Main Place in Portland. Judging from the bedlam of the crowds in both cities, the people are saying, "Send in the clowns!"

By Art Tegger
Photos by Rob Hare



(clockwise from top) John Johnston asks that people think of him as more than "just another bagpipe-playing comedian." Robert Jenkins, winner of the Stand-up Comedy Competition, says family problems give him an extra edge on the competition. Susan Rice performed at the semi-finals in Springfield, but failed to make the finals in Portland.



Hanging out at the EMU with Doc

He can be seen in a corner of the EMU cafeteria most days around lunch time. He usually is sitting alone, drinking coffee and working elbow-deep on his latest manuscript.

"Doc" Wynd, a Eugene native and retired administrator from the University biology department, says he has lived, worked and traveled in more than 30 countries since completing his education in 1933.

Unlike the many faculty and students who go to the cafeteria just for a quick bite to eat between classes, Wynd spends his hours in the cafeteria in a more casual manner.

"I sit around and read books and talk to students," he says, adding that he goes to the EMU every day just because he's used to it.

But he also goes to work on that manuscript. For now, Wynd refuses to discuss exactly what he is writing. But perhaps someday he will unveil his work. "Sometime later maybe," he says. "Maybe in five or six years."

"I don't know what the heck he's writing," says Dr. Arnold Soderwall, a retired professor of biology at the University and a close personal friend of Wynd.

"He considers himself quite an expert on mushrooms and oysters," Soderwall says. Wynd has been working on recipes for oysters, but he is unsure if that is Wynd's current project, he adds.

Gene Arvidson, a graduate student in political science, and another friend of Wynd's, says Wynd "directs traffic" at the University. "He's the resident Chinese expert, the resident biology expert and a general philosopher," Arvidson says.

But Wynd is not known for his hard work. In fact, Arvidson says he has never known Wynd to work much.

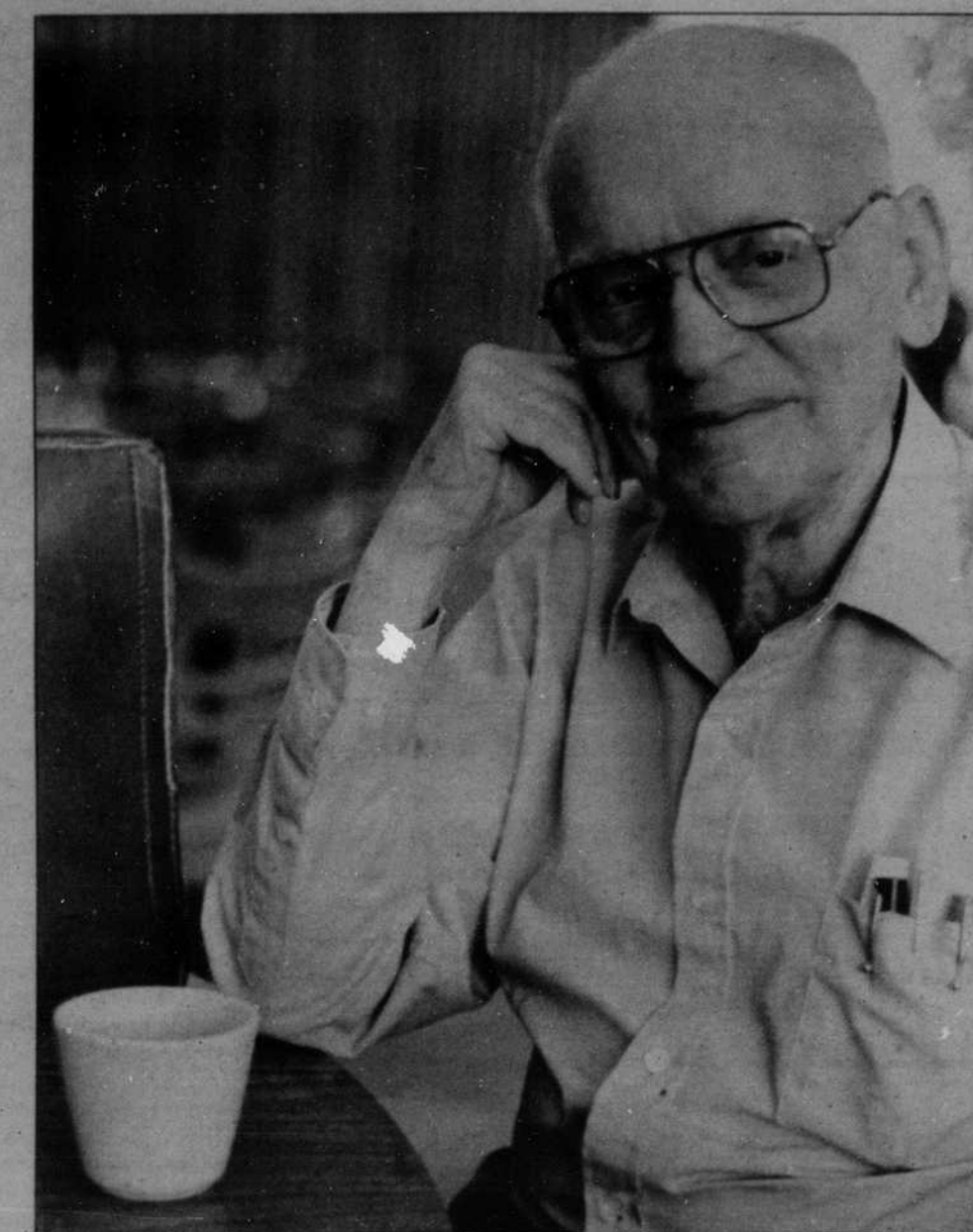
"Give me two bucks and I was off when I was young," Wynd says. "It's pretty hard work not to do anything, but I have spent my life practicing how to waste time."

Wynd, who celebrated his 81st birthday Saturday, remembers his youth in Lane County.

There were very few paved roads in Oregon back then, and the road to Portland was a trail winding along the river, he says. "It took all day to get there."

When he enrolled at the University in 1922, his class boasted about having almost 3,000 students. "Everybody knew everybody," he says.

In 1928, Wynd received his bachelor's degree in botany from the University and two years later earned a master's degree in biology. He then transferred to Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri to work toward a doctorate in



Retired University Administrator Doc Wynd spends hours in the EMU cafeteria every day, reading, working on his manuscript and talking with students.

bio-chemistry, completing that work in 1933.

Not one to take himself, his education or much of anything else too seriously, Wynd says, "Ph.D. means piled higher and deeper."

Wynd says after graduation from Washington University he worked on Rockefeller Foundation post-doctoral fellowships at the Washington University Medical School and at the University of Missouri. He then spent 12 years as a professor of research at the University of Illinois.

"During World War II, I was released from the Navy to work on a government project to develop synthetic vitamins for use by the military in the tropics," he says.

After the war, Wynd says he went to Mexico to collect botanical specimens as part of a project sponsored by universities in Mexico, Europe, and the United States.

During what he calls his "academic period," Wynd says he published more than 90 research papers, four magazine articles and a book on the evolution of fungi. This text was published in cooperation with the University of Zurich in Switzerland.

After a number of years with a biochemical consulting firm near Windsor, Ontario, Wynd moved to Alaska. He bought a small sea-going cruiser and

qualified with the Coast Guard as a licensed skipper taking passengers for hire. Wynd eventually sold his boat and returned to Eugene.

Wynd became an academic administrative assistant at the University in the department of biology during the time of student rebellion in the late 1960s. "The behavior of the students has greatly improved" since that time, Wynd says. "And they dress better," he adds.

After his retirement, Wynd says he spent time travelling in the Far East. His most recent trip was to China three or four years ago, he says. "Of all the people I've seen in the world, the most civilized are the Chinese."

As a result of a personal association with a number of students, Wynd says he feels he is a safety valve for the release of student pressures. He feels he has helped students deal with a variety of complaints. "As long as students are able to gripe about things, the administration is on its toes," he says. "Gripping is the solace of the soul."

After all his travels, Wynd came back to Eugene. "I could have lived anywhere, but Eugene is the best place to live in the world," he says.

By Marty Schwarzbaur
Photo by Karen Stallwood

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