

PRESENTING: Annette and Spangles

Pulling Strings Pays Off For Two Mercer Actors

By Nancy Yates

A vivacious pair of Mercer drama majors are experts at "pulling the right strings."

Proof of that statement lies in the way they managed to get booked for a regular 15-minute weekly show on a Macon TV station—and, moreover, the success they have made of it for the past six or seven months.

The show is entitled "Annette and Spangles." And, by the way, the strings they pull are real. Spangles, who is well-known to many Mercer students, is a puppet.

Annette Robertson, a junior and Max Croft, sophomore, are the television twosome. Not too long ago, they presented a program in student Chapel.

Max has been an amateur puppeteer for six years now. He owns more than \$150 worth of professional but self-made equipment—including a portable stage, switchboard, phonograph, and puppets he built himself. He is a member of the Puppeteers of America and a popular entertainer in Macon and Brunswick.

Some of the puppets who "come alive" beneath Max's nimble fingers—besides Spangles—are Van-elena, a doll-like ballet dancer; Andy, country cousin to Spangles; Mr. Echo; Tweedledum and Tweedledoe; Bloody Mary, a skeleton; Robert the Easteregg; Monsieur Gordon, a French piano player; and even the children's idol, Santa Claus.

Annette, whose real name itself is charming enough to use on the show, is an attractive and talented puppeteer. Already a veteran of summer stock work and numerous Mercer productions, Annette plans to continue her career in the world of drama. She has a beautiful solo voice besides—and uses it to advantage on the show.

She has been named "Outstanding Actress of the year" here at Mercer and is active in both the dramatic organizations.

Spangles, perhaps the main member of the production crew, is a little boy who became a clown by special permission of the "ugly fairy," a creation of Max and Annette. Annette cares for Spangles—sings to him, and tells him stories.

Although a once-a-week production, the show is actually almost a full-time job. Every Friday Max and Annette meet in Mercer's Wingham Chapel building to discuss ideas for the next week's show.

Miss Audrey Needles, Mercer instructor in speech and drama, aids them in rehearsals and technique. Jane Caudill, sophomore daughter of a Baptist missionary in Havana, Cuba, is pianist. Tom Campbell, junior, assists Max with the puppets.

"Sometimes we start with a song and build a show around it," Annette explained. "Or at other times we hit on an idea and have to search for songs to illustrate it."

Usually by Tuesday, after another confab Monday, the plot and songs are ready, and the group begins work on timing and smoothing over rough spots in the dialogue. Then on Wednesday afternoon they have a dress rehearsal at the studio to straighten out all the technical difficulties and complete plans for properties and set.

On Thursday at 6 PM the show begins. The next quarter-hour is a bewitching world of fairies and enchantment for lots of Macon youngsters and one of enjoyment and reminiscence for their parents and older friends.

Max and Annette presented their first performance last spring—the night before the last final examination of the Mercer school year! They had foregone studying for exams because of the chance to

ing a performance. During the commercial Max and Tom were frantically trying to untangle the strings or clip them off so the puppet could appear in the next scene.

Annette finds it hard to realize that Spangles isn't a real little boy. In a show she commanded, "Jump, Spangles!" When he did (under Max's guidance), Annette broke off his little plaster-of-paris hand. She had to hold his "hand" during the rest of the show so the audience wouldn't realize what had happened.

In each original story Max and Annette try to inject a statement or two of moral value to young children. Spangles says his prayers and goes to bed like all good children, and he loves Annette and minds her well.

Annette has even written a story about the little puppet, "How Spangles Became a Clown." She says she hopes to put it together in better form this summer for possible publication as a children's storybook.

"Max's puppets are more alive than some of the really famous ones I've seen," Miss Needles commented. "There's a tremendous reality present in each performance."

Annette and Max beamed proudly and commented on a recent write-up they got in a national TV magazine. And Spangles jumped joyfully and clocked his heels.

One of the biggest problems they encounter, say Max and Annette, is getting ideas—but that's to be expected. The ones they don't expect are the troublemakers.

For example, once a puppet was knocked off a chair backstage dur-



Max Croft and Annette Robertson pose with "Spangles" during a rehearsal session for their TV program.

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Four Mercerians Attend Meeting

Doo Young Lee, Lygia Bittencourt, Domingo Tamburtour, and J. C. Kim attended the eight annual Foreign Student Conclave at the University of Georgia last weekend. Approximately 130 foreign students gathered in Athens for the two-day meeting.

Dr. Ivan Putnam, foreign student adviser at the University of Florida, was the featured speaker at a banquet Friday night. The dinner was followed by a dance.

Activities on Saturday morning included a continental breakfast followed by a discussion of foreign student problems. The students were guests of the city of Athens

at a barbecue, and then were taken on a tour of the city and the University campus.

Alum Group Sets Fete for George

The Mercer Alumni Chapter of Washington, D. C., will honor Senator Walter F. George at a testimonial dinner in Washington on May 4.

Senator George was graduated from Mercer in 1900. He received his law degree from the school in 1901.



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