THE ENTERTAINMENT SEEN

A Christmas Story

by Kendel Bryan Covington

Being a sneaky and smart aleck kid (I prefer sensitive and observant), whenever my parent had parties, it was my designated job to keep my ear to my bedroom door and listen to every word of the sacred "grown-up talk (adult B.S.).

Around my seventh Christmas, my parents had a party and one of the activities was for everyone to tell their favorite Christmas story. I listened to all of the stories, and when it came time for Mom's turn, she told one that is still my favorite 'til this day. This being the appropriate time of year, it's my pleasure to share it with you, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoy telling it.

Christmas Glow

The cold night wind whistled through the trees and, below, stirred up what was left of mother nature's fall carpet of yellow, red and brown.

Dusk was settling on the small town of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and soon the street lamps cast a soft yellow glow on the simple frame houses that were typical on the north side of town.

It was the winter of 1944. Overseas, World War II raged on, but here, in American, it was almost Christmas.

In the Thompson household there was a glow of a different kind. Activity was centered in the living room on this particular evening. The children (all 8 of them) were putting the finishing touches on the Christmas tree. Mama was seated on the couch, watching her brood scurry to and from, unpacking and hanging ornaments, stopping only to discuss (argue) why this one should or shouldn't hang here or there.

"Edith!! You keep on putting too many blue bulbs in the same place. Find some other colors!" "Say, Edward, stop eating all the popcorn, man!" "Mama, tell Melvina to stop pushing me." "Margaret, could you hand me that one with the sparkles on it?"

This continued until the magic moment had finally arrived. The tree was decked in all its glory and splendor, and not it was time to plug in the lights!

This occasion was special for more than one reason. In 1944, times were rough everywhere, and the Thompson household was no exception. Somehow things always seemed to work out even though Mr. Thompson often found himself miles away from his wife and children. On his last visit home, he'd surprised his family with the contents of two packages at dinner one evening. To everyone's delight, they were bright, shiny electric lights for the Christmas tree in all the holiday colors. Now it was time to bring them to life.

Andrew, Jr., the oldest, took the honors. When everyone took their places near Mama on the couch, Junior eased the bright copper plug into the socket. Nine pairs of eyes stared in silent wonder as the tree took on a life of its own, filling the tiny house with Christmas wonder.

The evening was getting late and it was nearing time for Mama to go to work across town. "Melvina and Junior, I want this living room clean just like you found it. Get the kids together and get it done. I've got to go to work. I'm trusting you two to make sure that after you finish, everyone gets a bath and gets to bed. And, yes, before I forget, unplug those lights. I read where those things have caught some houses on fire, and we certainly don't need to have that happening here." "Awwwww, Mama!" "You heard me, Jump to it!"

Soon Mama was gone, and, though the living room was spotless, no one wanted to leave the room. "Please, Junior, plug them in just for a couple of minutes!" chimed Edward and Elliot, the twins. "Yea, please, Junior!" said Mary Louise and Margaret. Slyly, Junior looked at Melvina (they'd already planned to do it when the rest were in bed). "Y'all promise not to tell?" "No, we won't tell!" yelled everyone. Once again the tree sprang to life. Little Edith Ann was the first to speak. "It's almost as pretty as the one in the Sears window downtown." "What do you mean, almost?" challenged Melvina. "That one blinks off and on," said Edith. Edward (The Adventurous) disappeared into the kitchen and soon returned with a knife in his hand. "Watch this!" he announced, and inserted the tip into the light socket, freeing one of the bulbs. At this, all the lights went out, and when he pushed on the light, all of them would spring back to life. The children shouted their approval. On, off, on, off, on . . . . .

Adell Thompson had just finished doing a little Christmas shopping and boarded the bus that went from downtown to the south side of town. No sooner had she taken a seat, when her neighbor, Mrs. Smith, spoke up. "Well, Adell, I see you have electric lights on your tree this year." The other ladies gasped their approval and looked at her in admiration. Mrs. Smith continued, "The kind that blink on and off, too!" The ladies turned to hear the reply. "Oh, I'm sorry, you must be talking about someone else's lights. Ours don't blink, but we still feel blessed." "No, Adell," frowned Mrs. Smith, "I'm sure when I walked down to catch the bus not 20 minutes ago, it was your house with those blinking lights. I even saw your pretty little kids dancing around."

The rest fell on deaf ears. Adell Thompson was at the front of the bus ready to get off at the nearest stop, homeward bound.

Eight children sang Christmas carols that evening like they'd never been sung before. They danced. They played. They laughed. It was more fun than a three-ring circus. Halfway through "Do You Hear What I Hear", the door flew open and there stood Mama, tired, angry and breathing fire.

"Melvina and Junior, you're first, and nobody else move! Each and every one of you are going to have your little bottoms peppered this evening! Go get you daddy's razor strap!" "We just wanted to see the lights glow, Mama!" said Melvina. "You're going to learn to obey me, girl. Now git!"

Later on that night as eight children slep on their stomachs, the tree stood dark and silent, but the glow could be **felt** by all in the tiny house on the little street in the small town of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. A glow of a different kind!

Merry Christmas and may God bless you and yours this holiday season.

P.S. I love you, Mom. Thanks. **Ken**

Act One

by Kendel Bryan Covington

This is a continuation of last week's article "Nathaniel Phillips/ The Rocky Road of Success".

"Good and bad things come out of any given experience in life," says Nate, "and our (Pleasure's) experiences were good for contacts and learning, and negative in realizing how artists can be exploited and ripped-off by not only companies, but individuals, as well. I learned to really pay attention to the business of music."

After the demise of Pleasure, Nathaniel remained in California and enjoyed a measured amount of success, but there was nothing like jammin' with the boys (his childhood pals). So homeward 'ol Thunderlicks' headed and formed Cool 'R.

As we all know, Cool 'R has been packing downtown nightclubs for the last four years and continually get better as they go along.

When I first saw Cool 'R, I thought the music was tight but lacked the visual hook that groups of the eighties use as a tool.

Once again, perseverance paid off, and now Cool 'R is a force to be reckoned with.

I noticed a distinct change after Doug Lewis left and returned. Nathaniel appeared to be more motivated than usual, and it seemed to carry on throughout the group. "I've always had confidence in everyone in the organization," says Nathaniel, "And what you are seeing is a result of us becoming familiar with each other's style of music as well as personality. Our vocalist, Andy Stokes, is one of the best in the city and has come a long way. As far as Doug is concerned, he is one of the best guitar players in R&B music today, and is finally getting the recognition he finally deserves. Jeff Alviante was playing with some friends at a jamm session, and when I realized that Jeff was not playing with a regular band, I knew I had to have him. Our new drummer, Jeffry Minneweather, is solid as a rock and used to substitute for Bruce when he was on the road. So he is familiar with not only our music but also the band's material."

"There are other up-and-coming artists in this city that we feel deserve a break. That is the reason that we are now featuring them as opening acts for our local shows. My advice to anyone entering the field of music is to be dedicated and never, and I mean NEVER, forget where you came from and who you are."

The Portland Observer wishes Nathaniel continued success in his return to the spotlight.

Marianne Mayfield Takes over Parchman Farm Jazz Line-Up

PORTLAND, OR — The Parchman Farm changes into 1988 with a brand new jazz lineup featuring the Marianne Mayfield Trio on weekends and the John Jensen/John Hardy Quartet on Thursdays at the popular eastside jazz lounge.

The Marianne Mayfield Trio with Special Guest Leroy Vinnegar, plays weekends in January, opening Saturday, Jan. 2 after a closed New Year's Day.

Mayfield is featured vocalist and Vinnegar handles bass duties in his renowned "walking" manner of laying down the beat. Mayfield, a jazz/blues singer on the Portland scene for a number of years, has been featured singer/bassist at the Parchman Farm the past two years. Vinnegar has been a nationally acclaimed bassist for some three decades, appearing on dozens of jazz recordings both as leader and sideman.

Harlem's Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre Featured on NBC

NEW YORK — AT&T will sponsor the December 27 NBC special "Creole Giselle," a 90-minute ballet spotlighting Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem and hosted by Bill Cosby.

The performance will be telecast on NBC Sunday, December 27 2-3:30 p.m. NYT; in stereo; please consult your local station for times in your location.)

"Creole Giselle" is a critically acclaimed production which translates the classic ballet "Giselle" from its traditional setting in 19th Century Austria to Louisiana's free Black society in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries. A tragic love story, "Creole Giselle" has been hailed as the "Romeo and Juliet" of dance, and retains the ballet's original choreography, music and storyline.

DANCE

Founded by Arthur Mitchell in 1968, the award-winning Dance Theatre of Harlem will tour the Soviet Union next year, where they will visit Moscow, Tbilisi and Leningrad.

The Dec. 27 NBC special will showcase Virginia Johnson as Giselle, Eddie J. Shellman as her lover, Albert, and Lorraine Graves as Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis.

A Christmas Play

"The Night the Animals Talked," a Christmas play based on the theme of the traditional carol — "The Friendly Beasts," will be performed by the youth group of Augustana Lutheran Church on December 24th at 7:00 p.m. The play is an attempt to provide a new dimension in the telling of the familiar Christmas story. It tells the tale of how the animals are given the gift of speech on the anniversary of Christ's birth. The narrators of the story are three puppets — cow, donkey, and sheep. "The Night the Animals Talked" was written by Bonnie Bartel. Ms. Bartel has been youth coordinator for a Lutheran Church in Lilburn, Georgia, and a coordinator of the Citizens Advocacy for the Mentally Retarded. All ages will enjoy this play. Augustana Lutheran Church is located at 2710 14th Avenue in Northeast Portland.

ABOUT TOWN

Brasserie Montmarte . . . . . **626 S.W. Park, 224-5552**
Fri.-Sat., Dennis Springer Quintet

Dakota . . . . . **239 S.W. Broadway, 241-4151**
Sun., Mayther Bros.

Dandelion Pub . . . . . **31 N.W. 23rd Place, 223-0099**
Sat., Mayther Bros.

Hobbit . . . . . **S.E. 39th & Holgate, 771-0742**
Sun., Jazz Jam

J.B.'s Paradise . . . . . **3530 N. Vancouver, 288-1196**
Fri.-Sun., Benny Wilson & Friends

Key Largo . . . . . **31 N.W. 1st, 223-9919**
Fri.-Sat., Cool 'R; Sun, Crazy 8's

Mary's Place . . . . . **5700 N.E. Union, 281-1176**
Fri.-Sun., The Staple Bros.

O'Callahan's . . . . . **11650 S.W. Canyon, 626-2223**
Mon, Cool 'R

Royal Esquire . . . . . **1708 N.E. Alberta, 287-5145**
Fri.-Sat., Dr. Rock (Recorded Music Sequencing)

Schnitzer . . . . . **Downtown**
Tues. & Wed., Kenny G

Shanghai Lounge . . . . . **0309 S.W. Montgomery, 220-1865**
Sun, Cool 'R

Local Jazz Authority to Teach History Class

A course dealing with the history of jazz music, from its origins to its contemporary form, will begin through Mt. Hood Community College's Performing Arts Division winter term. Introduction to Jazz History will meet Tuesday evenings from 7 to 10 p.m. in Room 2138 on the main MHCC campus.

Noted local jazz authority Bob Dietsche will teach the course. The host of KKUL radio station's "Elevation," Dietsche is currently writing a book on the history of jazz music in Portland. He has written for both the Oregonian and Willamette Week and has taught jazz history at Portland State University, as well as at Clark and Mt. Hood Community Colleges. Dietsche also is the owner and president of Django Records in Portland.

MUSIC

The winter term class will focus on the inception of jazz and the history of the unique American music style through the 1940s. A second class, scheduled for spring term, will pick up where the winter class leaves off and follow the history of jazz through contemporary times.

The course is listed in MHCC's winter term class schedule as MUS 205. For more information or details on registration, call the Performing Arts Division at 667-7155.

Color of the Week: Poinsettia Red
Word of the Week: Osmosis: To absorb

Zoo Schedules Children's Free Day

Children's Holiday Free Day at Metro's Washington Park Zoo is on Wednesday, Dec. 30. Smilin Ely and Bingo will be on hand to greet youngsters as they arrive and special activities are scheduled between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. in the zoo's warm, enclosed areas.

Kids can spin the roulette wheel to win a prize, compare their footprint to a lifesized elephant footprint, forage in straw for tidbits at the primate house and test their skill at snaring vittles like a snake.

For the first time in twenty-five years the zoo has a chance to top a million in attendance and zoo officials are hopeful that attendance on the free day will close the gap.

This is the twelfth year the zoo has sponsored Children's Free Day. Some 3,500 children are expected to attend the event.

It's A Birthday Celebration
(Louisiana Style)
for
State Representative
Margaret Carter
Sunday
December 27
5:30 PM - 12:00 MIDNIGHT
ANNOUNCEMENT
7:30
Juleps
135 N.W. Fifth
Hot hors d'oeuvres - Live Jazz
Donation $20.00
Free Parking Available
Diamond Parking Lot Next Door

JAZZY FM 89.1
KMHD
MT HOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

KEY LARGO
31 NW FIRST 223-9919
NIGHTLY ENTERTAINMENT
Weekend, Dec. 25th-26th
COOL 'R
Sunday, Dec. 27th
CRAZY 8'S
Monday, Dec. 28th
CAYUSE
Tuesday, Dec. 29th
REX & THE ROCKETS
Wednesday, Dec. 30th
NERO'S ROME