

I Enjoyed His Second Childhood Immensely

They say a hat makes the man. Grandpa probably would say that a hat (as well as a suit) is like a man and likes to step out once in a while (pretty girl or no pretty girl). One of my favorite parts of Meet Me in St. Louis was the enormous array of wonderful hats I got to wear as Grandpa Prophater. I pick out most of them from the costume room at the Huber and one was brought by the producer. Grandpa went from a genuine Shriner's fez with tassel and all kinds of bells and whistles to a Holmesian deerstalker cap on Halloween to a huge Admiral's hat and one more that I will expound upon in a moment. There were a few plain, ordinary hats that were just not wild enough. There were only two scenes in which Grandpa was not seen wearing one: a dinner scene with the family and the Christmas Ball (although I thought the old Civil War vet would have looked smashing in a top hat with his old tuxedo he had gotten out of mothballs).

The Admiral's hat presented a few problems as I began to learn how to wear it. I thought it should be worn "sideways" with the ends at the sides. Then, I had it on backwards with the tailfeather hanging over my face. Finally, I got it right amidst thunderous applause. The first time I rehearsed with it, the entire cast had to stop the scene from laughing. I was told that I looked like Cap'n Crunch which was where I got the inspiration to wear the cap sideways. I also had to be careful entering during the very serious scene as the audience roared as I snuck in through the kitchen door after performing Grandpa's favorite pastime: eavesdropping.

The deerstalker was my idea. It added a nice touch to the Halloween excitement of egging on "Agnes" and "Tootie" in their quest to throw flour into the faces of evil cat poisoners and other monsters. It also helped in discovering

the truth behind the mysterious injury to Tootie's lip.

I had discovered a fez in my combing of the costume department. However, a much better one was found complete with medallion to wear around my neck and handy pouch to store them in. I felt like I should be in the Shriner's Convention scene in *Bye, Bye Birdie* or the Grand Poobah of the Loyal Order of Waterbuffalo.

My next to final costume was by far the most challenging, but one of the most entertaining. The family is awakened EARLY by Mr. Smith on Christmas morning. I KNEW Grandpa had to have a memorable outfit for sleeping. I knew exactly what I wanted. The turquoise robe was already there. The costume mistress took my measurements for a long nightshirt and the *piece de resistance*: a wonderful multi-colored, tassled nightcap. I loved it. After the scene, not so much. I had to make the fastest change I have ever made into my summer outfit for the World's Fair. The hardest part of the role. At one of the dress rehearsals, I came out clutching the night shirt and made everyone think I was Linus from the Peanuts comic strip. Thankfully, I was able to devise a scheme to change quicker.

I think this will be my final post for *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Each production I have ever been in has been different than the last. Each performance of every production I have been in has been different than the last (for better or worse) but that is the beauty of live theatre. Everyone involved has to be on their toes and at their best. That is one of the many things I will always cherish about it.

To those who made a trip to St. Louis, I hope you had a great ride. To those who could not, my apologies. I hope that one was surely watching from above saw me continue to grow. There are better shows out there but I think big, happy, family-friendly shows need to be done if not only as an escape from today's troubling reality.