

STORIES FROM "PIPA BILL"

YOUNKERS TEA ROOM

Management of Younkens in the initial decades of the twentieth century learned early on the key to retailing success: Make your store a fun place to visit. This they did, together with other ambience, by the development of the Younkens Tea Room.

As I write this piece, it seems probable that Younkens, including the Tea Room, will not make it to the twenty-first century, and maybe not even to the end of the year.

Here in this long sustained institution, weddings have been celebrated, Bar Mitzvahs endured, business and political careers launched, and affairs begun and no doubt ended. But above all, merchandise was sold and moved, usually accomplished through the vehicle of the Younkens Tea Room Fashion Show and through this I found my own unintended theatrical outlet.

In the 1930's, Younkens would organize each August a back-to-school fashion show luncheon. Clothes were modeled, ranging from Babyland to their Hi-teen shop. Although most of the models were girls, some boys were models too, and one year - 1937 - my brother Jack and I were both asked to be in the show, which prompted our proud mother to ask several of her good friends to join her for lunch and viewing.

My costume included knickers and required that I wear boots. Finding a pair to fit was a challenge. We located a pair small enough: it was found that Zona Fitch (wife of Lucius, an heir to the shampoo fortune then in its bandwagon

phase -- Don't despair! Use your head, save your hair!) had small feet and boots to match. When I removed the paper packing in the boots, I discovered in the bottom of a boot, three ten dollar bills wrapped around a silver dollar (1995 value: about \$500).

I returned the money to Mrs. Fitch who gave me a \$5 reward. This I used to buy a front wheel brake and "knee action" for my Tiger bike (local trade name for the then prestigious Schwinn product). The bike itself I had just paid for by selling candy bars to the workmen building Windsor Terrace Apartments for a nickel each (which had been purchased at the A&P store three for a dime). The whole experience taught me that given the choice between hard work and good luck, good luck is a very suitable alternative.

The morning of the day of the style show was filled with instruction. The plan was for my brother Jack and I to walk the runway together. We were to begin by bowing to the audience, but the walk itself was to include various turns so that the spectators could get an adequate view of the clothing. When the time came for the first turn, I turned but my brother Jack was motionless. Then (with a glance to my mother and her luncheon party), I said to him, "Jack, you are supposed to turn." At the next turn juncture, I became more aggressive, giving Jack a nudge and with greater emphasis, "JACK, you are supposed to TURN!!" Jack then hit me. Then I hit him back. A slugfest ensued. We became the show's greatest attraction. That is, to all but my mother.

Jack is shown in the attached photo, receiving better treatment from Scootie Rollins who five years later became my "first love" but not for that reason.

*FORTY PLUS YEARS LATER
DEJA VU (ALL OVER AGAIN!)*

In the Fall of 1978, once again the call went out! I was asked to model Calvin Klein's "innovative" fashions. Elizabeth Ballantine, then a star journalist with *The Register*, wrote:

".... it was convincing proof that all of us can wear stylish clothes
. . . it just depends on how you act in them."

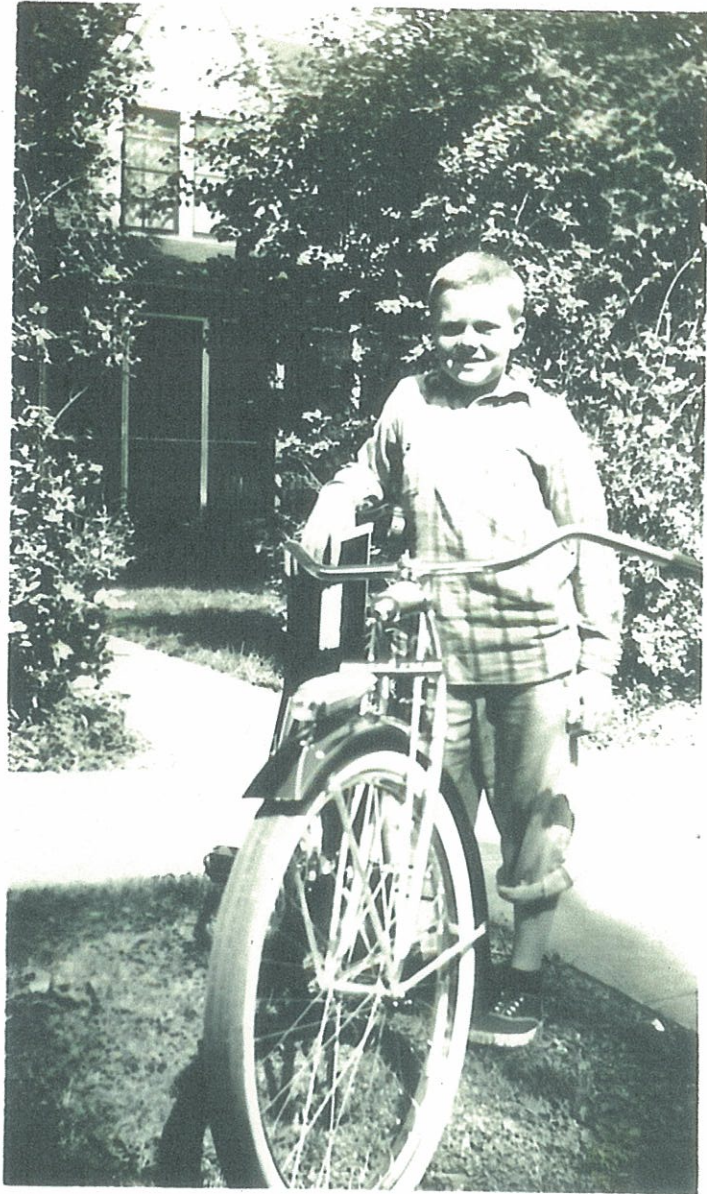
AND

"Local star of the fashion show was Bill Peverill whose role as a model could not have been played better by Walter Mitty."

(Ballantine later became by virtue of her Russian language fluency, legal talent, and education, a leading national consultant on Soviet/Russian law. Moreover, she is currently chairperson of the Grinnell College Board of Trustees as well as chair of the voting trust which controls Cowles Media.)

While I have no idea why my "performance" drew so many cheers, the Walter Mitty syndrome could be an appropriate description as often I wished my mother had pushed whatever theatrical talents I possessed (She actually did her stage-mother best in 1938 in Hollywood where we lived and where only her timing prevented my introduction to "Our Gang" and as Mickey Rooney's understudy.(See "Pipa Bill" story on Hollywoodland). I attended at Drake Dorothy Canfield's drama school (where Cloris Leachman began). There I was cast as Rumpelstiltskin and Friar Tuck in "Robin Hood."

But actually, my stage career really began and ended on the Younkers Tea Room runway!



YOUNKERS

Back
to



FASHION SHOW

Monday, August 23

During Luncheon in the
Tea Room

Clothes for School and
Sunday Best

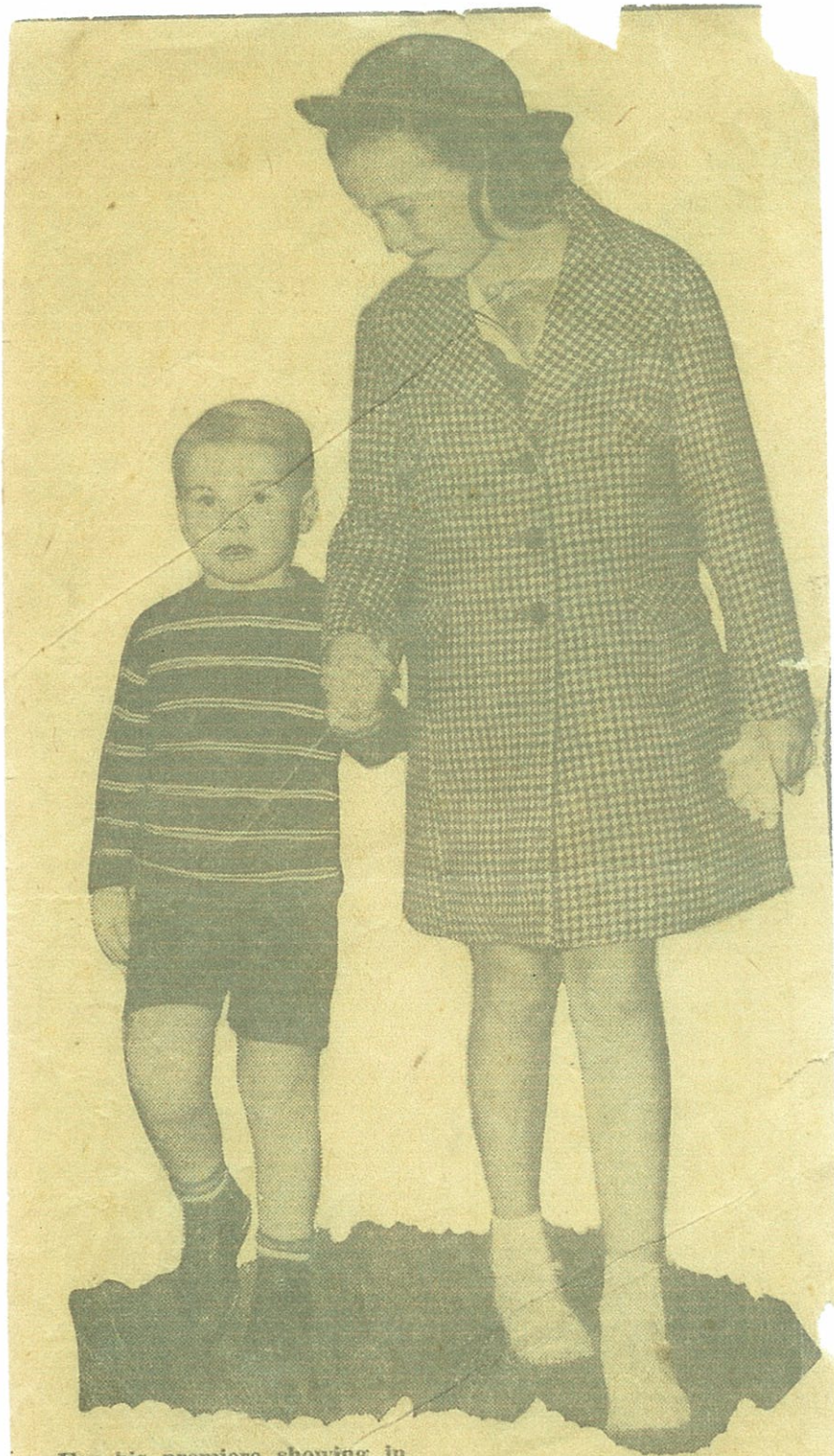
THE MODELS

Joyce Anderson
Patty Anderson
Jean Singmaster
Polly Fagen
Dora Lou Green
Mary Scott Rollins
Louise Jane Overhiser
Joan Law
Beverly Cabbage
Helen Steadman

Mary Hippee
Mary Helen McCurdy
Virginia Dunn
Elaine Reese
Margaret Hornaday
Virginia Wilfon
Harriett Sherman
Susan Wilson
Susan Harrison
Beverly Lanphere

Joan Willis
Barbara Miller
Katherine Drew
Patricia Potter
Jean Shuler
Alfred Powers
Buddy Kahn
Bill Myers
Henry Charlton
Jack Peverill
Bill Peverill

Garments Modeled are from
Babyland, Boys', Girls', Hi-Teen Shops
Third Floor, East



For his premiere showing in the classroom, the young man of today will wear a sporty jersey to give him that debonair feeling, should the curly-haired little girl across the aisle look his way. Jack Peverill, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Peverill, wears a brown striped jersey with brown pants to match.

Just the thing for a cool September morning when little girls must dash off to school almost at dawn is this blue and white checked box coat worn by Mary Scott Rollins, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Rollins. The little brimmed hat is of blue felt.

D.M. benefits from

By ELIZABETH BALLANTINE

Register Staff Writer

It was a long way from the folksy fund-raisers at the Izaak Walton League and North High School.

But it wasn't just an evening when Des Moines' upper crust donned its best apparel and did its charitable duty for a struggling dance company.

The \$25- and \$50-a-ticket benefit for the Des Moines Ballet Company at Younkers Tea Room drew more participants than its organizers predicted, and those who showed up seemed actually to have a good time.

They should have because the dancing was lighthearted and of high quality, and the Calvin Klein fashion show accompanying the program was not a chilling lesson in fashion one-upmanship. Instead, it was convincing proof that all of us can wear stylish clothes — it just depends how you act in them.

The Dance

But of utmost importance for the partygoers was the performance of the newly reorganized ballet company, which made a critical decision last summer to establish a truly professional standard of dance in Des Moines.

The benefit was the first appearance of the reorganized ballet company under the direction of Jorge Samaniego, 29, artistic director, who turned out to be a dynamic and versatile performer.

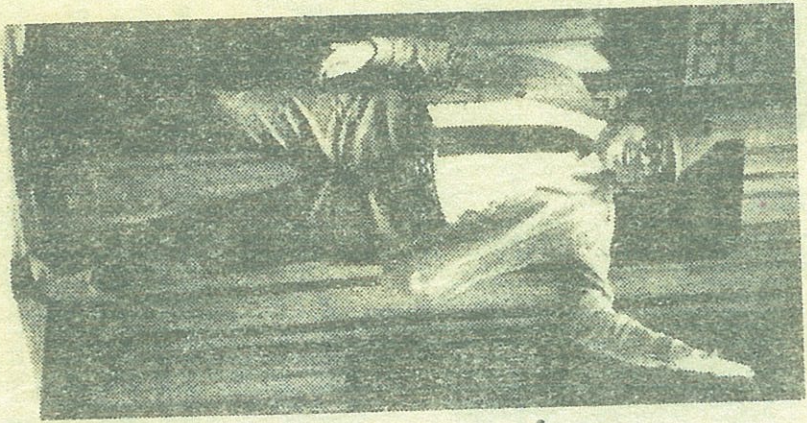
It was a promising night for the new company, which set high artistic and technical standards. Samaniego has said he wants the company to divest itself of a reputation of giving recitals of Swan Lake in high school auditoriums.

If Thursday's performance was any indication, Samaniego's artistic ability should have the support of the community — or at least the backing of most of those attending the preview.

Samaniego, a seasoned choreographer, wisely chose four pieces that teased the audience with the many sides of his talent — two neo-classic jazz numbers set to music by Chick Corea; a contemporary piece invoking the eternal dancing minstrel — Mr. Bojangles — as sung by Neil Diamond; and a classy finale in tribute to performer Judy Garland, set to the song "Quiet Please" by Peter Allen.

Captivating

The first duet with Julie Brannan and Amy Sanders began slowly — it was performed better at the rehearsal. The fluid dancing of Annabel Wimer, ably assisted by Kenneth MacDonald, the company's new ballet master, captivated the attention of the audience.



Waving to the crowd, Bill Peverill, 4225 Greenwood Ave., models a Calvin Klein sweater and slacks.

Ballet troupe benefit

Samaniego was a highly engaging and flirtatious Bojangles, tossing in some vaudeville soft-shoe routine and puckish leaps across the stage. He said the piece is a personal statement about his beliefs — "the eternal dancing spirit that is ingrained in all of us."

The final number was appropriately a classy, brassy ensemble, replete with chorus line kicks — a la Paris Champs Elysees.

Julie Branam, a tall brunette with remarkable extension and an expressive face, not only threw herself with gusto into the main role of Judy Garland, but she also displayed considerable technique.

The little company — pared down to seven dancers including Samaniego and MacDonald — rushed pell-mell to perform only two months after its formation, and showed energy and notable gutsiness.

October Promise

A richer sample of the group's talent and of Samaniego's choreographic skills is scheduled for early October at the Des Moines Community Playhouse.

Local star of the fashion show was Bill Peverill, whose role as a model could not have been played better by Walter Mitty.

Several of Des Moines' prominent

citizens — Robert Lubetkin, vice president of the Edmondson Art Foundation, James Hubbell III, vice president of Hubbell Realty Co., and Peverill, president of Computer Papers Inc. — among others — were persuaded to model Klein's innovative fashions for men. The clothes are cut larger and designed for comfort, unlike European men's fashions that pinch at the waist and armpits, said Klein's fashion representative Jack Ethridge.

No Finale

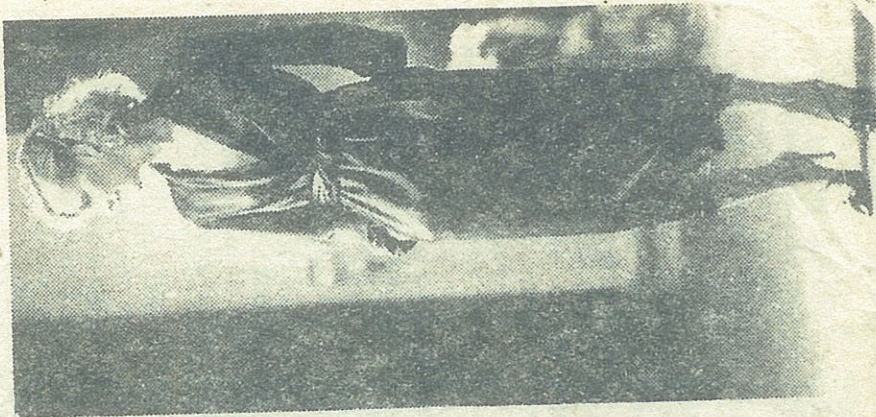
A finale to the fashion show, prepared by Des Moines businessmen William Reichardt and Crawford Hubbell, did not appear at the last minute.

Those who purchased \$50 tickets were admitted to the Embassy Club for dessert and dancing after the show. Officials said more \$50 tickets were sold than \$25. At least 300 persons appeared at the tea room.

"This is so much fun, it's like a private party," said Des Moines artist Val Tone.

"We're here because we've lived all over the country and now we're back, and Des Moines is finally coming to life," said Anne Amend, a learning disabilities instructor, seated with her daughter, Margaret, 22.

"Des Moines is long overdue for real cultural life."



Connie Olson, a Younkers buyer, models a casual Calvin Klein creation at the ballet company's benefit.

