

STREET CRACKS

Mark Morton is making a living — by day, night

By Louise Okrusky
staff writer

Mark Morton earned a bachelor's degree in business but he's doing his graduate work in comedy.

The 23-year-old, June graduate of Detroit College of Business in Dearborn has armed himself with a day gig. As assistant director of special projects for the school, he negotiates contracts for employee training sessions with industries by day.

By night he negotiates laughs. He can be seen Tuesday, Oct. 3 at Mikey Z in Dearborn.

Morton, whose comedy style revolves around impressions and story telling, was in the right place at the right time for laughs. Friends signed him up for open mike night at Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia. He had a month to prepare.

"I didn't have a performing background," said the Wayne resident. "I spoke in front of groups a lot. But you never do it to make them laugh." During his days as a Wayne Memorial High School student he appeared in a talent show.

"I STILL DON'T know if performing was a serious (option) though," he said.

Cajoling laughs from a group of strangers can be a tough as negotiating a contract.

"You think about falling flat," Morton said. "Sometimes the crowd's dead. It's a challenge. There was a crowd one time at the Looney Bin. They were dead. There were two good comics before me and they died. I just went up and did my best stuff."

He failed to revive the group. However, self-preservation is a comedian's most basic instinct.

"You got to check the crowds out," he said. "You think about burns before you go up. You can't let them get the last word."

Putting together a routine is another matter.

"I just can't sit down and be funny," he said. "Sometimes I'll be talking to someone and I'll say something funny. I'll build on it later for the act. I pick up on anything."

HE KEEPS HIS act clean.

"I'm definitely no Eddie Murphy," Morton said. "I took a dictionary to 'Raw.'"

At worst, he said, his humor gets a little weird.

"You know, I can say 'divorce rates are down and freezer sales are up' and people laugh," he said. "It's terrible but people laugh."

His father, retired Wayne Police Chief Arthur Morton and his two brothers pop up in his act.

"Dad's a funny guy," Morton said.

Although his dad and mother, Judy have moved to Florida, his older brother lives in the family's house in Wayne. Morton lives down the street.

"It makes it easy when I take my sewing to my sister-in-law," he said.

A Wayne city champion golfer, Morton is also a volunteer coach for the Westland Youth Athletic Association for football players 9-14 years old. He started off as an assistant with a buddy and now he's head coach of the Westland Meteors. Although the team's had a tough start this year, they're 6-2, he promises a better showing in the future.



Mark Morton of Wayne is an employee of the Detroit College of Business in Dearborn by day and a budding comedian at night.

COMEDY CLUBS

Here are some listings of comedy clubs in our area. To let us know who is appearing at your club, send the information to: Comedy Listings, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

● BEA'S COMEDY KITCHEN

Mark Still will perform with Marv Welsh and Arturo Shelton Friday-Saturday, Oct. 6-7, at Bea's Comedy Kitchen, 541 Larned, Detroit. Show times are 9 and 11:15 p.m. For information, call 981-2581.

● CHAPLIN'S EAST

Bobby Collins will perform Wednesday-Saturday, Oct. 4-7, at Chaplin's East, 34244 Groesbeck, Fraser. Show times are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 792-1902.

● CHAPLIN'S PLYMOUTH

Jack Thomas will perform Wednesday-Saturday, Oct. 4-7, at

Chaplin's Plymouth in the Plymouth Radisson, 14701 Northville Road, Plymouth. For information, call 454-4680.

● CHAPLIN'S WEST

Scott Shaw will perform Tuesday-Saturday, Oct. 3-7, at Chaplin's West, 16590 Telegraph, south of Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 533-8666.

● HOLLY HOTEL

Dan Logan and Tim Butterfield, along with Roland Kimbel and Steve Billaliter, will perform Thursday-

Saturday, Oct. 5-7, at Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. Show times are 8:30 p.m. with additional 10:30 p.m. shows on Friday and Saturday. For information, call 634-1891.

● JOEY'S LIVONIA

Stanley Ullman will perform Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 5-7, at Joey's Comedy Club, 36071 Plymouth Road, Livonia. Show times are 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Saturday. For reservations, call 261-0555.

DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

On the Town

What kind of a kid do you suppose Thomas Edison was?



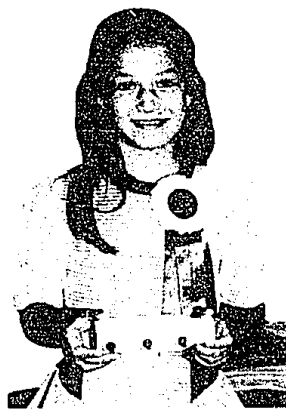
Bet he looked at problems and saw solutions. Like Maurice Scales who invented Baby No-Mash to prevent doors from closing on little fingers.

Bet he saw how things were done, and imagined better ways to do them. Like Lillian Lukas who invented the Puddle Detecting Cane for the blind.



Bet he watched how things work and thought of ways to avoid wasting time or effort. Like Caitilin McCracken who invented the Orphan Kitten Feeder for Three.

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If you're wondering if it's all worthwhile, just imagine what Edison would have said.

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