

TRAVEL

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O&E MONDAY, JULY 29, 1991



Iris Jones

Clowning around at Magic Get-together

This is the time of year when most of us like to slow down and savor summer. Photograph the water birds in Kensington Park. Take a picnic to the nearest stretch of grass. Let the sun shine on our faces and forget that the grass at home still needs to be mowed.

If you have more active ambitions, there are a million things to do in Michigan.

MAGIC GET-TOGETHER

You might know him as Milky the Clown. In Colon, where he goes every year to Abbott's annual Magic Get-together he is known as Clare Cummings. The get-together is Aug. 7-10 this year.

Clare is 80 years old now. He has lived in Birmingham since 1917, when "it wasn't much more than a one-horse town." He fell in love with magic when he was 8 years old, got a Mysto Magic set for Christmas and was soon entertaining his neighborhood friends on Sunday afternoon.

By age 13 he was performing for Boy Scout troops and hanging around with a magician called George Pullin, who passed on all of his professional equipment to the budding magician.

"When I was getting ready to go into the service during World War II, I knew I had to go to Colon," Cummings said. "The magic performers used to go there on a Saturday afternoon in summer. My girlfriend Peg, now my wife, went with me to Abbott's Get-together in Colon in 1942."

"They held the get-together in the opera house then, but the festival was so popular that the opera house soon wasn't big enough. By the time I came back after the war in 1946, they were holding it in a tent. The tent burned down and it moved out of town."

Cummings became Milky the Clown after Twin Pine Farm Dairy discovered him doing a marionette and live rabbit show called Peter, Clare and Oscar. "They wanted a magician and clown. I performed on television from behind a table, so I was only a clown from the waist up."

For information on the Magic Get-together, call Abbotts Magic Co. at (616) 432-3235.

Artpark had its gala opening in 1974. It is funded by New York State's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation through the National Heritage Trust.



Artpark in Lewiston, N.Y., is just downstream from Niagara Falls. The theater building seats 2,300. At large performances or during very warm weather, the back wall of the building opens up like a garage door, and spectators can sit on the hill.

New York's Artpark: Experience the art of creation

Sally Sawyer is a playwright and amateur theater director from West Bloomfield.

By Sally Sawyer
special writer

There are paintings, but there are no walls. There are artists, but they are under the trees. If you would like to introduce your family to hands-on and face-to-face art in a natural setting, you will find that experience at Artpark in Lewiston, N.Y. It is just downstream from Niagara Falls.

Walk the perimeter of the park and you'll see large art works in progress. "Omega," a very popular finished piece, has been on loan from the New York artist Owen Morrel since June 1980. Morrel trained at Cranbrook Art Academy in Bloomfield Hills.

"Omega" is 110 feet long, 42 feet high, 48 feet wide and is suspended over the Niagara Gorge. There are 52 see-through steps to climb and every

platform is at a 7-foot angle. Mirrors reflect the water below and the clouds above. It took me 15 minutes to get to the top, heeding the cheering section below: "Don't look down!"

Once aloft, I experienced a weightless, heavenly floating feeling. No funhouse on Halloween could have been more exciting!

Near "Omega" is an outsized sandpile for toddlers and a working forge where a sweat-beaded smithy hammers pig-iron into shapes. While in the woods, you may visit the turtle-shaped Indian burial mound.

In clearances are the theater-in-the-woods and The Performance Center where University of Niagara drama students in multicolored overalls have fun with audiences and get invaluable experience. Bring a basket lunch, find a picnic bench and be entertained while you eat.

Delicious smells and growing appetites drew us to The Eatery in the Art E2, a huge covered wooden ramp

with many levels, where all sorts of "making art together" activities happen near the upper parking level.

While sipping sun tea and eating spinach pie, we hear the rhythmic beat of an African drum and an eerie pipe, wailing to help children create dance stories and music. The children make the instruments themselves from large plastic pop bottles and cardboard tubes.

At Artpark you will find gifted young people like Stefania Samuels of Ann Arbor. A granted artist-in-residence last year, she works mainly in clay, concrete and glass and was chosen not only for her many professional credits but for her ability. We found her talking freely with children in "the Clay Place" and showing them how they, too, can create exciting and beautiful things with their hands.

Steffie graduated in 1983 from University of Michigan in ceramics and Asian studies. She started out

studying law and has always had a keen interest in jazz.

The evening crowd at Artpark is entirely different; all spit and polish. They are at one of the most unusual theaters and performance spaces in the country. Amazingly, the price is nominal.

The theater is a permanent building, seating 2,300, built near the bottom of a hill. At large performances or during very warm weather, the back wall of the building opens up like a garage door, and lawn seating up the hill can be sold. (The theater has no air conditioning or heat.)

The season opened June 5 with Big River, the family-oriented musical about Huck Finn.

Artpark charges a daytime workshop pass fee: \$3.50 for adults, \$2 for children plus a \$3 parking fee. The park is open through Aug. 25. For a brochure, write Artpark, Box 371, Lewiston, N.Y., 14092.

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