

TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



His mission, since he accepted it, is to bring news of other worlds

You have seen "Star Wars," "Superman, The Movie" and "Brief Encounters of the Third Kind," so it will not surprise you to learn that I have met a creature from another galaxy. His name is George Pierrot. Pierrot tells the world that he was born in Washington state and has spent his adult life in Detroit. He is actually from another galaxy and is here on a mission. His job is to stretch our horizons so that we earthlings can begin to see things from a planetary and interplanetary point of view.

I understand that George asked to be sent to earth as a potentate of some kind, but, with typical galactic bureaucracy, they sent him down as a travel writer and lecturer.

George, the practical one, made the best of it.

WHAT BRINGS THIS up now is a photocopied letter that George sent to all of his friends and associates, recently, announcing his retirement from the "World Adventure Series" and his donation of the series to the Founder's Society of the Detroit Institute of Arts. If you are taken in by this smoke screen, you haven't been paying attention to your Superman movies.

This only means that the first phase of George's mission is complete and he is checking in with Galaxy 81, known in the trade as the Georgian Galaxy, for another assignment.

REMEMBER THOSE World War II movies in which the innocent shopkeeper pushed open a hidden panel and made radio contact with the enemy? When George has finished distracting us with his dirty limericks, he takes off his thick glasses, sucks in his ample stomach, dons a red and blue cape, and flies through the air to make radio contact with the Georgian Galaxy from the top of the Taj Mahal.

He was caught at this once but quickly covered his tracks by announcing that he had just made the first telephone call from the Taj to North America; his friend Lowell Thomas backed him up.

The first time I saw Pierrot, he was a large shape with a pixie smile on the television screen, discussing the pubs of Europe with a travel photographer. Rule one of interplanetary spying is "look like one of them." Nobody with a figure like that could fly like Superman.

I met him through Sheila Holden, a mutual friend from Farmington, who took us all out to dinner. "I have to eat to keep up my strength," he would answer when nudged about his weight. I knew then that he couldn't have come to earth as Kal-el (later Clark Kent) had, in a simple space ship.

Pierrot would never travel on a vehicle that didn't serve vodka martinis.

OVER THE YEARS, I've seen him do a lot of good works for others. Rule two of interplanetary spying is to contribute to the planet where you are stationed.

I probably would never have blown Pierrot's cover if he hadn't recommended me for membership in the



HELEN AND GEORGE PIERROT

Society of American Travel Writers. That's where I first discovered the familiarization trip, in which writers race through a country making notes for their readers, and that's where I first considered the possibility that Pierrot was on such a trip to planet earth. He'll deny all this, of course. He's already addicted to earthy pleasures and he doesn't really want to go back to a place where he can't eat, drink vodka martinis, collect limericks, peer through his heavy Clark Kent glasses at pretty girls and play an amorous Superman to the Lois Lane of his life, his wife Helen. For a while I wondered about Helen. She is a little too beautiful and well-preserved for a woman in her "30s," but she shows other signs of being an earthling. I don't have the slightest doubt about Pierrot. If you doubt me, look up into the sky during a full moon some night at midnight. You'll hear yourself ask, "Is it a bird? Is it a plane?" And you'll answer, "Hell, no, it's George Pierrot."

Where to camp it up if many want to camp it out

The Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has set aside 10 campgrounds and six picnic areas for groups that want to make reservations in the eastern region of the U.S.

Family campgrounds continue to be available on a first-come, first-serve basis at the 14 national forest areas in the northeast, which covers the Great Lakes and adjoining states.

Group campgrounds, intended primarily for tent camping, are used by youth groups from scouting and church organizations as well as by adults traveling on company, union, civic and fraternal outings.

Wedding parties are not unusual in group picnic areas. At least two have been booked this year in the Goose Bay picnic area in Shawnee National Forest, Ill., according to Ed Canare of the forest service.

picnic areas are also commonly used for large family reunions, especially in the Monongahela National Forest of West Virginia, which is often used for the reunion of pioneer families.

Advance reservations are required. The Furnace group picnic area in the Wayne National Forest in Ohio is so popular that reservations

come in on Jan. 1 every year.

Fees range from \$10 a day for groups of 50 or less to \$60 groups of 200 or more. Reservations are taken by contacting the following Forest Service offices.

In Michigan, which has the Ottawa National Forest, Marion reservations for group camping can be made by writing to the Watersmeet Ranger District, USDA Forest Service, Watersmeet, Mich., 49869, or by calling 1-906-358-4551.

In adjoining states, contact the USDA Forest Service in Ironton Ranger District, Ironton, Ohio, 45638; the Vienna Ranger District, Vienna, Ill., 62995; the Florence Ranger District, Florence, Wis., 54121; the Park Falls Ranger District, Park Falls, Wis., 54852; Ironton and Vienna also have group picnic sites available.

Group camps are also available in Sheffield, Marienville and Ridgway, Pa.; at 208 Broadway, Montour Falls, N.Y.; and at White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.

West Virginia has three of the group picnic areas, at Parsons, Petersburg and White Sulphur Springs.

Chicago site of Oct. theater fest, Lautrec exhibit, new mall debut

Three major events — a giant Chicago Theater Festival, a Toulouse-Lautrec Retrospective, and the opening of the State Street Shopping Mall — will make Chicago a busier place in October.

More than 40 Chicago area professional acting companies will produce plays during the city's first Theater Festival, from Oct. 8-22.

Plays stages will range from debuts of original works written by Chicago playwrights to Broadway road company productions of "Annie" and "A Chorus Line." Theatergoers will have the option of purchasing a special \$5 festival ticket entitling them to half-price admission at five participating theaters. For example, with the festival ticket, a \$20 theater ticket will cost \$10.

Actors will perform special productions during the noon hours in the city, in the neighborhoods and in the Public Library's Cultural Center. Two companies of festival troubadours will perform throughout the Chicago area during the festival as well.

A do-it-yourself musical will fill the Auditorium Theater at 8 p.m., Oct. 17. The audience will be invited to sing with the chorus of the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra as it performs a well-known Broadway musical.

THE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC Retrospective, from Oct. 6 through Dec. 2, will be held at the Art Institute.

The first major exhibition in the U.S. of the artist's work in 25 years will contain more than 100 paintings and gouaches by the 19th century French artist. Highlighting the exhibit will be 25 pictures from the famous collection of the Toulouse-Lautrec Museum in Ahi, France, the artist's birthplace. This will be the show's only stop in the country.

THE OPENING of the \$17 million State Street Mall in late October will be the beginning of a several hundred million dollar development program



Jane Avril, pictured here in oil on cardboard done in 1892, danced at the Moulin Rouge. A favorite subject of Lautrec, her style and manner allowed her to strike the most sensitive and boldest of poses, captured in full by the artist's brush. A Toulouse-Lautrec retrospective will open at the Chicago Art Institute Oct. 6.

for the area that will include construction of a Conrad Hilton hotel and major renovation to the Palmer House Hotel.

When opened, the mall will feature 24-foot-wide sidewalks, outdoor cafes, and several entertain-

ment areas. The world's largest shopping mall also will have new sub-way entrances, a year-round information booth, and sport landscaped areas for relaxing and watching the city move by.

Auto traffic is already banned from the street and only CTA buses and emergency vehicles are allowed along the nine-block mall. Taxi stands will be at each of the east-west streets crossing the mall.

Reaching for the stars in Ohio

They come from near and far, but not to be a shooting star. Rather, they simply come for the practice.

They are the people with potential, winners from auditions held around the country to fill spots in shows at Cedar Point. Try-outs are held in cities like Detroit usually from



Susan Stokes of Warsaw, Ind., is a cast member in a show at the Frontier Theater at Cedar Point.

Rail Canada turbos back on track

VIA Rail Canada's Turbo trains are back on track for runs between Montreal and Toronto.

The trains will make one afternoon trip each way, following the existing Turbo schedule, with departures from both Toronto and Montreal at 3:45 p.m. and arrival at destination at 8:15 p.m.

The Turbos were pulled from service following a fire which damaged one of the three trains on May 29. Since then, an investigation uncovered that the fire was caused by a broken stainless steel pipe that allowed fuel to spray over a hot turbine engine.

It was determined that the break in the pipe was the result of corrosion inside the pipe caused by the sulphur content of the fuel. The train on which the fire occurred will not be returned to service.

With only one trip per day for each train, the two remaining in service will each have a 20-hour lay-over period, during which daily inspections will be carried out.

February through April, and are conducted by reps from Cedar Point. More than 1,000 people tried out this year.

While some Hollywood, Las Vegas, Broadway or TV hopefuls polish their acts in bars or before party crowds, these young Channings, Streisands, Falks and Nicholsoners are on a

merry-go-round of sorts, performing in the park's various productions and later attending classes after their respective spotlights have been dimmed.

The Sandusky, Ohio, amusement park a few years back initiated a program for students of the stage to earn their keep and learn their craft simultaneously. Their stamina and drive are tested through boot-camp-like requirements which all performers endure sooner or later.

At the park, 16 different shows play daily during the summer. More than 150 singers, dancers, musicians and technicians are involved.

Performances in five theaters range from revues of musical hits from radio, television and Hollywood, to contemporary, dixieland, barbershop, bluegrass, folk and country styles.

Classes available include dance (tap, ballet, modern and jazz), audition workshops, the business side of show biz (budgeting, show production, resume writing) and classes for musicians (arranging scores). The training through the classes, once open to all Point employees, is now limited to those in the shows.

Theaters work out in drama or various spoofs such as "Step Right Up Folks," the subject of which is the traveling medicine show of yore.

"They (the classes) help me as a performer. All entertainers need as much dance instruction as possible. With this, I'll become a more versatile performer," said Peter Samuel, the hero of the melodrama at the Golden Palace Theater.

SCHEDULES ARE rigorous, with show stagings as many as

five times daily, six days a week. Estimates are that the college-aged entertainers will do between 400 and 700 shots this season.

"The entertainers working here this summer are learning the ways of entertaining," said Marjorie Cronenwett, live shows manager at the park.

"Nothing serves as a better teacher than working in front of people. Contact with different types of audiences forces our performers to change their style accordingly and by doing this, they are adding new dimensions to their abilities and perfecting their craft."

The young entertainers apparently agree with Ms. Cronenwett on this educational method.

"The amount of exposure I get by working over day allows me to try different techniques. I have learned to read an audience and determine which roles will work in every situation," said Kristopher Antekler, who plays the doctor in the medicine show.

Performances and the tolerance needed for each is important to Susan Stokes, a singer in the cast at the Frontier Theater, which features popular songs in "Make Your Own Kind of Music."

Said she: "It is a challenge to be up for every show. You have to make each performance fresh or your role becomes staid and it will show."

Back to Ms. Cronenwett: "Not only do we want to put on high-quality shows that will entertain our guests, we also want our performers to improve and develop their talents. We want them to be better prepared as far as knowing their capabilities and what to expect at different levels in the entertainment field."

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