



A little spooked by strangers, Kokomo gets a reassuring squeeze from his partner, Nick Carrado.



A credible Walter Brennan impersonation is struck by Kokomo Jr., who is billed as "America's favorite TV chimp."

## Monkey shines

### Kokomo knows how to ham it up



Life on the farm is hard for a migrant monkey but the work seems to pass quickly by singing a verse of "Swanee."

Nick Carrado has been a monkey man for 20 years now.

He and his partner, Kokomo Jr., "America's favorite TV chimp," rolled into town in a motor home this week to perform in an arena that has become the new town hall—the shopping mall.

The malls have been known to bring in dolphins, polka dance contests and even trout ponds to attract customers. And this week Kokomo Jr. and Carrado will be at Orchard Mall trying to get people to laugh for a while.

But Kokomo Jr. is not just an ordinary monkey act. You won't catch Kokomo Jr. doing the usual things performing chimps do—riding around on a mini-bike or roller skates. This is the thinking man's monkey.

"Kokomo Jr. would be bored stiff doing things that simple," explains Carrado. "We do a communications act. Kokomo Jr. understands over 150 words. If I tell him to turn around on the chair he'll do it because he understands the words 'turn around.'"

"I'll tell the kids in the audience that we are a team but that every team must have a leader and that's me. Kokomo Jr. nods his head and points to me. When I turn my back he puts his finger to his skull and tells the kids he's the brains of the outfit and mimics me.

"When I turn back around he's sitting politely in the chair like a perfect angel," explains Carrado.

Carrado says that he strives for a straight man versus fall guy approach to comedy, rather than just letting the animals perform. He says he was the first trainer to teach chimpanzees to perform magic and the first to put chimps on snow skis and send them down the slopes.

Nick and Nancy Carrado have been staying in the Farmington Hills home of former Superior Earl Teeples this week. Teeples says the chimps have been excellent guests and has put them to work picking plums and peaches from his trees.

During a demonstration at Teeples' home, Kokomo Jr. responded cor-

rectly to an unbelievable amount of oral commands given by his trainer.

Carrado told the chimp to grab a basket and pick plums off a fruit tree, and he did it. He told Kokomo Jr. to screw up his face like Popeye and he did it.

"You dig that, 'ey buddy,'" asked Carrado. The chimp nodded and swagged off with one of his four hands in hand with his trainer.

Kokomo Jr. comes from fine chimpanzee stock and is a star in his own right. His father, Kokomo (Sr.), appeared on television with Dave Garroway, Jerry Lewis, Ed Sullivan and Garry Moore before retiring in Carrado's farm in upstate New York.

His son, Kokomo Jr., is carrying on the old man's heritage with the internationally syndicated Kokomo Jr. TV shows and commercials like the one he does showing humans how easy it

is to prepare a Buitoni Instant Cheese Pizza.

In reality, wherever that may be, there are three Kokomo Jrs. But Carrado doesn't let people see more than one at a time and isn't crazy about revealing a professional secret.

"Actually there are two more Kokomo Jrs. than the one right here, but don't make a big deal out of it when you write the story," Carrado says. "It's just like there were maybe eight Lassies. We alternate the chimps between shows so they don't get over-tired but call them all Kokomo Jr."

Since Kokomo Jr. was sporting a yellow bowtie and natty vest, we asked the trainer if the chimps resented wearing costumes.

"My guys like to dress," Carrado said. "They especially like new things

and colorful things. If they have a new wrist watch they'll keep showing it off."

Carrado's chimps seem a far cry from the naked ape. He swears that when the chimps are in the motor home after a hard day's work they will usually put on a t-shirt rather than walk around naked.

"We have some small t-shirts for them with pictures of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck printed on the front," Carrado said.

While Carrado is a New York City native, he has just purchased a home in Carthage, N.C. He explained that the town lives up to its motto, "There are no strangers that visit Carthage." And for a 20 year traveling monkey man like Nick Carrado, that's a good place to call home. Besides, he says, there are a lot of trees on the grounds for his pals with the long arms.



Kokomo Jr. heads back to the motor home with Carrado where he will join the other Kokomo Jrs. and relax in front of the TV.



Actually, a performing monkey works up a real thirst, but to the layman it's all a barrel of fun.

Staff Photos  
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