

oliday skits draw shoppers

Students spread cheer

By Suzanne Shuford
Reporter

What is one of the most rewarding Christmas joys? The Aggie Players' Post Oak Edition says it is entertaining children.

This troupe of four Texas A&M theater arts majors presented its children's Christmas theater Saturday to over 400 children, their parents and grandparents at Post Oak Edition.

Director Michael Greenwald says the group performed five Christmas skits — "Nine Cheers for Christmas," "Shoes and Stockings and Soloman," "Prairie Christmas," "The Shoemaker and the Elves" and "The Night Before Christmas."

The players also led the audience in Christmas carols that were heard by shoppers throughout the day.

After the presentation, the group painted stockings, trees and candy canes on children's faces to enhance the Christmas theme.

Greenwald says the troupe received a \$4,000 grant from the mall and will be used as a scholarship fund and divided among the four members.

The group includes Janice Jaruto, a junior from Houston, and Mary Ellen Brennan of Austin.

and Todd Jones of Houston, and Mark Wilhite of Mount Pleasant.

Greenwald says the students were chosen in May from more than 100 applicants because they showed the most promise.

He says this is the first year the theater arts department has worked with the mall on the program.

Jones says the idea for the program is to give each incoming freshman class a chance to be a part of the Post Oak Edition.

The group says it believes entertaining children is different from entertaining adults.

Jarutowicz says adults bring their life experiences to the theater, but children are in the process of forming their experiences.

"Children's theater is a world in its own," she says. "You can't fool kids because they demand total honesty."

Jones says the children don't like to be talked down to. They like to feel they are important, he says.

"You have to give them credit for their knowledge and comprehension abilities," he says.

Jones also says the group tries to educate the children while it entertains them.

"The way to educate people is to teach them in a way they don't realize they're learning," he says.

For example, "Shoes and Stockings and Soloman" teaches the children about Christmas customs in other countries, he says.

Brennan says performing the children's theater is a different and refreshing style for her.

"It gives me a lot of new techniques and acting variety," she says.

Brennan displayed her talents through a variety of characters in Saturday's presentation. She played the shoemaker's wife, a cowboy on the range, a shoe and a child on Christmas Eve.

Greenwald says the students started planning and rehearsing the shows a month in advance. They spent about three hours a week practicing, he says.

The group has two shows planned for the Spring semester. One involves Indian legends and the other is about summertime, Greenwald says.

The students — known as the mall rats in the theater arts department — also have been in other Aggie Players' productions, such as "New Voices" and "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," he says.

Money earned from the performances goes to the Aggie Players Scholarship Fund, Brennan says.

Japanese purchases affect fajita market

LAREDO (AP) — The Japanese have made their presence felt everywhere in the American marketplace — in automobiles, motorcycles, radios and televisions, photography, and audio and video recording equipment.

But fajitas?

According to several Laredo grocers, the price and availability of those popular carne asada morsels are determined by Japan.

Two or three times each year, the Japanese make massive purchases of the part of the cow that was once one of the best buys in the American meat market.

"When the Japanese start buying, they really go to town," said Arnulfo (Fito) Santos, grocer and Webb County Commissioner. "They'll contract with the big packing plants for about a million pounds each time."

Out of 1,000 pounds of beef, only about 10 pounds can be used for beef skirts, known in Mexico and South Texas as fajitas.

It takes a lot of cows to get a million pounds, and there are sometimes not enough cows — or fajitas — to go around.

The retail price of fajitas has recently dropped, and is now about \$1.30 per pound. But three months ago, the last time Japan made a raid on the American market, the price was \$1.90.

There is little room in Japan to raise cattle, and the Japanese import

most of their red meat from other countries.

Beef skirts purchased in the United States are refrigerated and shipped by boat to Japan in 60-pound boxes, Santos said.

For 10 years, fajitas have been popular in South Texas. Until three or four years ago, when the Japanese began buying, the price was less than a dollar per pound.

Other countries import beef skirts from the United States, but not in the quantity that Japan does.

"I know the U.S. government will let you export almost anything," Santos said. "If Japan weren't buying, the price would stay lower."

Like his customers, Santos would prefer that the price of fajitas stay low.

"When the price is lower you sell more," he said. "It's the same problem the car manufacturers have. They're taking over the market and what can we do?"

According to Gilberto Narvaez, another Laredo grocer, the Japanese are looking for boneless meat and the beef skirt cut is about the cheapest.

However, they have recently begun purchasing English cut, which is also obtained from the lower rib of the cow.

In fact, the effect of Japanese purchasing power on the price and availability of English cut has been even more drastic than on the fajitas market.

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The Texas A&M Chapter of Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society is inviting applications from outstanding senior students for a National Graduate Fellowship for up to \$6,000 for first-year graduate or professional study. Fifty of these fellowships will be awarded nationwide. Thirty additional students will receive Honorable Mention Awards of \$500. The Texas A&M Chapter will nominate one senior for these awards.

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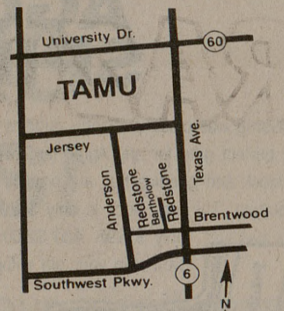
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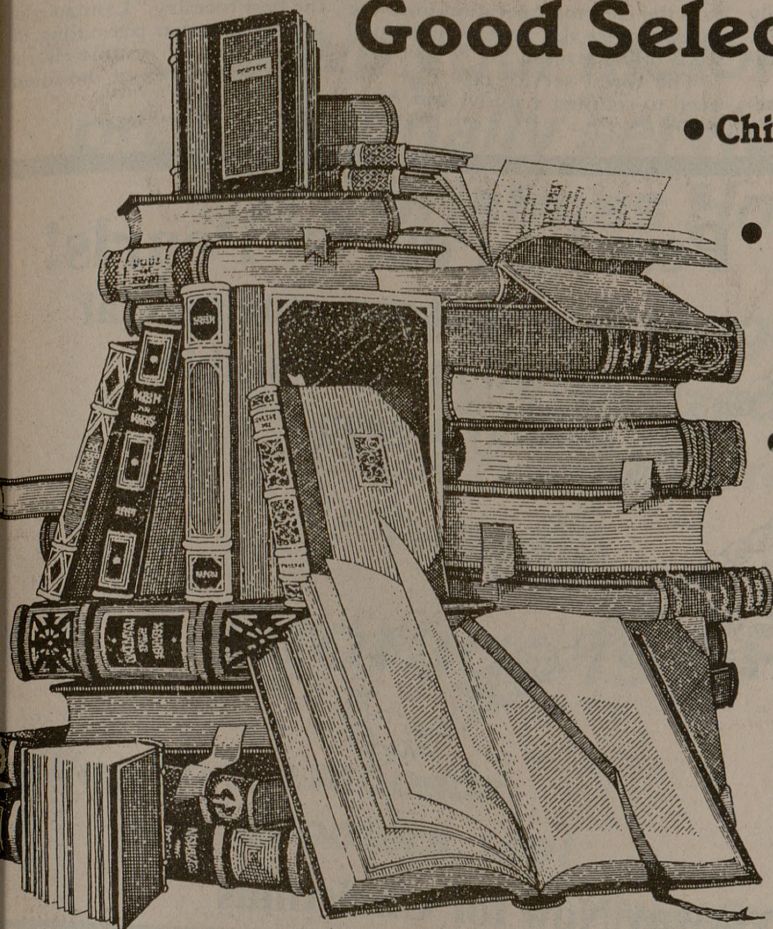


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