

Annie People



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National Association
Of Fan Clubs

The Newsletter for Annie Fans

No. 24, November 1986

Published by Jon Merrill, Box 431, Cedar Knolls, New Jersey 07927

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Price: Free

Annie People is published every other month in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Publication has been continuous since January 1983.

FORMER ANNIE STARS GATHER ONE MORE TIME FOR FLORIDA PRODUCTION

Currently running at the Burt Reynolds Jupiter Theatre in Jupiter, Florida is a production of Annie whose cast list reads like a Who's Who of past Broadway and National Tour Annie productions:

ALICE GHOSTLEY reprises her role as Miss Hannigan, which she played over 900 times on Broadway; "Daddy" Warbucks is being played by NORWOOD SMITH, who went all the way through the 1st National's run of three and a half years; Broadway's original Rooster, ROBERT FITCH, is Rooster once more, as well as being the choreographer of this production; Grace Farrell is played by JAN PESSANO, who played the same role in the 1st National opposite Norwood Smith; EDWIN BORDO, who played Drake for the entire Pre-Broadway and Broadway runs right from Goodspeed to "2,377" will again play the Warbucks mansion butler; MOOSE, Annie's busiest tour dog these days, began his role as Sandy in the 3rd National and played most recently in the 1986 National Tour. They are joined in the cast by Elliott Reid as FDR, Joanie Burton as Lily, and eight-year-old Lindsey Alley as Annie. Like Lindsey, several of the Orphans have been in local productions of Annie in South Florida: Tara Dickman (Tessie), Dina Dolan (Molly), Christine Duff (Suzie), Jennifer Duff (Kate), Marcey Gilman (Pepper), Jeri McDonnell (July), Wendi Rohan (Duffy).

The production is being directed by Tony Award winner Charles Nelson Reilly and will run through January 11. I hope some of us Annie People will be able to get down to Florida to see what will undoubtedly be a superb production.



Alice Ghostley



Norwood Smith



Robert Fitch



Jan Pessano



Edwin Bordo



Moose



WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SCENE IN ANNIE? (Asked of our readers)

(adult fan) Annie singing "Tomorrow," because it represents what Annie is all about: optimistic, never-say-die, and spunky. No matter what happens to her, she knows that things will work out and get better....(child fan) The Christmas scene at the end when Sandy is unwrapped, because it is the happiest time for Annie....(Nat'l Tour Orphan) Scene when we sang and danced to "Smile," because I enjoyed doing the number every night and hearing the response from the audience....(adult fan) When Warbucks tells Annie that "Something Was Missing," and then they happily agree that "I Don't Need Anything But You," and she finally lets him adopt her. I always get a teary-eyed and a big lump forms in my throat....(local Orphan) The first scene in the Orphanage, because all the kids are on stage together and two of my favorite songs are featured, "Maybe" and "Hard-Knock Life"....(local Annie) "I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here," when she first comes to the Mansion, because she's very amazed and happy....(B'way Orphan) "I Don't Need Anything But You" and "Maybe," because I like the relationship between Annie and Warbucks. I like the opening scene with the Orphans and Annie, because I liked watching the audience distinguish between the Orphans and find out what each kid is like....(adult fan) Scene with FDR, because it's a twist on what Harold Gray would have done....(local Annie) In the movie at the end when the Orphans are all at Annie's party, because everybody is happy and the Orphans are all dressed up. I also like it because of the beautiful fireworks....(adult fan) "Oh, no, officer, he's my dog..." because it's a chance for Annie to act emotionally and realistically....(Nat'l Tour Orphan) The radio scene, because I was Tessie and it was my moment in the sun!....(adult fan) "Tomorrow" and "Easy Street," because I like the way Annie talks to the policeman; she shows a lot of spunk and self-confidence. I like "Easy Street" because I really like the dancing part of it....(Nat'l Tour Orphan) The Christmas scene, because it's joyful and fun, and it makes the audience relieved that everything worked out fine....(adult fan) When Annie comes down the stairs in her traditional outfit, because it's when the show comes together with the original look for Annie....(local Orphan) "Hard-Knock Life," because it's one of my favorite Annie songs and I love the dance steps with the buckets....(adult fan) Right before and including "NYC," because it shows the beginning of the special relationships that are going to develop in the rest of the show; you see Warbucks soften for the first time....(Nat'l Tour/Movie Orphan) "Smile," because I was able to sing solo both in the movie and the play....(adult fan) The street scene when Annie calls and hopes the her stray dog will respond to the name of Sandy, because it's so typical of what a child would do....(teenage fan) Play - when Annie meets Sandy, because it's very touching; Movie - "Hard-Knock Life," because it always gets me involved, and I love the gymnastics....(Nat'l Tour Orphan) The Christmas scene, because I always enjoyed this scene as Molly and Kate. Everyone is happy and the whole cast was in it. The rainbow dresses and the quick change (for the curtain call) were fun....(local Orphan) In the movie when Annie sings "Dumb Dog," because they're both alone then, but you know already that they'll soon be together....(local Warbucks) The Hour of Smiles, because it is a humorous, nostalgic spoof of the era in which the show is set....(adult fan) Just before Act I curtain when Warbucks sings, "What a thing to occur, finding them, losing her..." because it is very touching....(local Orphan) "Fully Dressed," because I loved singing it and dancing it; "Little Girls" because it is just so funny....(adult fan) Warbucks singing "Something Was Missing" to Annie, because it hits the theme of love between the two better than any other....(Nat'l Tour Orphan) The end when Sandy comes out of the box, because Sandy makes the whole show a smash!

Please put me on your mailing list. It was inevitable that Annie People and I would meet! This show haunts me. I'm sure you'll agree there is something about it.

I went to see the original Broadway company in the summer of '77 and stood and cried and cheered with the rest of the audience, but it was especially poignant for me because I had just lost my parents and although I was 31 at the time I was now an orphan like the kids in the show. It touched me so.

In '78 I was doing a nun in The Sound of Music and a little sister of a cast member kept hanging around watching me sketch between scenes. She asked me to draw her a life-sized Annie on cardboard. I did, and it proved her good luck omen, for three weeks later I was painting that same little girl's trunk. Shelle Monahan had made the (1st) National Tour of Annie.

I teach art and one of my students has a real love of theater. We ended up doing a production of Annie. She was July and I was Mrs. Pugh, etc., but when I had to step in as Miss Hannigan a real life student and teacher faced each other on the stage. Although Miss Hannigan's not a teacher, the relationship seems the same. That show ran 16 weeks--still unprecedented for that theater--with Vicky Todd and Roxanne and Mr. Watson from the National Tours. that was '83-'84, and of course in there I went to see a few productions, saw the movie, and got Annie--A Theater Memoir book. But I didn't consider myself an Annie-phile--yet.

In November of '85 a theater friend called and cried "Help! My set designer quit...." You guessed it--pretty soon I was banging together headboards and hanging gold brocade curtains in the Warbucks Mansion.

Finally, last night was my eighth night of filling in for Miss Hannigan--a dream come true--at Three Little Bakers in Delaware. Vicky Todd is back, hasn't grown since the '83 production. I'm a professional ventriloquist and am usually seen as "Molly McCracken" in the Radio scene, as well as other chorus characters. Our Miss Hannigan, Jane Beckman, got sick during the second verse of "Maybe" and I had all of about two minutes to rip off my Hooverville costume, get miked up, wigged and all! The kids didn't even know a different Hannigan was coming out! Moose, alias Sandy, is also with us, and is loved by all. Thanks for coming to see us. I'll follow your paper with great interest.

Ruth Wren
West Chester, PA



Tricia with Bernadette Peters at Broadway's Song and Dance, for which Bernadette won a Tony Award



NESHANIC STATION, NJ - Top row from left, Elizabeth Caldwell, Katie Jung, Elyse Wolf; bottom row from left, Rebecca Davis, Cindy Jung (Annie), Meghan Cibulskis, Holly Buczek

★ Annie Stars Since Annie ... ★

ALICE GHOSTLEY, NORWOOD SMITH, JAN PESSANO, ROBERT FITCH, EDWIN BORDO, and MOOSE are all currently starring in Annie at the Burt Reynolds Jupiter Theatre in Florida until early January (see related story)...MARCIA LEWIS and GARY BEACH are also in Florida this winter; Marcia is in Nonsense and Gary is doing Legends...SARAH JESSICA PARKER will be in the NBC miniseries A Year in the Life, which will air in December...MARTHA BYRNE was nominated for an Emmy Award as Outstanding Ingenue in a Daytime Drama for her role as Lily on As The World Turns on CBS. Look for a feature on Martha in the Christmas issue of McCall's magazine...ANDREA McARDLE did two shows of Peter Pan in Santa Barbara, California in August, substituting for Cathy Rigby. JOHN SCHUCK was Captain Hook in the production, which also played other cities in California. Andrea also appeared in Atlantic City with Buddy Hackett this fall and made an anti-smoking public service announcement with MARTIN CHARNIN. She is also currently becoming interested in writing some original songs to use in her club act...Look for ALLISON HARVEY in the national Apple II computer commercial...APRIL LERMAN will appear in the CBS-TV After-School Special called Little Miss Perfect...ALLISON SMITH appeared at the Connecticut Special Olympics in November and was on the Dick Cavett Show in October. Also, keep watching TV Guide in future weeks for an interview with Allison...MONICA MILLER will play the part of Marcia in the upcoming TV movie, Tall Tales and Legends - The Story of Davy Crockett. Monica will also appear in a Pennsylvania production of The Nutcracker...A new children's showcase called The Star-ettes opened at Gatsby's in Cresskill, New Jersey in November, and on hand for the opening were SUSAN LIPTON, TANI TAYLOR POWERS, and JENNIFER (GOTTESMAN) BLAIRE. Jennifer was Kate in the 4th National and understudied MOLLIE HALL as Annie, and later on played Tessie in the 1983 Guber-Gross tour with ALLISON SMITH. Since then she has appeared on ABC-TV's Ryan's Hope...No doubt many of you saw CAROL BURNETT in her starring role in the CBS miniseries Fresno...MOLLY RINGWALD will make her New York stage debut in Lily Dale, which will open off-Broadway on November 20. She will play the title role, an early 20th century Texan who is reunited with her brother...MARTIN CHARNIN's Jokers, starring Ronny Graham and Kim Hunter, just finished up at Goodspeed's Norma Terris Theatre in Chester, Connecticut...JENNIFER EAST, who has played an Orphan in Annie productions in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, recently starred in a Young People's Special on NBC called The Horrible Secret...ROBYN FINN, Broadway's first Pepper with ANDREA McARDLE, has been on ABC's One Life To Live and was in the CBS TV movie Izzy and Moe with Jackie Gleason. Robyn will be seen next in another TV movie, Sweet Lorraine with Maureen Stapleton...Birthdays: ANDREA McARDLE, 23 on Nov. 5; SANDY, 12 on Nov. 19; KIMI PARKS on Nov. 27; ALLISON SMITH, 17 on Dec. 9; HALLY McGEHEAN, 15 on Dec. 18; ALYSSA MILANO, 14 on Dec. 19; SHERRI LEIDY, 12 on Dec. 26; KRISTI COOMBS, 15 on Dec. 27. Belated greetings to MONICA MILLER, who turned 13 on Oct. 29.



STAR-ETTES - Susan Lipton, Tani Taylor Powers, Jennifer (Gottesman) Blaire



The 4th National's Jennifer Blaire

AP's Exclusive Interview with MARTIN CHARNIN
Creator, Director, and Lyricist for the Broadway Show of Annie

Conducted by Tricia Trozzi on April 30, 1986

PART II

- AP: Now we go to April 21st, 1977. What was that like for you? Were you sitting in the back of the theater biting your fingernails?
- MC: Well, we had hints. April 21st, 1977 was a glitzy night; it was a gorgeous spring night to begin with. It was one of the dressiest openings and biggest openings that had been on Broadway in a couple of years; everybody turned out, a lot of celebrities, a lot of limousines, a lot of traffic control, and a sense around town that something quite special was going on. There's a perception; you know when a hit is in town.
- AP: So, newspapers were there too?
- MC: There were a lot of photographers there, many, many more photographers were there than had been at openings that season. We were the last musical and there had not been a really big smash hit musical [yet]—three musicals opened that week; Side By Side by Sondheim opened on the Tuesday, I Love My Wife—no, one of them opened on a Sunday, one of them opened on a Tuesday and we opened on a Thursday. And I Love My Wife opened and both of them got wonderful reviews, and one apprehension that we had was that the critics were going to be "written-out"—that they would not have any adjectives left. They came over a three-day period of time; I knew opening night at intermission that the [New York] Times was good. I knew that because [Clive] Barnes had been there at the matinee; he'd seen the Wednesday matinee. And the Times was already in bed, so it was being printed Thursday night for Friday. Dave Powers, our press agent, had said to me also the [New York] Post wanted to do a full-page insert spread, which also sounded like whether or not the review was good, there was going to be a lot of noise about it. It was going to make a scene under any circumstances. It ended up being on the front page of the Post. The [New York Daily] News had an enormous picture spread on it. And the columns were breathtaking; Earl Wilson was fabulous, Liz Smith was fabulous; the first review that we got was the only bad review that I remember. 11:00 Stuart Klein came on Channel 5 [WNEW, local New York]—
- AP: I think he hates everything!
- MC: —and didn't like it, and it was very deflating. And from there on everything else was tremendous. We went to Channel 2 [CBS], who was next, Pat Collins was in, and she was a rave, and then Pia Lindstrom [Channel 4, NBC] was in and she was a rave, and I don't remember who was doing Channel 7 [ABC], but it was a rave also.
- AP: Out of all two hours and some odd minutes of Annie, what is your personal favorite moment in the show? Do you have one, first of all, or is that impossible?
- MC: Yeah, I have a lot of favorite moments, but I think the moment where the whole thing comes together and has the most effect on me is where Warbucks in the last scene says, "I love you, Annie Bennett," and she says, "I love you too," because that's what the whole musical is about. And if that moment affects me and I sense that same effect in the audience, then I know the evening has worked. I love all of the jokes and I love all of the humor and I love all of the laughs and I love all of the craziness and I love all of the craft of it, but that's my favorite moment.
- AP: I think I could have guessed that, now, from talking to you, because that's the most real and the most human for them.
- MC: That's right.
- AP: I like that a lot too, especially if it's done well. I only saw Broadway two times, so most of what I've seen are local productions, so when I see it done right, I think, "Ohhh, good!"
- MC: There's a great sense of relief that comes over you which means that, as bad as it may be, as incorrect, as off-center as it may be, if that moment works, then the musical somewhere has been on track, has gotten back on the line, and if they buy that, then I feel the evening has been satisfactory.
- AP: How about your reaction to the seven Tony awards and the numerous other awards?
- MC: Well, I think it—every award Annie gets it deserves. It's as simple as that.
- AP: I think so too. Good answer! OK, that'll look good in print! Did you get a lot of letters from people who saw the show? Would they write to you?
- MC: Mostly children. Most of the letters that I got were from kids who wanted to be in the show.
- AP: Oh, really? As in, "Mr. Charnin, could you give me a job?"
- MC: Well, not so much "could you give me a job"—but the next time you have auditions please make sure that they're public and that you let everyone know about them, which indeed we did, I mean, we held many, many open calls. And a lot of the kids that ended up being in the show, both in the road company productions or on Broadway were children who really had very little professional experience. Any number of them simply had talent, and they were seen in the same context as the most super-professional children. So, those were mostly the letters, and occasionally I'd get a letter from an adult who said, "Oh, I was so convinced that I was going to go in and have a terrible time and I resented the fact that I was going to be manipulated and in the end I was howling like a baby and loved it and thank you very much!" There's always been this kind of thing hanging over it, feeling that oh, my God, how can it be anything for adults if it's got children, dogs, Christmas, and it's got the President of the United States—
- AP: Something for everyone!
- MC: I mean, how more obvious can you possibly be? Christmas, dogs, children, Presidents of the United States are all really facts of life; they're not cliches, they are what they are, they have existed for 200 years here in this country, for thousands of years all over the world, one shape or another, so those constants are things not necessarily to be ashamed of at all.
- AP: So most people would write to you and say thank you for doing such an entertaining job; "I remember the strip when I was a child," or something?
- MC: Well, a lot of people—most of the letters that I got from people who had any recollection of the strip, was that they always thought that the strip was too difficult to read, it had too many words in it, and so they were not really fans of it, they were fans of her—I think what they were fans of was her staying power. Eventually, you become a fan of something that is just around a long time. You may not necessarily celebrate it the same way as something that you're really fond of, but you accept and respect it. And I think that was what happened to the strip—that strip was just there a lot. So after a while you take a second, third, and possibly even a fourth look at it.
- AP: During the performances on Broadway, day to day, what was your participation? Were you always directly involved?
- MC: No, I'd watch, but I was always directly involved; a director keeps his show alive by keeping people on their toes. I would go to the show every week at one point or another and mostly the notes [I took] would go to the stage manager, or I'd go to individual performers. I maintained, over a five year, six year period of time, a very healthy, loving relationship with all of these people. My presence in the house always made everybody just work a little harder, a little faster, a little better.
- AP: Sometimes did you surprise them?
- MC: Yes, I'd sneak in every now and then. But the kids were so funny; I remember Allison Smith, for example—I'd walk into the theater and she'd know my cologne. I thought I'd be so clever and come back at the end and say, "A-ha, I gotcha!" and she'd say, "Oh, we knew you were here; I smelled your cologne!" There's an underground in the show, and you can hardly ever sneak in.

AP: I would imagine somebody could say, "he's here tonight, we'd better not mess up, don't make any mistakes." OK, so then there were brush-up rehearsals?

MC: There were always brush-up rehearsals; there were under-study rehearsals, there were rehearsals when an individual actor would come in. So the show was a living, breathing thing; it didn't become sedentary by any stretch of the imagination; it was always being worked on. And I must say the company wanted very much to maintain it, so when there's internal maintenance, there doesn't have to be as much external maintenance. When you get a lazy company and they don't want to keep the show up, then you have to come in and browbeat them a little bit. So they wanted to work hard—but we also had another thing which was we had children who were always being replaced, I mean, they were outgrowing roles, so with adults you weren't doing that. We were running—the average lifespan I guess was about six and a half or seven months in a show, with possibly one or two exceptions. So a new kid would be going in and that would affect the Hannigan, and that would affect the Annie, and that would affect the last scene, so there were rehearsals going on pretty often.

AP: How did those rehearsals work, were they in the mornings?

MC: No, they were usually in the afternoon. The children would have school in the morning unless it was the summer-time. The rehearsals would be in the afternoon, they would go from one to four or something like that, and then they'd do a show.

AP: How was it when you had to replace the adults? Did some adults say, "I got an offer to go be in a movie" or something?

MC: Some of the adults left to go on to other things; some of the adults were with us from *Goodspeed* to the end. Ray Thorne was there from *Goodspeed* to closing night on Broadway as was Ed Bordo. Some of the actors went on to bigger and better roles; Laurie Beechman certainly graduated to very significant roles. Some of them went to California to do movies, occasionally an actor would be replaced—his contract would not be renewed at the end of the time because the performance maybe got stale, or there was some emotional problem in terms of why they didn't want to continue. I mean, I don't think it was any better, worse, or different from any other show that's ever been on Broadway.

AP: You never felt like you wanted to replace people, it was more like their choice?

MC: No, on occasion I felt I wanted to replace people, and on occasion I did replace people. By replace, meaning simply did not renew contract and in a couple of instances some people were let go because they were not doing the job that I believed that they had to do. And the only person who really knew it on a day-to-day basis were the stage managers and me. And so I took it upon myself to at one time do a major housecleaning—not without warning and certainly not without the total agreement of all the other collaborators who were in a position to hire and fire people. And the producers, I might add—I say I did it; I did not do it alone; there is no such thing as that kind of—

AP: It's kind of like a committee?

MC: Well, it's very much a committee; I mean, everybody has a vote and everybody has a right and everybody has a responsibility. But somebody has to go in and say, "Look at that actor; that actor is not really working up to full speed, and I think that actor should be given a warning and then that actor should be given another chance and then that actor has to be talked to and then"—I mean, you can just go so far and then you finally have to turn around and say, "I'm sorry, but that actor has to be replaced because that actor is affecting—that wheel in the machinery is just not running."

AP: Yes, you have to maintain the integrity of the show—

MC: That's right. You have another responsibility. Charging people \$30 a ticket, at that time it was \$30, whatever it was, \$27.50, \$35 a ticket, that's a responsibility. And word of mouth travels very, very quickly. I had to maintain the dignity, the importance, the significance, the hit status from day 1 that we opened and we were called what we were called until day 2,377 when we closed.

AP: So it was mostly through rehearsals that you kept the show fresh?

MC: Through rehearsals and through other means—conferences, and there were discussions, and there were other things that they did; they kept fresh by having other things to do.

AP: Like little bits of business would change as actors changed?

MC: All the time, all the time. Business was—the distinction between all of the companies, the script in effect stayed the same, but company to company to company. I mean, even in a single company where two new actors would come in, they would be serviced in a whole other way; sometimes an orchestration would even get changed, a harmony would get changed. We attempted in each and every instance to make each one of those people feel special, unique—not at the expense of the material, never at the expense of the show. There were boundaries inside the play—it could be stretched like a balloon just so far. If it burst, you had to bring it back. But business would change all the time.

AP: So, an actor would come in and do something?

MC: Or I'd reblock something. I'd reblock a scene just for the sake of keeping it interesting.

AP: And that would help the whole show?

MC: It would help the entire show. You put an actor on the left side of the table as opposed to the right side of the table after he's been on the right side of the table for 1,500 performances, all of a sudden everybody is going to perk up and start looking for—why is he there, what's going on.

AP: I would see how that would change it. You were also changing theaters, though, I remember you said "the touring company that toured New York"—

MC: That's right.

AP: Now, some of the people I've talked to that worked in the Uris [now called the Gershwin], say they hated the Uris, keep complaining that it was the worst house. Now, do you feel the same way?

MC: The Alvin [now called the Neil Simon] was the best house because it was home base to begin with, it was what the show was built for, it was designed for the Alvin; the accommodations were never made to enlarge it. In the Uris it had to get bigger as opposed to the Uris closing in. Annie was always an intimate show; it's always worked better smaller than bigger. And the theater sometimes can really be oppressive—the Uris is a very big house. And it's a house for an extravaganza—like Singing in the Rain, like Sweeney Todd; Annie was not that, Annie was a very intimate little show.

AP: So did you feel that maybe part of the intimacy of the show was compromised because you had to be in a large theater?

MC: Very much so; of course it was compromised.

AP: Like people sitting eight miles away—

MC: Well, they couldn't see what was going on, and the actors' impulse at that point is to become bigger in order to reach the back of the house, and that begins to destroy and corrupt the fabric of the show, which is not a big show, it's not broad.

AP: Then they could kind of get a little hazy?

MC: And it would get—well, hazy is not the word—it would get excessive, and when it became excessive you'd have to go in and correct it.

AP: But you would've preferred that it had stayed in one theater the whole run?

MC: Oh, absolutely. I mean, it should have stayed in the Alvin, and if it had stayed in the Alvin, theoretically it could still be here today.

AP: The producers made it move, or—?

MC: Well, there were a lot of politics attached to that; I'm not privy to a lot of that information, and at this point I don't even want to speculate on it. But shows move rarely for the given reason; there's a lot of subtext—as to the "why," we'll never know.

AP: So, also for the decision to close the show--?

MC: The decision to close the show was not a decision that anybody reached lightly. If you want to count performances, we had five companies out there and one in London and 22 all over the world in 12 different languages--and you eventually run out of people. It's not like we didn't get a good run out of it. The decision to close the show was simply rooted in the fact that it hit a slump. If we could have gotten through '83, '84 would have brought a new generation; it would have been seven years later and '84 would have brought a new generation. So, we'll just have to revive it.

AP: Good idea! OK, so how did you feel personally when everybody sat down and said, "Well, we gotta close this thing." Were you--

MC: Devastated.

AP: This is like your baby here; "No, you can't close my show," right?

MC: Well, there were other extenuating circumstances. The movie had opened. The movie really began to eat into the business. Whether it was good, bad, or indifferent is not even the point; the fact was the option you had when you looked in the newspaper was that you could either go to the theater for \$28 or you could go to the movie for \$5; now economically it simply made more sense--and Annie never sold pairs of seats; you sold five tickets, three tickets, nine tickets, you were always schlepping families. So the choice was you take six people at \$5 a pop or you take six people at \$20 a pop. Now that's a big decision. And in many places on the road they would put the movie on across the street from the show--and they'd sell the movie at a dollar off their normal rate, and the show would be playing in the evenings and the movie would be playing in the afternoons at reduced prices.

AP: So each one was trying to get the business.

MC: That's right. And on top of that the national companies were also a factor. What you begin to count on in your fourth and fifth and sixth year in New York is not the New York audience anymore; you've run out of them. You're counting on people who are coming in from Memphis and Pittsburgh and Toledo and Akron and wherever. Now those people had all seem it because we had had all those companies out there. So, Annie was not new information when you came in. And at that time a couple of other shows had opened and were relatively noisy successes, so they were the things to go and see.

AP: So do you think maybe it would it have been better not to send out four national tours all at the same time like that?

MC: One less. One less I think would have kept us going--

AP: Through '83, and then you would have had it through '84. You were close, right? So was the closing night difficult to organize?

MC: Well, it was hard only in terms of the sadness attached to the underlying desire to do it, but it was pulled off--Janice Steele was responsible for putting together the evening, and the evening was an enormous event at Magique [diaco in New York City]--

AP: I didn't get to go!

MC: --and there were a couple of thousand people there, all of whom had in one way or another been a part of the show.

AP: I didn't get to go to Magique. Jon was there but I wasn't there, because I was only 17 and I had to go to school the next day.

MC: Oh, dear!

AP: I was there with a friend at the final show, and he was 17 too, and I said, "If we go to this party and I come home at, like, 4:00 in the morning, my mother is going to make me sleep with my teeth outside of my mouth!" So I couldn't go, so I said, "Jon, you tell me all about it." I had just met him. I don't know if you knew this is how we met--we met at the stage door of the Uris getting autographs and we were like--"Oh, gee, you like Annie too? Wow." I did not know, honestly, that there were any other Annie fans outside of my little place in, just think, New Jersey. So, then we said we'd be pen pals, and then we said, "Well, wait a minute. There's no Annie fan club or anything, so why don't we start it." And that's how we started Annie People.

MC: That's terrific!

AP: So, that night was just as big for the fans as it was for the performers.

MC: You'll come to the opening night party of the sequel--

AP: Oh, good! I can get into that one; I'm 21 now, you can let me in! So, the closing night speech was so moving, I was crying like anything; oh, it was so sad! I imagine the whole thing was orchestrated--

MC: Well, we did have to pick out exactly what was going to be done, I mean, it had been so professionally handled; it wasn't going to sink; it was gallantly going to go into the water--

AP: It was on all the news channels, and I think Sophisticated Ladies closed the same night--

MC: Something else closed that night--[Annie] was on the front page of the New York Times, pictures of the five kids, which is the first time in the history of the theater that a closing night made the front page of the New York Times. I don't even know if opening nights had ever made the front page of the New York Times--but a closing night photograph of all those children was quite an extraordinary celebration of how really important and how significant Annie had been. The thing that was hurting me the most was the concept of it not being on Broadway after having been there for six years. That's what was just mind-boggling, that it was not there. It closed on a Sunday--the next day, Monday morning, the sign over the Palace Theatre had been purchased by somebody else, and they started to paint over that sign, so that even the remnants of it were gone.

AP: I know; I remember that huge thing over the Palace. Collectors think of ways to climb up there in the middle of the night and peel it down--it's something I would do, probably--go up there with a little razor blade and take it down! So you had the whole optimistic thing; was that a conscious idea to have, "Let's write Annie--TWO!"?

MC: We talked about doing Annie II, and I thought that orchestrating the moment would indeed be the right way to give everybody who was hysterical and weeping something to hold on to, and indeed, we had talked about Annie II in 1981--we had talked about Annie II when the movie came out.

AP: Oh! That far back you had already thought--?

MC: That far back. Yes.

AP #25 will contain the third and final installment
of the Martin Charnin interview -- Don't miss it!

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No additional news on Annie II at this time; as of last spring when we had the interview with Martin Charnin, plans were to open it on Broadway on April 21, 1987, with a probable earlier pre-Broadway run somewhere else, such as at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. We at AP haven't heard anything yet as to auditions and casting, but if you and your managers/agents keep your eyes on Backstage, you will undoubtedly hear about auditions before we do. Good luck!

The letter to the New York Daily News which appeared in the last issue of AP caused quite an uproar among Annie strip readers in New York. Here is the complete series of letters (even your editor got into the act) relating to Annie's leaving Sandy behind after the pirate ship blew up. Lately we learned that the ship reportedly was not destroyed, and although we still do not know the whereabouts of Annie's faithful friend, don't give up hope yet.

The Sandy saga

Cedar Knolls, N.J.: Voicer Cathy Knett has expressed dismay that Little Orphan Annie seems to have forgotten all about her faithful dog Sandy, now that she is marooned on an island. Having followed Annie's adventures for years, I am sure this situation is temporary and that Annie will come around. Remember a few years ago when Sandy was taken by dognappers for medical experiments? A whole story centered around Annie's diligent search for him. Never fear. Sandy made his first appearance in the strip on Jan. 5, 1925: Annie's not going to desert him now. But let's get her off that island first.

Jon Merrill

Arf 'n' Annie

Glendale: I am thoroughly disgusted with Little Orphan Annie for leaving her dog, Sandy, locked up on a ship that exploded and presumably sank while she took off to save her own hide. Worse than that, she hasn't shed one tear or even mentioned Sandy since. Shame on you, Annie! After all these years, how could you do that to him? Just for that, I hope the pirates get you, and that Sandy is rescued by a kind and loving family. *Cathy Knett*

Don't waste your worry, folks

Long Island City: All you Annie fans can stop worrying about Sandy. It's all a bad dream. One of these mornings Annie will open the shower door and Sandy will say, "Arf Morning." *Mary Kuntz*

What Sandy wants

Manhattan: In response to Voicer Cathy Knett condemning Annie for abandoning Sandy on a sinking ship: Please be advised it is in the best interest of a young girl to save her own life, not a pet dog. This is a good example for children that their own health and safety is primary in today's dangerous society. Sure, we all hope Sandy is okay—but if not, I'm sure Sandy would not want it any other way.

Elliot Nesser

Annie, how could you!

Manhattan: With reference to the disappearance of Sandy in "Annie," I was disgusted by Voicer Elliott Nesser's cavalier attitude toward the life of a poor, defenseless dog. Unfortunately, there are many others like him, and there will be more if children are taught to care only for themselves.

Shella Richardson

Looking for Mr. Wright

Eastchester, N.Y.: To you people concerned about Annie's leaving Sandy on the high seas: Don't worry. Sandy will be back. But, how about Winnie Winkle's husband, Will Wright? He was *murdered* by his brother Orville, and so far Orville has not been caught and punished. Justice *must* be done—even in the comic strips. Let's get him! *N. Bottari*

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