

A Night at the Pops

by Richard Craft

One of the more positive actions taken by the *Ellenville School* in the past few years, was the creation of the *High School Performing Arts Academy*. Since that time, there has been a steady maturing of their students in drama, instrumental music, and vocal performances.

As a result of hard work, and dedicated teachers, this year's performance of "Arsenic and Old Lace" was a smashing success. It was also good to see the involvement of parents, as they assisted in a myriad of ways. Not to rest on their laurels, the *PAA* followed right up with the *Annual Pops Concert*, always a crowd-pleaser.

As the 150 students filed to the rosters and stage, you could tell you were in for a "fun" evening. The dress was decidedly international in flavor and color. There were Zulu princesses, Roman Senators complete with togas and head garlands. Matching headdresses and gowns were probably from Nigeria and Ghana, as was the unmistakable and authentic Scottish Highlander (he lacked his skeen du, though). There was an inflatable Sumo wrestler and accompanying Geishas, standing alongside the Statue of Liberty and French waitresses. You could tell by how they looked and sang that they were enjoying themselves immensely. Not to be outdone, Choral Director Bob Oehme showed up in authentic Tyrolean get-up, complete with lederhosen.

Not only did the Concert Choir, Women's Chorus, Men's Chorus, and Chamber Singers look good, they sounded good. With selections like *Jailhouse Rock*, *Forever Motown*, *My Guy*, *All You Need Is Love* and others, you could see they were well prepared although it was only two months into the school season. Their attention to the director was absolute as was their voice control and blend, so important in putting over their songs. The audience response was spontaneous and gave the distinct impression that they got the message. All sections performed with balance, blend, and assurance.

One moment stands out as unforgettable. During one of the songs, Jose Valdez came down into the audience and knelt in front of Dale Craft and sang to her. He also crooned "Babe" which brought down the house.

The instrumental side of the concert was no less successful. Once again the Symphonic Band and Jazz Band showed great rapport with their director, Laurie Worden. A good barometer of their desire to play well revealed that they had increased in number by a third in the larger band. Word does get around, even in school, when you're having fun. Selections from Broadway plays, and the movie "Fellowship of the Rings" rounded out their performance. The jazz band concluded the evening with songs like "Crazy Train" and "Spies R Us." I could have listened to more from each group... they were that good. The brass sections were good, as were the woodwinds, and percussion and rhythm areas. True to tradition, a free make-your-own-ice-cream-sundae compliments of *Gillette Creamery* concluded the evening.

The entire tenor of the evening was upbeat. You came away proud of the conduct of the students, the almost flawless performances, the smiles on the faces of the audience, and the word confirming that this indeed was a memorable evening. Most of all were the smiles in the faces and eyes of the students who knew deep in their hearts that they had done a super job.

EHS's Eckdahl to Retire

Ellenville High School principal Jack Eckdahl has taken personal leave effective November 15th, and will retire on March 31, 2005.

Ellenville School Superintendent Lisa Wiles said Mr. Eckdahl cited "personal reasons" for his retirement, but said there have been discussions since the beginning of the school year about his leave and subsequent retirement.

Mr. Eckdahl joined the district in 1999, and has been a popular administrator with faculty, students, and parents. He came to the district from the Batavia City Schools.

According to Mrs. Wiles, Mr. Eckdahl leaves a legacy of innovative programs, including a baccalaureate ceremony honoring student scholarship winners and the businesses, organizations and individuals who sponsor them, implementation of a night school and performing arts academy.

Anthony Rigothi, a retired high school principal from Fallsburg Central School District has been hired as interim principal. An extensive search for a permanent principal is underway.

Under The Christmas Tree

by Elyssa Garcia

On Christmas Eve, I can't wait to see
 What's waiting for me under the Christmas tree.
 I think of surprises I put on my list,
 Of Santa's big sack sitting in cold wintry mist.
 I picture elves working, fixing toys...
 The ones Kris Kringle gives to good girls and boys.
 I can't wait for tomorrow, though Santa's still far,
 To open my presents from the tree with the star!

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