



(Photo by Persis Thompson)

### From "Chicago" to Salem

Laura Castellanos del Valle We have all had the same dream. Opening night of a Broadway show and after the last curtain falls you take your bow on stage and the audience is applauding for you.

Clare Leach, a freshman from Godsden, Alabama has made that dream come true for herself. Last year she toured the United States with the national company of Bob Fosse's Broadway hit "Chicago."

At age six Clare began piano and dancing lessons.

The piano did not hold her interest for long, but the dancing was quite another matter. Clare knew that from then on she wanted to concentrate on dancing, but as a good performer she would need to be well-rounded - add on singing and acting. There were no family performers who influenced Clare and the closest thing to a childhood idol was Fred Astaire.

Her sixteenth and seventeenth summers Clare spent in Nashville as a lead dancer for Opryland's production of "I Hear America Singing." After she graduated from high school, Clare went to New York for the summer to take jazz dance lessons and tone her body. She lived in a girl's boarding house there. Occasionally, Clare would check the trade papers for auditions. An audition meant a chance to learn, experience and build self-confidence. On a whim she auditioned for the "Chicago" national company. It was "terribly exciting" to audition for Bob Fosse, but there are just no words to describe how Clare felt when she got the job.

Instead of leaving for Stephens College in Mississippi as was planned, Clare began a year long tour

of ten major American cities on August 22, 1977. She was the youngest member of the cast. Touring with a show is a whole different kind of life and according to Clare it ages you. "You had to hold your own, if you couldn't hold your own you had no business being there." "Chicago" played in Boston, Toronto, Miami, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco. During that year Clare was back home to Alabama for a total of eight days; not more than two days at a time. Fortunately, her

family traveled to see her and there were a lot of long distance phone calls.

Touring was very exciting, but tiring. Clare was a member of the chorus and played the role of Mona in one of the scenes. Though rehearsals were very demanding, she felt they brought the cast closer together. On stage, Clare says she never felt any stage fright, but more of an intense nervous energy that could even make the music sound slow to her. But the feeling you get when you are on stage

and the audience is responding is a kind of rush and natural high that according to Clare knows no description and makes everything worthwhile.

Clare chose Salem a little haphazardly on the recommendation of her family and from what she knew of this area. She loves Salem and the "college life," though it is quite an adjustment from last year. Like on stage where Clare strives for the unattainable goal of giving one hundred percent, she wants to endeavor for the same here at Salem.

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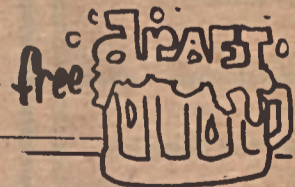
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