

# Living Today

SECTION B THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 1981

## Bennett Home Animal Haven



**KISSING CAT** - Puffy-Buddy, a pet tom cat, is one of the more affectionate pets that Johnny Bennett, above, and his wife, Linda, enjoy at their home on El Bethel Road. The cat likes to kiss his master on the nose.

Johnny and Linda Bennett have been adopting stray animals for several years and have started what may appear to be an unusual hobby for pet lovers, the breeding of ferrets.

The Bennett home on El Bethel Road has become a haven for dozens of cats, guinea pigs, flying squirrels, and even a male African Bush lion cub.

"What we'd really like to pursue is the breeding of exotic cats," said Bennett, "but we don't think our neighbors would like the idea when the animals became full grown. So we started raising ferrets which we highly recommend as easy to care for and inexpensive pets."

Josie, the five-months-old baby in the Bennett family's re-

cent litter of ferrets, has become a house pet while her brothers and sisters, Hot Lips, Scooter, Lester and Casper are housed in warm cages in the barn. Ferrets are pole cats in the weasel family and the two breed pair produce one or two litters each year, 6-10 babies, most of whom the Bennetts offer to the public for pets.

Josie was brought into the house because she was smaller than the rest of the litter and had to be bottle fed. She has her own cage but quite often romps in the living room with the cats and two flying squirrels.

Linda continues the story. "Ferrets eat dry cat food, fresh, raw meat and vegetables and some meat and fruit. They eat less than cats and it takes very little to feed them. Ferrets retail from \$50 to \$100 up," she said.

Linda and Johnny keep records on all their pets and never breed parent to offspring. When full grown, a ferret can kill a medium size dog but when he becomes agitated will spray his attacker, in similar manner to a skunk. The odor is not as offensive and the musky smell remains only about 10-15 minutes. "Spraying is a protective device and we've seen only one of our ferrets do that," explained Linda who says ferrets weigh from 8 to 10 pounds and are recommended for house pets. It has not been hard for the Bennetts to domesticate Josie, who loves to take a bath, and plays well with other animals.

Another hobby for the Bennetts is music and Johnny hopes to open in a few weeks Kings Mountain's first recording studio and production company in a new brick building adjacent to their home. "It will be a 16 tract State of the Arts studio and will be on the air in another six weeks," said Johnny, who said his company will be able to provide any type of recording and audio and video work and will operate under the name of Earthfall Productions, Inc.

The Kings Mountain studio grows out of a need for a facility for musicians to work in at their convenience and eliminate a long drive to Charlotte or Columbia.

Johnny and his brother-

partner, Tommy Bennett, will be equipped to record any style of talent or format, using the latest in equipment. "We can take a group or individual and manage it, handle its entire career and put it on the road," said Johnny. The local studio will be competitive with any 16 tract studio in the Carolinas, said Bennett.

Bennett quit show business two years ago after a 17 year career in which he owned and managed a singing-playing group for 12 years. He was the keyboard player, played trumpet and did vocal arrangements and charts throughout the Southeast, traveling as far north as Boston, New York and Los Angeles and as far south as Florida. He played the concert and college fraternity circuit. Local people will remember his talents in the "Phineas Taylor Band," "Scratch," and "Caravelles." His groups played Top 40, hard and acid rock, disco, rhythm and blues and whatever was on the billboard chart.

"I loved it," said Bennett, who decided to get off the road two years ago and settle down at Bennett Brick and Tile, where he is secretary-treasurer.

His wife, the former Linda Simmons whom he married four years ago, also enjoys his love of music and on any given day of the week the Bennetts are hosting talented young people at their home. "One act is in rehearsal now," according to Linda,

"and by the first of March will be recording a first album."

Linda Bennett also enjoys her work at Gilliland Florist owned by her parents-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gilliland. The Bennetts are parents of 10-year-old Tommy Putnam, who attends a private school in Florida, and 10-year-old Kim Bennett who is a fifth grader in Bessemer City.

When the children come home for visits on holidays and in the summer months the house is a beehive of activity and they enjoy the pets as much as their parents.

"We always have two or three things going at one time at our house," said Johnny, "but we find that combining a hobby with business is fun."

Linda Bennett gets the credit for their menagerie. Everytime she goes to a pet store she brings home another pet and she never can turn down a stray. She takes them in and feeds them and soon they are regular family members.

"Puffy Buddy," a stray tom cat, is the pride of the household and was literally kidnapped twice. Because the lovable feline likes to kiss, he scared his catnappers off, according to the doting owners. The cat was left at a shopping center during one of his excursions and was waiting in the parking lot when his owners spotted her. Puffy Buddy has the run of the farm.



**BENNETTS AND PET** - Linda and Johnny Bennett enjoy pets and have raised ferrets as a hobby for two years. Mrs. Bennett holds the baby and pet of the litter, Josie, who has not been climatized to the outdoors and lives in a cage in the house.

Story And Photos By Lib Stewart



Photo by Lib Stewart

**VISITING ARTIST**-Paul Davis, visiting artist at Cleveland Tech. is welcomed to the Christian Woman's Club by Susan Weiss, special features chairman.

## County Women Enjoy Fellowship

On every third Thursday at noon Christian women gather at Shelby Elks Club for a luncheon meeting of the Cleveland County Christian Woman's Club.

And four topics that are taboo are: weight, age, church affiliation and the latest operation.

What the women do enjoy is fellowship, interesting program topics and a religious emphasis by an out-of-town speaker which is non-denominational and non-sectarian.

Unlike most clubs, there are no dues and the club is open to all interested women. Lunch is \$4 and special events are planned during the year. The February meeting of the club is "Valentine Guest Night" on Thurs., Feb. 12, from 7 until 9 p.m. at the Elks Club. Dinner will be \$4.50 and the program will feature a fashion show from Boudoir, Inc. and Loy's Men Store of Shelby. Dr. and Mrs. Blake McWhirter will entertain with special music and Max Rice of Travelers Rest, S.C., author of "When Can I Say I Love You," will be featured speaker. The program is open to husbands of members and guests.

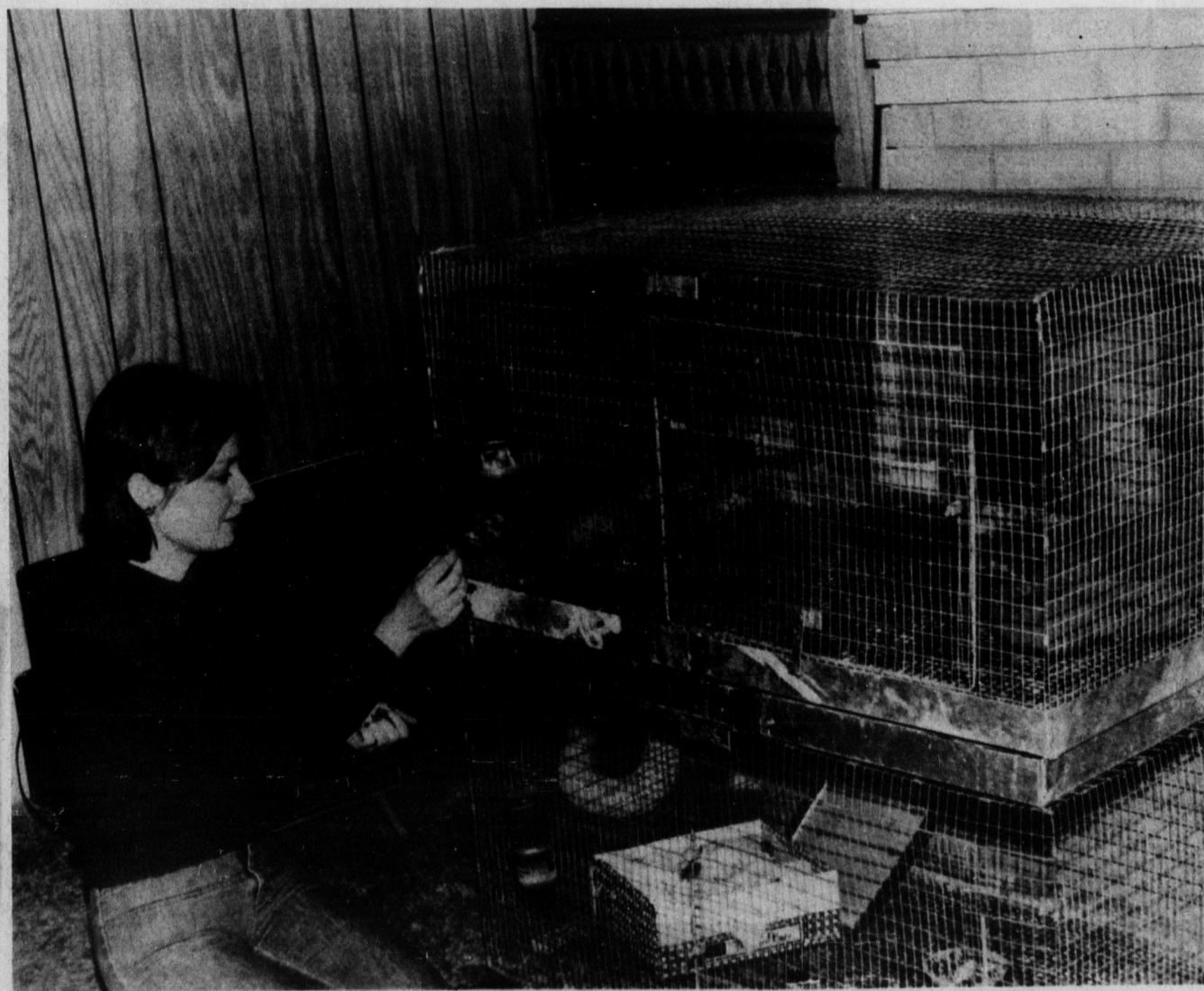
In addition prayer coffees are

planned, as well as Bible studies, to which members are invited to attend. A "Be Our Valentine" prayer coffee is set for Feb. 5th at 9:30 a.m. at the home of Mrs. Becky Saine, 201 Countryside Dr., Shelby. Bible Studies in Mark and Luke are being held on Mondays and Wednesdays and Pat Eckerd, club chairman, said that visitors are always welcome to attend.

Jean Hiott, Greenville, S.C. recording artist, delighted the group with a sacred concert at Thursday's meeting in which she gave her own Christian testimony. Prior to the featured program, Paul Davis, visiting artist and enameling instructor at Cleveland Technical Institute, showed slides of some of his own work in which the artist brings a painting like quality to the enamels.

Mr. Davis got interested in enameling as a senior student at Kent State University and went on to receive his master's in fine arts. He showed pictures of a ring made from stones found in a ruby mine, a 14 karat gold wedding set and other beautiful pieces he had fashioned.

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**FERRETS AND SQUIRRELS MAKE GOOD PETS** - Linda Bennett feeds Josie, a pet ferret, but the two flying squirrels, in bottom cage, went into hiding as soon as the

photographer appeared. Linda and Johnny Bennett breed ferrets and recommend them as inexpensive pets.