

Getting Around

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Every once in a while, a grown-up moviegoer comes up to Dale Killeen, who manages the Old Orchard Theater in Farmington Hills, and says something like, "Remember me? You once threw me out of a kiddie matinee at the Norwest because I tossed something at the screen."

Ms. Killeen just might remember. She was the first woman theater manager for the Suburban Detroit Theater chain. She's spent "way over 20 years in theaters" since she first trained as assistant manager at the old United Artists Theater in Detroit.

She managed Detroit's Norwest Theater for years during the 1950s. And when Richard Sloan opened the Old Orchard, "I went there to manage a twin. Now it's a triple."

MS. KILLEEN and her husband, who is retired, live in Farmington. She has great fondness toward her theater and on a tour of the Old Orchard showed off two 550-seat auditoriums and a 400-seat one.

Of the smallest, she declared: "I call this the little dollhouse. It's so cute! It has no side aisle."

She's somewhat like a mother to her young staff, besides having her own family. "I have a great staff. They help me," she said. Because the theater is so large, "You need roller skates to get around," she said with a twinkle.

Ms. Killeen trains her own employees, teaching them how to treat the public.

"Once they start at the age of 16, they stay on until they go to college," she said. They start on the floor, may

work as ushers or usherettes, in the box office, or as relief managers.

She said her husband teases her, saying a woman has an advantage in maintaining order. "I ask people to leave. I don't have to throw them out," she explained, telling how she handles unruly patrons.

That's the bad side of the business when she confronts, say, a teenage customer who is loud and uncouth. "I give them one minute to leave and they do."

Being a woman theater manager — there are five or six now in the Suburban Detroit Theaters chain — also is likely to result in a theater that is neat as a pin.

"Maybe I'm prejudiced, but I think that women are more fussy," Ms. Killeen said. "They say I'm too fussy."

The Old Orchard opened in 1971. There is a lounge for each theater. "Most theaters don't have that. They built it right," she said.

The spacious indoor lounges also provide waiting areas for patrons. "I don't like to keep the people out of doors," she said with pleasure.

WHILE MS. KILLEEN talked somewhat reluctantly about the bad side of managing a theater, she was more than willing to relay the good part — "getting to know your customers."

Ms. Killeen also was at the Bloomfield Theater, now closed, in Birmingham for a time.

"I'm a movie nut," she said. "I love movies. To this day, on my day off, I go to the movies."

Seeing movies on one's day off seems to be an occupational hazard with movie theater managers. But she pointed

Movie manager, patrons reminisce

out, "It takes a long time (for her) to see a movie at any place. The moment you sit down to see it, something else happens. That's why I go elsewhere to see movies."

Ms. Killeen makes managing a movie theater sound easy, but Bill Marcus of Suburban Detroit Theaters stresses that a lot of hard work and ability goes into her job.

MOSTLY, managing a movie theater means everything is kept running smoothly and customers can enjoy watching a movie uninterrupted, munching their popcorn.

Booking the films is not part of a manager's role. Richard Sloan, the owner, does that. "Occasionally I'll beg for a movie," she admits.

Catering to large groups who book attendance at a particular film is among a manager's duties. On a recent week, six parties of 30 or more persons arrived and were given special seating in roped-off areas.

"A father came with his daughter, who had 20 school chums with her," Ms. Killeen said, describing one of the

groups. The Old Orchard has Wednesday matinees with regular customers

attending, Saturday matinees for children, and Sunday matinees offering special features.

THE BIGGEST BOX office hit Ms. Killeen recalls at the Old Orchard was "The Poseidon Adventure," a melodrama aboard a sinking ship. "We had long lines. It was fabulous," she said.

Currently playing at the Old Orchard is Clint Eastwood in "Every Which Way But Loose" (originally the Christmas attraction); "Fastbreak" with

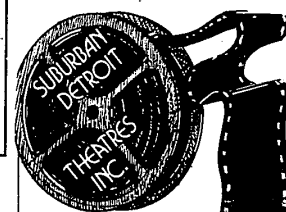
Gabe Kaplan, and "The End," starring Burt Reynolds.

Coming attractions at the theater include "Back Rogers," opening Friday; "The Promise," April 16; Woody Allen and Diane Keaton in "Manhattan," May 2; "Voices," May 19; and "Prisoner of Zenda," May 25.

Peter Falk and Alan Arkin in "The In-Laws," June 13; Barbra Streisand in "Main Event," June 22; "Dracula," July 20; and "Amityville Horror," July 27.

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Sondheim musical opening on campus

Stephen Sondheim's vintage musical comedy "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" opens Friday, April 6, in the Studio Theater of Oakland University's Varner Hall.

The department of music production will be repeated on three successive weekends starting April 6. Tickets are priced for general admission and for OU students and senior citizens.

The musical won the New York critics' Tony Award in 1962 and it has been a popular choice for regional musical theater productions ever since.

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" has been described as a burlesque in Roman dress. There is a classic chase scene and plenty of lyrical bards in such songs as "Lovely," "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid" and "Bring Me My Bride."

FEATURED in the cast are David Pfeiffer of Detroit in the old Zero Mostel role of Pseudos, Ron DeRoff of Dearborn as Senex, Ric Gibbard of Rochester as the young Hero and Karl Schmidt of Pontiac as the blustering Miles.

Others in the production include Sue Stine of Fraser as Domina, Judy Richer of Royal Oak as Ertronia, Ivan Cope of Detroit as Hysterium, Dwayne Foster of Bloomfield Hills as Lyceus and Chari Suriano of Newberry as Hero's love interest, Philia.

Performances are at 3 p.m. on April 8 and 22 and at 8 p.m. April 6, 7, 12-14 and 20, 21 on campus near Rochester. Tickets are available at the door, or in advance by calling 377-2000. For group rates call 377-2032.

St. Dunstan's stages production of 'Bus Stop'

"Bus Stop," the story some believe proved that legendary sex symbol Marilyn Monroe could also act, will be staged Friday and Saturday, March 30, 31 and April 6 and 7, by St. Dunstan's Theater Guild.

Director Florence Neal Brown, backed by Alec Fiesselmann and co-producers Polly Henry and Liz Smith, have turned the St. Dunstan's stage into a cheap diner where the entire play takes place. Pamela Tucker has the task of creating the role made famous by Marilyn Monroe.

Other cast members include Jane Lynn Kilby, Hank Kryskalla, A. David

Kahn, Fred Buchalter, Ralph Todd, Pat Cavanaugh and Bruce McCallahan.

Special theater benefit performances — the entire evening sold to a group which in turn sells tickets to raise money — will be given on March 28 and April 1 and 5.

Ticket information and reservations can be obtained for the regular and benefit performances by calling the St. Dunstan Theater at 644-0527.

Regular performance curtain time is 9 p.m. at the St. Dunstan Playhouse located on Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills.

Coffee shop gets new look

Restaurateur Chuck Muer has announced the completion of renovation at his LeCafe coffee shop on the lobby floor of Hotel Pontchartrain in downtown Detroit.

Le Cafe is open again after three weeks of redoing the floor plan and decor to provide more private seating arrangements and a brighter, garden terrace atmosphere.

Latticework was used extensively by designer Jeanne Crandall of Crandall & Associates (Detroit-based interior design firm), as were hanging plants, clay pots and wood-grained tables and chairs.

The color scheme is yellow, green and tan. New carpeting has been installed.

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