HO, HO, HO. — Santa Claus was in town yesterday doing some shopping in Franklin Street stores. Despite the fact that he was out of uniform, our alert photographer recognized him and snapped the first known picture of Ol' St. Nick since he returned to the North Pole after last year's deliveries. He seems to have lost a lot of weight.

—Merry Christmas from Jock Lauterer

At Barn Theater

'Picnic'—A Crowded Merry-Go-Round

"Picnic," by William Inge, stars Ron Barron, Rosita Palabay, Carol Sue Maxson, Frank Eben, Bill Catusi and Donna Cole. Direction is by Tony Calabrese, production by Howard D. Wolfe and stage management by Pasquale Antoniello. At the Raleigh-Durham Barn Dinner Theater.

By DENNIS SANDERS
Special To The DTH

Hal Carter, Alan Seymour's buddy, likes Alan's girl, Madge Owens. Madge's sister, Millie, likes Hal, but Madge's and Millie's mother, Flo, distrusts him. Howard Bevens likes fun with no responsibility and Rosemary Sydney, the old maid school teacher, is after Howard, her last chance to the altar.

A merry-go-round? Almost. In "Picnic," William Inge's Pulitzer Prize - winning three-act play now at the Raleigh-Durham Barn Dinner Theater, you can't tell all the players without a scorecard.

"Picnic" is the light, fast-moving story of what happens to these small-town Kansans over a 24-hour period in the front yard shared by Flo Owens (Joanne Marsic) and Helen Potts (Ruth Noble).

It is, moreover, a study in human nature.

It all begins when a high school dropout, Hal Carter, comes to Mrs. Potts looking for odd jobs, the usual practice of the roaming bum. And Hal, who is played adequately if not well by Jon Barron, is a bum, largely through no real fault of his own. (His mother ran around on his alcoholic father, who was buried on pauper's row when he died. This is hardly the environment that gives the world its best citizens.)

Alan and Madge are two mis-matched teenagers who nevertheless are dating steadily. He is portrayed, very calmly and with no fanfare, by Bill Catusi, as a studious, mature person who has an amazing perception of what is really going on in the world. Madge — played by Rosita Palabay, an actress with three television shows to her credit — sees Madge as a cute, petite and even sexy girl with love on her mind . . . if she can hunt down the right guy. Miss Palabay's experience, clearly shows up in her work here.

Hal, played by Jon Barron, who forces his way through the role with little skill, is the stranger and is uneasy, but no more so than Flo, who mistrusts men in general because of her own misfortune. She is a typical mother, looking out for her offspring, but Joanne Marsic is too young for the part. She is probably the weakest link in the dramatic chain.

Flo and Helen Potts have scheduled a picnic for the young folks because of the "excitement, and mystery" such gatherings can generate. But Hal is afraid to go: "I've never been in a picnic before."

Alan: "You went on some with the fraternity."

Hal: "But you know what they turned out to be."

Hal is afraid of himself and for himself. He is looking for something more stable than he, and, for a while, Alan was this bench mark. It soon becomes Madge, and therein lies the break with Alan, who cannot maintain friendship with his girl's lover.

The events of the day, including the picnic, at which everyone ends up with someone else, move quickly to the end of the play.

Stage manager Pasquale Antoniello has done an excellent job with a small stage bordered by the audience, which spends a good deal of the evening pouring drinks and clinking ice in glasses. His props are realistic, although they are simple. Director Tony Calabrese's work is the result of 32 productions — seven for the Barn — and it shows. He keeps the attention focused, not such an easy job with eight performers on a small stage most of the time.

Supporting roles here are well done, save for Flo's. Millie, the jealous and impish younger sister of Madge, is portrayed as a not-so-naive kid who is ugly at first glance but grows on you. She is at her best coughing when she tries her first cigarette, choking on her first liquor, and stuffing padding into her dress just before the picnic.

The interplay between two characters, though, is worthy of more than praise. Rosemary, the teacher, played by Carol Sue Maxson, is the perfect hypocrite; she is pious and a do-gooder until she hits the bottle. Then, she loses her inhibitions, comes at Howard (Frank Eben) like a woman, and . . . like the Mounties, gets her man in the end. Eben is flawless, as he's seen as a good-time Joe who wants no part of settling down, a weasel trying to get out of his own doing, and the usual nervous bridegroom. Their work is the high point of the evening.

Ruth Noble, as Helen Potts, is as old as Flo should have been, and fills a minor role quietly and with talent. She is an old matchmaker at heart, who just likes having a man around.

There is a good deal of raw humor here, especially in the dancing scene when Rosemary gets high, and the scene in which she and Howard leave for their wedding and honeymoon. And, despite limited, unideal conditions for drama, there is a good deal of talent in the work of the Barn performers.

Technology Fattens Turkey-Day Dinner

ELK RIVER, Minn. (UPI)—Give thanks to science for all that lush meat on the holiday turkey.

Undoubtedly, the Pilgrims were equally grateful for the turkeys served at that first festive Thanksgiving — but those wild specimens must have taken long hours of cooking and strong jawbones for eating.

One poultry specialist, Dr. Norman Magruder of an animal research farm here, said the forerunners of today's quick roasting, plump and juicy specimens must have been stringy, tough and dry, the skin leathery. "They ate whole grains," he explained, "and would be greasy from picking up a lot of resins and oils that domestic birds don't".

Even so, Magruder noted, that early bird had one thing going for it — the Pilgrims didn't have to wrestle with turkey leftovers the week after the feast. A wild turkey probable weighed about 10 pounds on the hoof, which didn't leave much for the table. It probably took about 10 hours to roast it, too.

The pampered specimens served up today are the result of genetics, breeding, disease control and scientifically formulated feeds. They're pampered with soybean meal, corn, fish meal, animal and vegetable fats, antibiotics, minerals and generous offerings of protein fortification.

The wild turkey's diet, Magruder figured, was acorns, berries and wild grains and the constant foraging for foods turned him into a sinewy specimen.

As one Pilgrim wrote, a turkey could "runne as fast as a dogge and flye as well as a goose."

Benjamin Franklin once proposed that the turkey, not the bald eagle, be the national emblem, but he did not go so far as to propose that roast eagle be favored at holiday time.

He called the eagle a bird of "bad moral character" and the turkey a bird of courage that "would not hesitate to attack a grenadier of the British guard."

MOON CLOCK

NEW YOR K(UPI) — The absence of air pressure on the surface of the moon creates a special problem for designers of a special tuning fork clock for Project Apollo's moon-landing craft.

The clock will use two tuning forks — a "master" and a standard, Bulova Watch Company reports, and the master fork will be enclosed within a pressurized chamber inside the clock case. If unpressurized, the fork would "gain time" at the rate of 21 seconds a day while on the moon's surface.

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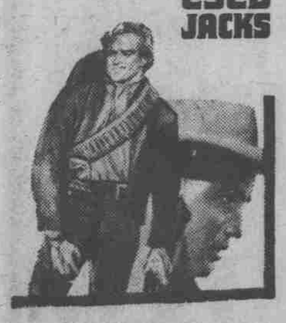


KATY JURADO · PINA PELLICER
TECHNICOLOR

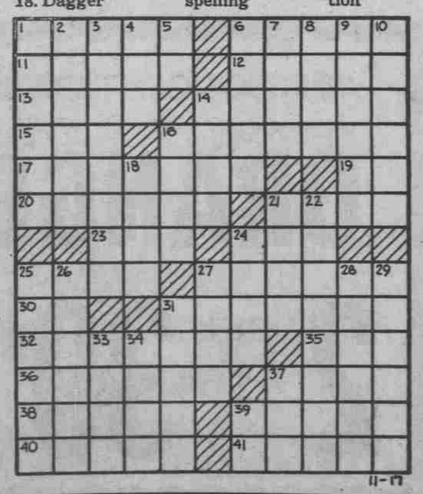
DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1. Residue from fireplace
6. Turf
11. Schemes
12. More docile
13. Saucy
14. Land of Prince Rainier
15. Ever: poet.
16. Packages
17. Greediness
19. Canadian province: abbr.
20. Oppose
21. Municipality
23. Metallic rock
24. Container
25. Kind of bed
27. Gossip
30. Overhead
31. "Flying saucer" man, perhaps
32. Courage
35. Wet earth
36. Marine fish
37. Dip out, as liquid
38. More recent
39. One of the Apostles
40. Expunge
41. Pays attention

DOWN
1. Come into view
2. Part of a garment
3. A U. S. president
4. Common ending
5. Baseball position: abbr.
6. Rocky
7. Magic stick
8. Biblical name
9. Lately formed
10. Scummy
14. Mongrel dog
16. Cold Swiss Alps wind
18. Dagger
21. Carrie Chapman
22. Hint
24. —— Grant
25. Globule of air
26. Bustle and clamor
27. Edible root-stock
28. Praised
29. Concluders
31. Measure, British spelling
33. Species of pier
34. Contends for
37. Sheltered side
39. Chemical abbreviation

BEDE SCUT
CIDER OASIS
AKIN ENGAGE
LIT ESNE EG
EN TROY BRO
BISHOP PASS
WASHERS
ADIT ALASKA
PAM UGLY AH
IR PLUS ONE
AWAITS PISA
NIGER SALAD
NORA MUSS

Yesterday's Answer



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