

Magicians, puppeteers, mime troupes greet customers

Bookstore's added attraction: entertainment

Story and photos by
PAT BORDMAN

Bookstores are usually for quiet browsing — not the spot to find a magician, puppeteer or a mime. That theory doesn't hold at the Children's Bookstore at Applegate Square in Southfield.

Customers have become accustomed to the frequent entertainment at the shop since it opened last spring. And best of all, it's free. And although intended for children, you can find many an enraptured adult, listening and watching with rapt attention to the frequent entertainment.

"We're combining literature with fun. It's not so formidable to the child," says shop owner Judy Tennen.

Fun was certainly in evidence at a recent Sunday afternoon show.

A group of Birmingham Groves High School drama students performed. Calling themselves the Fabulous Five, they offered mime, story readings and skits, all based on children's books taken right off the store shelves.

They used no props. Costumes were limited to a simple group outfit.

With a sole backdrop of shelves of books, the five presented fresh, spirited and animated renditions of stories. The audience had no trouble using their imagination to fill in the stage paraphernalia.

HIGHLIGHT of the presentation was a book by Judith Viorst, "My Mama Says There Aren't Any

Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Creatures, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins, or Things, but... Sometimes, Even Mama Make Mistakes."

Because of the store's layout, and its intended use as a bookstore, there is no clearly defined area for staging.

The proximity of audience to actors is only a child's arm length.

"It's a very informal atmosphere," Ms. Tennen said. "The children sit on the floor. They don't feel they're in the rigid structure of the theater or an auditorium, and they're very relaxed."

"I think they have fun." But it is a bookstore first and foremost.

"The emphasis is definitely on reading. I want it to be a bookstore, but I think the other things make it appealing."

ATMOSPHERE is a key to success at the Children's Bookstore where children are the most important customers. They are expected to browse, to leaf through the multitude of choices, to touch, to ask questions, to make requests and to participate in this store.

Child visitors get a natural feeling that the store is intended just for them. And it is.

The cliche is a secret room available only to small children because only they will fit inside.

But, adult customers have a place as well.

There is an adult section with selections on child-rearing, nutrition, and other family matters.

Ms. Tennen feels the weight of responsibility for recommendations.

"The parents come in and they want books on death, divorce and adoption," she said. "They want

something that is rational and not maudlin. I have to make judgments and it's a difficult thing to do."

"I feel tremendously responsible."

Why a bookstore just for children?

"I think people are very aware of what their children read and they see them coming home with things

from the paperback store and they're upset," Ms. Tennen said.

"I WORKED in a bookstore before starting this one and became an expert on children's books because nobody else cared or knew. There seemed to be a tremendous need for guidance."

Ms. Tennen contends that al-

though parents want help, they don't want to have to sit down and read things first.

"So this place affords a service," she said. "The children are pleased to come in here. They love the books and the ambience."

At 1 p.m. on Dec. 23 the Fabulous Five will again perform at the Children's Bookstore.



Mime is only part of the act for the Fabulous Five of Groves High School's drama department. Left to right they are: Wendy Arons of Birmingham

(bottom row), Nancy Tennis and Susan Tobocman of Franklin, and Jeff Parker and Michael Bernstein (top row).



Father Bob Dock, left, holds daughter Bonnie on his lap and watches with son Bradley Dock (right) as the Fabulous Five from Groves High perform their mime and storytelling. The group will perform again at 1 p.m. Dec. 23 at the Children's Bookstore in Applegate Square.

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In addition to the new pavement, the existing bridge over the River Rouge will be removed and replaced with a 30'-11" x 10'-8" culvert. The bridge will be closed during construction and thru traffic will be rerouted by a signed detour. Local traffic will be allowed to access up to the bridge site.

Information concerning this project, including preliminary plans and an evaluation of the social, economic and environmental aspects of the project, is available for public review and copying at the Office of the City Manager, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Mich.

The project is proposed to receive Federal aid under the Federal Aid Urban Systems, and under provisions of Federal Law, any person who would be affected by the proposed improvement, may request in writing, that a formal Public Hearing be held concerning the social, economic, and environmental effects of this project. Such a request should be mailed to the City Manager, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Mich. 48024. This request must be received on or before January 5, 1980.

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