

Hobbies

Young Puppeteer Believes There's A Bit Of The Child In All Of Us

16-Year-Old Jana Lee Combs Operates Santa's Village Show

By Ron Miller

A pretty young miss who thinks there's a bit of the child in us all is making her notion pay off in a big way. In fact hundreds of "kids" of all ages gather round her daily to prove she's got the right idea.

What does she do? She's the co-operator of the most popular attraction at famed Santa's Village, the Wee Puppet Theatre.

At an age when most girls are barely out of the bubble-

gum stage, Jana Lee Combs is already a seasoned professional. After doing more than 400 shows this summer, the 16-year-old lass can afford to be philosophical about her work.

"I get a special kind of thrill when I see an adult enjoying our show," Jana said. "Something about it reminds them of their childhood and it's like being young all over again."

Jana and her partner, 20-year-old Dick Reid, have fashioned their 15 minute drama with an eye for the adult audience as well as the children. They figure the kids are brought to the show by adults so they might as well satisfy them, too.

"We've combined three of the traditional nursery rhymes in our show," Jana explained. "The kids like them because they're as exciting as ever. The parents like them because they are the some rhymes they were told in childhood."

The show is a fantasy blend of "Wee Willie Winkle," "The Cat and the Fiddle," and "Winken, Blinken and Nod." The youthful puppeteers call it "Meet Mr. Moon."

"Almost every day an adult walks up to us after the show and says we've taken him into his second childhood," Jana laughed.

The slender lass, a senior at Santa Cruz high, began working with puppets when she was four. Mrs. James Combs, her mother, started teaching Jana the tricks of the ancient trade and in no time she was doing shows.

"It was very hard for me at first," Jana recalls. "I was very shy and hated getting up in front of people. But my mother made me talk over a tape recorder until I could speak easily and let me help her give shows at parties. Pretty soon I lost my stage fright."

Jana's mother, a renowned puppeteer, originated the Wee Puppet Theatre and operated it until this year. Then a new Santa's Village opened in Dundee, Illinois. Jana's mother, father and brother left for the Chicago suburb to launch the puppet theater there.

That left Jana to operate the theater at Santa's Village. No one doubted that she could do it. With her partner she has managed the show through a rigid seven day schedule with six performances a day.

There's no problem about who pulls the strings in the Santa's Village show. It's a 50-50 proposition. Dick works behind the stage and manipulates the marionettes and Jana fronts the act in her storybook costume, creating the illusion of reality.

Jana plans to finish high school here and then go on to a college near Chicago. She expects to be working with her family there next year. Dick will be a junior at San Jose State college this

A Seasoned Professional



Though she's only 16, Jana Lee Combs has 12 years of experience in the art of puppetry. Co-operator of the Wee Puppet

Theatre at Santa's Village, Jana is a seasoned professional at an age when most girls are barely out of the bubblegum stage.

Jana and her partner, Dick Reid, are now tiling a new show for which she is making all the costumes.

Life's Start On Earth Was 3 Billion Years Ago

By Alton Blakeslee
AP Science Writer

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Miss California Officials To See Beauty Pageant

H. L. Bergstrom