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Krupa Brings Back Memories For Fan

By CORINNE ABATT

I wouldn't go back into my old clipping file for very many people. It is an agonizing experience to read my beginning journalistic efforts.

But when I read last week that Gene Krupa had died, I had to do it. He was one of my early stories. It was the first and only time I ever pleaded to do an interview.

Krupa was in Detroit playing at Baker's Keyboard Lounge. As a favor to Southfield musician and teacher, Orin Ross, he played for the students at Southfield High with a couple of local musicians.

Many times during the early '40s, I had sat across the footlights watching Krupa behind that glittering set of drums. You could feel him working up and into a great drum solo before the members of the Tommy Dorsey band put down their instruments, sort of like a great storm coming in over the mountains. After that is was as leader of his own band.

His two bands and thousand jazz beats took over the whole theater. He had drama, he had rugged good looks, but over and above, he had talent – first magnitude all the way.

I got down to his motel room that day in April 1967 feeling like a high school journalist overawed at meeting "my star." But this was no star; this was a friendly, easy going grey-haired guy in an old blue shirt.

He talked about giving free concerts for high school kids: "It's a kick for me to watch the reaction of these kids who, until the time they walk into the auditorium, have never heard of Gene Krupa. It feeds my ego to hear them say as they leave, 'Where has this guy been all my life?' "

It may have been the ego boost which got him there, but more than that was being with young people, wanting them to enjoy the talent he knew he had. He liked exchanging verbal and drum licks with the young rock rhythm men.

He knew the road these kids were traveling, for Krupa had started as a professional drummer at 13 in Chicago.

In 1966 he played with the Franklin Community Band at the village's strawberry festival. He had friends in Franklin Village and this suburban area.

He was a showman who knew how to share.

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The mummies are coming to the Detroit Institute of Arts Youtheater in the "10 cent Mummy Matinee" beginning Saturday, Oct. 27, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Featured will be Boris Karloff's "The Mummy" and part one of the continuing serial "The Phantom Creeps," starring Bela Lugosi.

As an opening-day special, the Youtheater will have on hand a partially unwrapped mummy from the museum's study collection, along with a few other "live" surprises in the lobby.

Tickets may be purchased at the door of the art institute, 5200 Woodward, Detroit.

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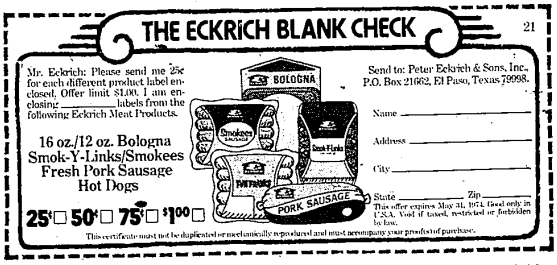

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