

Kirk Knock found instant fame by driving through a gravel pit

By HOWARD RONTAL

Most television commercials use actors who look and act as if they could be your neighbors. They never are. Considering how many television commercials get faxed into your home, it's surprising that some of your best friends aren't commercial characters.

But if you look at the latest American Motors Chevrolet Jeep commercial you will indeed see a Farmington Hills resident, maybe even a neighbor. 13-year-old Kirk Knock of Vades Side Drive.

Kirk is the one next to the brown jeep holding a lantern and waving to the pretty girls in another jeep as it drives by. Kirk has to have pretty good eyesight to have seen these girls, since their part of the commercial was filmed in California and Kirk's part was filmed in a gravel pit in the Midwest.

It's funny how they put these commercials together, said Kirk's father

Lloyd Knock, an engineer with the Ford Motor Co.

Kirk, a Warner Junior High School student, got an audition for the part of "boy with lantern who waves" because an agent at the Leslie Fargo Agency asked Kirk's brother John, a professional model, if he had two young brothers John sent them Kirk and 17-year-old Todd.

"They asked us to smile and we showed them a couple of pictures," said Kirk. They offered Kirk a part the next day. Brother Todd was left out of the money—he didn't quite smile right for a jeep commercial, neither were his legs heavy enough, said Kirk.

THE CAMERA CREW made about 20 takes of Kirk's segment before the director was satisfied.

The commercial, which has been shown during NBC national news and Baa Baa Black Sheep among other programs, is aired in 148 cities across the country. When it's aired in the Knock house, everybody runs for the nearest television.

"Eventime we hear 'Let's go for a ride in our Chevrolet Jeep,'" said Mr. Knock. "we run for the TV. It's Kirk's grandma

saw it in South Dakota and said she was thrilled."

Kirk's residuals will be coming for the next year, as long as the commercial runs. Kirk said he'd like to buy some clothes, Christmas presents and an electric organ, but most of the money is already earmarked for his college education.

A friend with Affiliated Models said some people wait years and years for a commercial. He was just lucky," said Kirk's mother, Shirley Ann Knock.

Lucky for the Knock's too, since Kirk is the youngest of eight college-bound children in the family.

There is a little irony in Kirk's commercial film debut.

Kirk is in his age group is one of the 10 best swimmers in the state of Michigan according to Amateur Athletic Union tabulations. Kirk practices two or more hours a day and lifts weights to keep at the top of his form. His awards and medals along with those of his brothers and sisters, practically spill out of the closet in which they are displayed.

After all that work, the commercial was like buying a winning ticket in the Michigan Lottery.

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Sixteen West Bloomfield youngsters will dance in the Michigan Ballet Theatre's opening performance of "The Nutcracker Suite."

Members of the group performed excerpts from the ballet Friday and Saturday during the local kick-off of the holiday season and will stage the full-length "Nutcracker" production Dec. 11-12 at Harrison High School Auditorium in Farmington Hills. Twelve Mile between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake roads.

The ballet tells of the Christmas Eve party given by Burgomaster and Frau Scherzer and their children Clara and Fritz. The production includes colorful costumes and sets including the Kingdom of Sweets where the Sugar Plum Fairy lives and stages of the Battle of the Mouse and Toy Soldiers.

Participating in the ballet will be local residents Anna Bolten, Michele Dora, Pamela and Peggy H. Hohns Hopkins, Stephanie Maza and Carolyn Mox.

Also included are Julie Lehmmer, Susan Salaries, Theresa Seely, Jill Stamm, Tim Vack II, Jeanne Vetrovich, Laurie Vukobrat, Lisa Vukobrat, Melanie Wesley and Laurie Whitcomb.

The ballet will be performed at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 11 and 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 12 at Harrison High.

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