

By Erma Bombeck

Memo to: Mr. Kravitz, principal
From: Miss Gutsie
Re: Christmas Pageant

The Christmas Pageant will be a little late this year. Possibly Jan. 23, if that date is agreeable with you.

Although an enthusiastic Pageant committee has been at work since October, we have had some problems. To begin with, there were several on the committee who insisted on making a musical out of the Nativity story. At one point, we had the precision drill team making a "B" for Bethlehem in the background while a trio of baton twirlers marched around the stable. This idea was scratched when someone remembered batons hadn't been invented yet.



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Remember how excited we were about the donation of the "live" donkey? Our custodian, Mr. Wehber, does not share our excitement. Although his phrasing was a little less delicate, he intimated that if the animal wasn't house trained by Jan. 23, we could jolly well go back to papier-mache. He also said — this is quoted out of context—that the smell of the beast wouldn't be out of the auditorium in time for the Lion's annual Chili Supper next May.

We have had a few casting problems to plague us. I had to award the Mary, Mother of Jesus, role to Michael Pushy. (His parents donated the donkey.) Michael refused to wear a wig, which might be a little confusing to the audience, but I'll make a special note on the program. I've had great pressure from Mrs. Reumschusser. It seems her son, Kevin, is a Ted Mack loser who plays "Good King Wenceslaus" on the tablespoons. I am using him at intermission.

The costumes didn't arrive until three days ago from the "Beelzebub Costume Company" of New Jersey. There was obviously an error. Instead of 30 Roman soldier uniforms, there were 30 pink suede bunny leotards with matching ears. It was quite apparent to me that, after I had tried a few on our "little people", this was not our order. Miss Heinzie and myself couldn't help speculating that somewhere there is a tired businessman with a Roman soldier sitting on his lap.

The shop department is not yet finished with the special scaffold for parents wishing to take pictures and tape record the program. We felt this necessary after Mr. Hapenstance's accident last year when he panned in too closely and fell into the manger.

I hate to ask, but could you please do something diplomatic with Mrs. Ringading? She has threatened the refreshments committee with her traditional whisky balls and rum cookies. You know what a fire hazard they created last year. If the Jan. 23 date is taken, we could schedule the Christmas Pageant even later.

Needle Points

Times change. In World War II, if someone had printed a leaflet urging our troops to quit fighting the enemy, it would have been called treason. Today it's called free speech.

Next they'll have us apologizing to Japan for Pearl Harbor.

Dr. Spock joins the Vietnicks. Those campus demonstrators need a child psychologist, all right—but not as an active partner.

A college football player gets paid a \$300,000 bonus for joining a pro club. And what are we supposed to say to the brilliant math student who is offered \$8,000 a year to teach school?

School officials report more cheating in the classroom. Now you know what some of the kids mean when they talk about academic freedom.

A tiny town called Johnson City, Texas, gets the first federal loan from the new Department of Housing and Urban Development, proving that you don't have to be one of those big cities with lobbyists in Washington to get attention from the government.

—Harry Karns

By Dick Zander

Playing the Game

"If you go before I do, please bequeath to me your very thick skin."

Adlai Stevenson made that request of Robert Moses. And the other day at Adelphi University, Assemblyman Moses M. Weinstein (D-Kew Gardens Hills) said Moses recalled the comment on the day of Stevenson's death. Weinstein, a dapper little man, was playing the role of professor of politics. He, too, is a man with a tough skin.

Weinstein is majority leader of the Assembly. He will hold that post until midnight Dec. 31. And it's anticipated that he will be named to the same position next year by Assembly Speaker Anthony Travia. Weinstein, however, insists he hasn't discussed the leadership with Travia.

Weinstein probably will be chosen to succeed himself primarily because state Democrats are attempting to put on the face of unity for the new year. It sure was different when the last session of the Democratic-controlled Legislature convened. Weinstein, who is also Queens Democratic chairman, stood firm with Mayor Wagner's forces and favored the election of Travia as speaker over Assemblyman Stanley Steingut, the Brooklyn Democratic leader. Steingut and Sen. Jack Bronston (D-Jamaica) were backed by supporters of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. But Travia and Senate Majority Leader Joseph Zaretzki (D-Manhattan) were elected when Republican legislators gave them their votes.

Travia and Zaretzki, who will be Senate minority leader in the 1966 session, were reelected unanimously last week—and there wasn't a peep out of those supporters of Kennedy, who like all politicians have long memories. If there is a move against Weinstein, the source might well be Frank O'Connor, the president-elect of the New York City Council. O'Connor's election not only boosted him into the position of being a frontrunner for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, but it also makes him a key political power in Queens, which now is in Weinstein's hands.

Weinstein, 43, has a tough skin. "You know, this has not been a career of victory for me," he told a group



Dick Zander

of Young Democrats at Adelphi. He pictured himself as a loser who tried, tried again until he got on the winning track. He became involved in politics for the first time in 1953 as part of a citizens group for John T. (Pat) Clancy, now Queens surrogate. He supported Clancy in a Democratic primary for Queens Borough president, Clancy lost. Weinstein worked in other unsuccessful campaigns, doing everything from writing campaign literature to handing it out on the street corners. His first taste of victory came in 1958 when he was elected to the Assembly.

"I was no longer a politician. I was a legislator." No sooner was he a legislator than he got deeper into politics. He is also a lawyer. In 1961 he was elected a district leader. In 1962, he recalled, "I tried to become a candidate for Congress. I was defeated." The nomination went to Ben Rosenthal. "I had my heart set on being a congressman," Weinstein said. After losing the bid for the Democratic congressional nomination, Weinstein went on to be elected county Democratic chairman that year. That was the year O'Connor was seeking the party's gubernatorial nomination.

Reports of bitter feeling between O'Connor and Weinstein stem from the party's 1962 convention. Queens was split between O'Connor, the county's district attorney, and Mayor Wagner's candidate, Robert M. Morgenthau. Morgenthau won the nomination and lost the election to Gov. Rockefeller.

Can't Be Neutral

"I didn't want to get into the boiling cauldron of politics," he said. "I thought it was a dirty game, and I thought I was too sensitive for it." But once he became involved through the Clancy campaign he was bitten by the bug. "This," he said, "was the greatest game in the world—politics." He urged the university students to become more involved and active in politics. "You can't be neutral today," he said.

During the course of his lecture, Weinstein said: "I hope someday somebody will tell the true story about the leadership hassle (of last session)." Later, when he was asked to elaborate, the Assembly majority leader said he had made the statement facetiously and had nothing to add to the widely publicized fight. In this time of attempted unity, the response came from a man who has developed a tough skin by playing the game.

Heads and Tales By Jack Altshul

Model Family Man

Even a bad guy can rate a good word in this space come Christmas time and to prove it we're going to tell you about Sonny Franzese—family man. In case you've missed his press notices, Sonny is a racketeer reputed to control shylocking, gambling and other nefarious practices on Long Island. Naturally this reputation makes him a prime customer for detectives from the Nassau and Suffolk Intelligence Squads and they spend much of their time keeping him under surveillance. So you might say Sonny is used to the appearance of strangers in his neighborhood, which happens to be in a nice section of Roslyn. The other day he pulled out of his driveway with wife and child in the car and a photographer came out of the bushes clicking his shutter. Sonny waved a finger at him and drove away, returning in about an hour. But he took the precaution of evacuating his wife and child at the corner and when he saw the photographer still waiting, said to him, "I don't mind if you creeps take my picture, but why do you have to involve my family?"



Jack Altshul

The photographer explained that all he wanted was a shot of Sonny and that he couldn't have possibly gotten his passengers through the auto window. Thus mollified, Sonny walked back to where the family waited and they followed him home at a good distance. And Franzese, showing his appreciation, struck several good poses as he got into camera range. So when a racketeer shows his good side, as you see, he can always get a good review here.

The foregoing demonstrates the hazards of taking pictures on the fly. There are nice little warm things that happen to photographers, too. Like what took place on closing night at the Metropolitan Opera House to Newsday cameraman Dick Morseman. He was snapping away at the white-tied and ermined celebrities when a striking woman tapped at his shoulder. "Would you mind very much," she said, "loaning me two cigarets, one for me and one for the wife of the French ambassador." Morseman offered her a pack, but she settled for four cigarets, explaining she'd save two for intermission. And the other day, Dick, who had given the lady his name and the

paper for which he worked, was in receipt of a carton of cigarets—Christmas wrapped. The card with accompanying message of gratitude for his wealth-sharing was signed "Happy Rockefeller." . . . Mary Pangalos, who once asked me what celebrities were like and went from a Newsday reporting job to the WCBS-TV news staff where she interviews them every day, becomes a bride on Sunday. Her new partner is Jim Manilla, a TV film director.

Twelve-year-old Michael Indrigo, a carrier boy, was knocked off his bike by an auto on Route 25-A, Kings Park, the other day and when Tom Teigue, who owns the Executive House near the scene of the accident, ran to help him, the boy kept repeating: "Please see that my papers are delivered." Later, Michael grieved that now he'd lose out on the Christmas tips he needed to buy presents. He won't have to worry about that, although he'll be in the hospital for a while with a fractured hip and leg. Teigue's customers have been filling a bar jug for the "Michael Fund" and it's almost up to \$100.

Alfred J. DeFeo has been in politics long enough to know that the patronage system is no respecter of the Christmas season. But it hurt like hell, anyhow, when he was forced to resign the other day after 28 years in the Nassau sheriff's office. DeFeo is 65 years old and was a Republican committeeman for 27 years in Port Washington. Last year when the late Tom Dugan, a Democrat, was elected, DeFeo resigned as committeeman and kept his job. He needed only a year and three months more to be eligible for a 30-year pension. But he was told early this month that it would be better if he resigned because of his age. This despite the fact that last January he had been promoted to the job of deputy to the supervisor of the field unit. That meant at 64, DeFeo's experience was respected in the difficult job of evicting people, repossessing cars and putting garnishees on salaries. At 65, DeFeo was no longer needed and what burns him up most of all is that last November he worked hard and long for the election of the new Democratic sheriff, Joe Maher . . . Ed Poulos, the Republican majority leader of the Oyster Bay Town Board, was greeted by Presiding Supervisor Mike Petito at a board meeting the other day after returning from a two-week tour of NATO defenses as an Air Force Reserve officer. Poulos reminded Petito he had sent him a card from behind the Iron Curtain which read, "Wish you were here."