

Readers share 'Spectacular' Christmas memories

BY KEELY KALESH
STAFF WRITER

Jean Mattingly of Farmington grew up in Brooklyn, New York and went to see the Rockettes "many, many times" with her grandmother, aunt and sisters.

She sent us a program from the Saturday, Jan. 8, 1949 show. Perry Como, Judy Garland, Lena Horne, Gene Kelly, Mickey Rooney, and Ann Sothern were among the cast members. Mattingly is one of the winners in our "Share your Radio City Memories" contest and received four tickets to the Friday, Dec. 6 performance.

Attending "The Radio City Christmas Spectacular" is a holiday tradition in many families. Readers shared their memories of attending the show either here or in New York for the chance to win free tickets.

"I was thrilled when the famous Rockettes began doing a Christmas Show at the Fox," said Mattingly. "Seeing the Rockettes has brought back many happy memories for me." Victoria Heugh of Rochester Hills also won four tickets to the Friday, Dec. 6 performance.

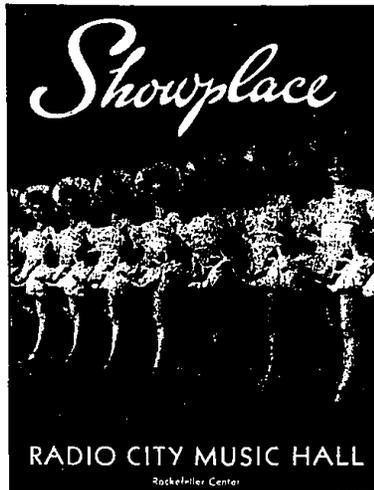
"I have great memories of the Radio Christmas Spectacular," she wrote. "I attended it for the very first time three years ago with my aunt, son, and daughter on the day after Thanksgiving. The show was indeed spectacular. One scary, but kind of funny moment was when one of the dancing bears got too near the front of the stage and fell off, right into the lap of an audience member. No one was hurt, and the show continued."

Our runners-up won two tickets to see the Rockettes, here are their stories: "My first memory of the Radio City Christmas Spectacular is going to Radio City Music Hall with my parents in New York City," wrote Kathy Kennedy of Bloomfield Hills. "Having seen it numerous times in NYC, I was thrilled to see it coming to Detroit. Taking my children, going with loved ones and friends, I never tire of seeing it."

"Probably one of the most memorable times seeing the show was when our college group decided to go together. One of the fellows took charge of getting the tickets and we had agreed that dinner at the DAC would certainly top off the evening. When the day came, the 'party planner' was unable to attend due to illness. We all went anyway, including his wife. We had a terrific time, charged dinner at the DAC on his account, but did buy him a Radio City Rockette Doll to console him. The doll goes on his Christmas tree every year. We still chuckle about that."

CHILDHOOD MEMORY

Patricia Klinges, also a Bloomfield Hills resident, remembers getting dressed her Sunday best and taking the train to downtown New York with her mom and sister to see the Rockettes. They waited in a line, blocks long to get tickets. "We waited a long time and it was bitter cold," she wrote. "We had on ankle socks and I remember putting my mittens on my feet and forcing them into my Sunday shoes, a very uncomfortable feat. I still shudder when I remember the cold."



Jean Mattingly of Farmington, one of the winners in our "Share your Radio City Memories" contest, sent this program from the Jan. 8, 1949, Rockettes performance at Radio City Music Hall.

We got into the second performance. Once we sat down and thawed out we stopped complaining and enjoyed the show. In spite of it all it turned out to be a wonderful day and the next year we were back in line again, this time with tickets."

Margaret Johnston, a Commerce Township resident, remembers going to Radio City Music Hall with her grandmother. "The show was beautiful, how the dancers stayed perfectly in step with each other was just amazing to me," she wrote. "I have been to the Fox Theatre's Christmas Spectacular and it brought back wonderful memories. The Rockettes are just as awesome

as my girlhood memories. It definitely is a great way to get into the spirit of the holidays."

"I remember two years ago my mom, my friend and her mom went to see the Radio City show in Detroit for the first time," wrote Maria Stoll, 10 of Livonia. "I was so excited. It was a spectacular site! There was Santa's workshop and the talented Rockettes. Now I want to go back every year as a family tradition. It was the best show ever. Keep up the good work Rockettes."

A PROPOSAL

Theresa Latour of Westland will never forget the time she went to see the Rockettes at the

'I was so excited. It was a spectacular site! There was Santa's workshop and the talented Rockettes. Now I want to go back every year as a family tradition.'

Maria Stoll
10 years old Livonia resident

Fox with her sweetheart. "Right there in the aisle, he got down on one knee while a crowd of onlookers giddy with glee. They knew what was coming, and didn't I too. Tiny box in his hand, his love so true. His eyes filled with tears, his lips barely parted, his face trembled slightly, my heart jumped and started. 'Will you marry me?' Enchanted right there, I replied 'Yes!' around us applause and care!"

A few months after giving birth to twin girls, Rhonda Van Horn's husband surprised her with a homemade gift certificate for a mystery date.

She was told to dress up, and grandma stayed with the kids at home in Livonia. The evening began at the Whitney where Rhonda's husband treated her to dinner. After dinner they were off to the Fox. "I can't believe my husband has ever even heard of the Rockettes but here we are, second row center, and I am stunned," she wrote.

"The show is fabulous, like nothing I've ever seen. The dancing, the costumes, the whole show is bigger than life and even my husband is having a wonderful time."

Mary Kauper of Bloomfield Hills went to New York City for New Year's Eve with her husband and five-year-old daughter in 1993. They got tickets to see the Christmas Show at Radio City Music Hall. While seated, a "very nice lady approached us to ask if she could ask our daughter if she wanted to be in the show as a walk-on when Santa was on stage. We agreed and Sarah was thrilled. We all went back stage to get Sarah fitted for her costume, a very large winter coat. Our guide showed her where she would walk on stage from the wings and she looked out on to the enormous stage, and then broke into tears saying 'Mama, I don't want to do this!' We went back to our seats and another slightly older girl was selected for the part. She loved the show from our seats out front. Sarah is now 14 and regrets that she missed her big chance to be in the Radio City Christmas Spectacular."

NOTABLES

Gift Idea

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Today! 6 pm
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