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The Ridgefield Times

The Official Newspaper serving the people of the Borough of Ridgefield, New Jersey

DECEMBER 2006

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Happy Holidays and Happy New Year, from the *Ridgefield Times*!

In conjunction with Ridgefield UNICO, the Borough held its 19th annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on Wednesday, December 6, 2006 at Christopher Columbus Park, featuring the Slocum School 4th Grade Chorus and the Ridgefield Brass Ensemble. Hot chocolate and cookies were served at the #3 Fire Department (Shaler Blvd.) after the ceremony.

Then on Thursday, December 14, Santa Claus telephoned a number of Ridgefield children in Pre-K through 2nd Grade, before visiting Ridgefield himself on Sunday, December 17 at the Community Center. All children present received a free gift from Santa

and candy. There was also a holiday-themed puppet show after Santa's visit.

Despite his very busy schedule as the holidays approached, Santa *still* managed to take a street-by-street tour of our town, courtesy of the Ridgefield Fire Department!

Finally, on Monday, December 18, the Recreation Commission drove around town and awarded gift certificates, donated by local businesses, to the best decorated homes (*see photos in this edition*).

We at the *Ridgefield Times* would like to wish everyone Happy Holidays, and a very Happy New Year!



The Mayor's Message - Mayor Anthony R. Suarez



New Jersey State Senator Loretta Weinberg was the recipient of an award honoring her for her efforts in the field of health. Pictured above from left to right: Ridgefield Health Officer Jad Mihalinec, Senator Weinberg, Palisades Park Mayor James Rotundo, and our Mayor Anthony Suarez.

I am first writing to wish you and all the families of Ridgefield a happy and healthy holiday season, and a joyous and prosperous new year.

Now that the 2006 election is over, I would like you to all know that I intend to continue working to the best of my ability at improving the quality of life for all residents of Ridgefield, both young and old. I will work with the new Republican majority on the Council to move the Borough forward and to address a variety of issues that

we face in the new year.

As you are aware, this past election brought to the Council two new members, and I personally contacted these men to congratulate them and to wish them the best of luck as they endeavor to put together an agenda that, in their opinion, will benefit the members of the Ridgefield community. I admire them for all they and the other candidates endured this past year, that is, to go through a time consuming election process which is

stressful and not always pleasant.

Most of you, like my own family, may think that people who run for elected office are crazy for going through the election process to obtain a position that is a seven day a week, twenty four hour a day, three hundred sixty five day a year job, taking time away from your loved ones, and personal privacy. However, I believe that the present and future members of the Mayor and Council believe that we do this for the right reasons, to improve the town we live in and to make life better for the future of our children. As I always say, we may not always have the same ideas but our objectives are always the same, to make Ridgefield a better place to live, work, and raise our families.

With that being said, let me inform you about our Borough's Mayor and Council form of government. The Council is composed of six Councilpersons and one Mayor. With the composition of the Council next year being four Republicans and two Democrats, the new majority will be, in effect, running all of the town's

departments, except for the schools which is solely run by the elected Board of Education. The new majority will be passing laws, setting the budget, and hiring all new employees, including appointed members of your volunteer boards. In fact, as Mayor, I do not get to vote on anything brought before the governing body, even the budget unless there is a three to three tie vote. In fact, I have not voted on a budget since taking office as Mayor in 2004.

As Mayor, the major function I am able to perform besides chairing the bi-monthly Mayor and Council meetings is to appoint a majority of the members of the Planning Board. In the new year, I intend to appoint members to the Planning Board who will continue to control development in the Borough. I also intend to have the Planning Board appoint a sub-committee on the Pfister Chemical Company redevelopment which will work with the newly appointed redeveloper before plans are submitted for approval to the Planning Board. Pursuant to the sub-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

The Mayor's Message (continued)

committee's recommendations, the Planning Board will dictate the terms and conditions of the redevelopment project, including our concerns regarding traffic, the effect of redevelopment on our schools, and the maximization of recreational space in the new project.

Since the redevelopment project is still in its infancy, much still needs to be done to ensure the residents of Ridgefield get the benefit of the bargain with respect to this new and exciting undertaking. Contrary to some rumors that are being circulated, plans have not been submitted or approved with respect to the area in need of redevelopment, and a developer's agreement has not even been signed. Therefore, you will see what is being proposed before any final approvals and you will be able to give us your ideas as to what you would like to see at the site prior to that time.

I personally intend to have all issues addressed which involve give-backs to the community for items such as emergency equipment, board of education concerns, and transportation. If you have any personal concerns regarding this project please contact me directly and let me know what's on your mind. I will gladly schedule a one on one meeting and go over the project with you to provide all of the information that I have with respect to the status of the project and its future course.

With respect to the fiscal year budget, I am happy to say that we are the recipient of \$200,000.00 from the State of New Jersey for extraordinary aid. This is the fifth year in a row that the Borough has been able to obtain

state aid, which goes directly toward taxpayer relief. I am happy to say that we have consistently been able to obtain this relief, which is not a loan, so long as I have been a member of the majority on the Council, and Mayor.

Senator Coniglio and Assemblypersons Voss and Gordon certainly have helped the municipality in this regard along with Governor Corzine and Community Affairs Commissioner Susan Bass Levin. In fact, Ridgefield has now received well over one million dollars in tax relief from the State of New Jersey since 2002. State aid is something that is vital to keeping taxes stable in Ridgefield, and I would like you to all know that year in and year out, I personally meet with the Commissioner of Community Affairs to plead our case for state aid, and have been successful in this regard, since the Borough never received state aid in its history prior to 2002.

As of this writing the governing body has not adopted the budget, however, we will do so prior to the end of the year. I intend to advocate a position that will trim the present proposed budget, and with the state aid added to our revenue, balance the numbers so that for the second year in a row we are not the subject of a tax increase from the municipal side of the budget. Since the mandatory revaluation of several years ago, which caused taxes to significantly increase, I believe that a tax increase should be avoided if fiscally possible, and in a responsible way. This is what I will be telling the members of the Council and the Finance Committee.

I am also going to appoint a Mayor's advisory committee on senior

housing this month, in hopes of coming up with a solution to the many issues our seniors face because of an increased standard of living and fixed incomes. Some of you may be aware of a project that has been proposed for Broad Avenue which will be an upscale 55 year and older building containing market rate units. That is a private project by a private builder, on his own property. It is not what would be termed "affordable senior housing".

I will put together a proposal for affordable senior housing in the coming year and work with our seniors directly to get their ideas and concerns, over and above what I already know, and see if the council would be in favor of the proposal. As a member of the Bergen County Housing Authority, I have been acquiring knowledge as to the type of senior housing we can build in Ridgefield, and what needs to be done to set up a project that takes into account income and affordability. I would like to bring this type of project to the Borough. My initial plan, which would have called for one location to provide affordable senior housing and another to provide market rate senior housing, was not accepted by the majority of the members of the Council. It would also have included plans for a new borough hall. At this point I will continue to work at bringing an affordable senior housing project to the municipality.

As for grants in the new year, I am happy to say that with the assistance of Senator Coniglio and Roberta Stern, our Borough Administrator, I have been able to secure \$150,000.00 for the repaving and refurbishing of Art Lane, which is badly in need of repair.

This money will help considerably since the Borough would have been responsible for funding the project with local taxpayer money had we not been able to secure the grant from the State of New Jersey.

Also, as I previously discussed in a prior edition of the *Ridgefield Times*, this month we will be the recipient of a \$100,000.00 grant from the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, which I will recommend to be used for the purchase of a new rescue truck for the Fire Department. The present rescue truck is in poor condition and is a safety hazard for our volunteer firefighters, long overdue for replacement.

Finally, before the end of the year, the municipal building committee of the Mayor and Council is to select an architect for a new Borough Hall, which is mandated by court order that was entered into by the prior administration. This project is long overdue, and while my prior proposal has not been accepted by the majority of the Council, I am hopeful that the Council will put on the table a new proposal before the end of the year, so that work can commence early next year on the project.

With all of that being said, I again wish you the best in 2007. I also hope that the new majority is able to address all of the issues that they discussed in the past year's election. I will do my best to continue to assist and help in this regard. Thank you again for electing me Mayor, which, through its ups and downs, is still the most rewarding job that I have ever held. God bless you and your families.

The Ridgefield Times

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SUBMISSIONS: The *Ridgefield Times* welcomes relevant submissions from Borough residents. Please submit only Ridgefield-related events or feature stories. Items chosen for publication may be edited for length and/or content. Submissions should be e-mailed to staff@DeMarcoCommunications.com, or faxed or mailed to the above address.

ADVERTISING: The *Ridgefield Times* accepts advertising from local Ridgefield-area businesses. Please contact DeMarco Communications at 201-585-0500 or staff@DeMarcoCommunications.com.

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Ridgefield Housing Rehabilitation Program

In order to insure that the Borough's lower income homeowners are able to maintain their homes in a safe, energy efficient condition, the Ridgefield Borough Housing Rehabilitation Program provides up to \$16,000 for home improvements to low income, single family homeowners. The funds are provided in the form of a 0%, deferred payment loan that is repaid only when the house is sold or title transferred. Loans can be used for repair or replacement of roofs and gutters, furnaces, plumbing, doors and windows, electrical systems, painting or siding, structural problems, etc.

If you think you are eligible for this program, please fill out the below application and mail or bring it in to Borough Hall. The Housing Rehabilitation Coordinator will contact you soon

afterwards to let you know the status of your application and your rank on the waiting list. Applicants will be helped on a first come, first served basis.

By helping to maintain the quality of the Borough housing stock, you will not only be helping your neighbor, but you will also be helping to preserve everyone's property values.

For more information, contact Steven J. Weinberg, Coordinator, Ridgefield Housing Rehabilitation Program, 201-943-5215 Ext. 381 or 732-390-4745.

RIDGEFIELD HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM

ATTENTION RIDGEFIELD HOMEOWNERS

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LOANS MAY BE USED FOR NECESSARY REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT OF:

+ ROOFS	+ HEATING SYSTEMS
+ WINDOWS	+ ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS
+ PLUMBING	+ PAINTING
+ INSULATION	+ STORM DOORS AND WINDOWS

FAMILIES MUST OWN THEIR HOME (1 or 2 family home) FAMILY INCOME MUST BE WITHIN THESE LIMITS:

Total Persons in Household	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
Maximum Total Income All Adults	\$41,700	\$47,657	\$53,614	\$59,571	\$64,337	\$69,102	\$73,868	\$78,634

Fill out the Preapplication Information below*

and mail it to:	Or call Mr. Weinberg at:
Ridgefield Housing Rehabilitation Program Coordinator Ridgefield Borough Building, 604 Broad Ave. Ridgefield, NJ 07657	201-943-5215 x 381 or 732-390-4745

PREAPPLICATION INFORMATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

Type of home: Single Family Two Family

Total # of persons in my household _____

Name(s) on Deed (1) _____

My Gross Family Income is below the maximum allowable on the chart above. Yes No

Date: _____

Home phone # _____

Work/cell phone # _____

Email: _____

2004 Gross Family Income: \$ _____

(2) _____

*IMPORTANT These home improvement loans will be provided through the Ridgefield Housing Rehabilitation Program, administered by the Borough in accordance with guidelines of the NJ Council on Affordable Housing. Eligibility will be determined by the Borough Housing Rehabilitation Coordinator. 4/05



Above: Santa Claus visited the Ridgefield Community Center on Sunday, December 17. Below: the 3 homes judged the best decorated by the Recreation Commission in the Ridgefield House Decorating Contest on Monday, December 18.



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FEATURE STORY

The Big Band Era

by Joe Shiel

Les Brown started his first band in New York City in 1938. Tag Line: "Les Brown and the Band of Renown"; Theme Song: "Leap Frog"

Les Brown refers to his band as "The Malted Milk Band". If you equate malted milks with leading a relaxed, youthful life, with liking and trusting people, with enjoying what you're doing, with retaining a certain amount of unabashed naiveté, then Les's description is quite accurate.

This band was fun. The guys always seemed to take pride in their music, and for good reason: it was always good music. Maybe it wasn't as startlingly creative as Ellington's or Goodman's or that of some other bands, but it was never music that the men would have any cause to be ashamed of. The arrangements (many of the early ones were written by Les himself) were topnotch, and throughout most of the band's history the playing of them was equally good.

Les's spirit and musicianship pervaded his band. Few leaders have ever been accorded such complete respect by their sidemen.

It's difficult to find a better liked and more respected leader in the entire dance band business than Les Brown. Of course, a healthy personality and an honest character don't make a great leader by themselves. But they help an awful lot when the guy can do other things such as make fine arrangements, rehearse and routine a band intelligently, treat men as they want to be treated, and them impress himself on the public by playing a good clarinet.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE >>

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FEATURE STORY (cont.)

The Big Band Era: Les Brown

continued from previous page

Though there always existed a warm, close relationship among the members of the band, a preoccupation with musical precision prevented an equally close rapport with their audiences. Thus, during its first three or four years, the band made a stronger impact on other musicians than it did on the public.

Organized at Duke University, the band known as the Duke Devils left the college in the spring of 1936 as a complete unit. The men, almost all still undergraduates, spent the summer at Budd Lake, New Jersey, and then, with the exception of two men who returned to school in the fall, took to the road for a year. During the summer of 1937, they played at Playland Casino in Rye, New York. Les recalls that "the guys made twenty-five bucks a week, and I made all of thirty-five. I was pretty green in those days. I remember that the song pluggers used to come up to see me to talk business, but most of the time I'd go off between sets with the guys and play shuffleboard."

The band broke up after Labor Day - the parents of most of the boys decided that their sons should go back to college and get their degrees. So Les moved in with another arranger named Abe Osser, later known as Glenn Osser, and supported himself by writing for Larry Clinton, Isham Jones, Ruby Newmann and Don Bestor.

For the summer season of 1938, Les returned to Budd Lake, fronting a local band which had also served as a road band for Joe Haymes. There he finally noticed a very pretty girl who had hung around the bandstand during the band's engagement two years earlier - noticed her enough to marry her. Les and Claire (Cluny) Brown were one of the most popular and respected couples in the West Coast musical circles.

Meanwhile back at Budd Lake: the romance had been good; the band had been only fair. Les wanted out before the end of the season so he could go with Larry Clinton as chief arranger. But the customers liked Les and his band, so the management wouldn't let him quit.

At the time, RCA Victor had a very shrewd A&R chief named Eli Oberstein, who saw great promise in Brown. (Les had switched from Decca to Victor's subsidiary Bluebird label.) Oberstein convinced Les he should organize a better band and arranged a booking in the Green

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Wolf Creek flood control study update

On Tuesday evening, October 23, 2006, Carl Jenne, PE, Ridgefield Borough Engineer, gave a presentation at the Community Center summarizing the status of the Wolf Creek Flood Control Study that Medina Consultants is undertaking for the Borough. All residents who live along the Creek were sent an invitation to attend the meeting.

New topographic survey mapping, detailed survey of the creek and a comprehensive computer model of the entire length of the creek, have recently been completed. These tasks were required to provide the engineering basis for evaluating potential improvement plans and presenting them to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to obtain the permits that will be needed for construction. The Borough is funding Medina's work through a grant received from the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission.

The section of creek where properties are impacted from flooding and erosion lies entirely in Ridgefield although almost 70% of the land draining to the creek is from outside of Ridgefield (Fort Lee, Palisades Park, Cliffside Park and Fairview). Thirteen bridges cross the creek and restrict the flow.

Flooding and erosion problems differ along the stream based on the slope of the creek channel and slope of the land outside the channel. The lower section, below Broad Avenue, experiences little damage or erosion from flooding and is greatly influenced by tidal flooding from the Meadowlands. Most of the flooding being experienced in Ridgefield occurs in the center section, between Broad Avenue and Edgewater Avenue, where the channel slope is relatively flat and the adjacent land is also flat and highly developed. While there is some flooding in the upper section, above Edgewater Avenue, the primary damage being experienced there is channel and bank erosion resulting from the stream twisting, turning and flowing very fast (due to steeper slopes).

Residents noted that the channel is not being cleaned out the way it used to be nor are trees being removed when they fall down in the area between Slocum Avenue and Elm Street where there are no houses. Mr. Jenne stated that the DPW routinely removes trees identified as having falling across the creek and he would look into trees down in the area mentioned. He also explained that the NJDEP passed regulations a number of years ago which required a permit to do even routine maintenance and cleaning. Ms. Roberta Stern, the Borough Business Administrator, noted that she has been working closely with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission to have them assist the Borough in obtaining these permits and expects that a cleaning will take place next spring (NJDEP does not allow work in stream channels during the winter).

Numerous questions were asked by the residents regarding the type of improvements that would be made and when they would be made. Mr. Jenne stated while detailed design evaluations would be the next step in the study, preliminary analyses indicate that stabilizing the eroding stream banks and modifying/enlarging some of the bridges was appropriate in the upper section while the center section required widening/deepening the stream channel as well as replacement/widening of the

bridges. All improvements would require permits from the NJDEP prior to construction. Permits for the upper area were relatively straightforward, but as additional regulations protecting the environment have been put in place over the years, it becomes more difficult to obtain permits for stream improvements such as what is needed in the center section, especially as the channel needs to be made larger to handle more water. Since much of the channel in this area is already man-made and deteriorating, he expressed optimism that these permits could also be received.

The next phase of the Wolf Creek Flood Control Report, to be completed in the next 2 to 3 months, will present recommendations for specific improvements along the creek including estimated construction costs and an initial priority ranking. Meetings would be held with NJDEP as well so that the report could include an evaluation of the difficulty in obtaining the required NJDEP permits and potential for obtaining State and Federal funding. He anticipated that the earliest that any work could begin would be in the spring of 2008 assuming the permits and funding could be obtained.

Ridgefield receives \$200,000.00 in State aid

Fifth year in a row Borough secures money for taxpayer relief

For the fifth straight year, the Borough of Ridgefield has been fortunate to have been the recipient of extraordinary aid. "This is certainly great news from the standpoint of the taxpayers of Ridgefield", said Mayor Anthony R. Suarez, upon hearing the news of the aid.

The Borough of Ridgefield adheres to a fiscal year budget, and the calendar for the municipality's budget runs from July 1, 2006 until June 30, 2007, which is why the announcement of the relief came during the Thanksgiving week.

The budget was introduced over the summer, and a public hearing was held on the budget on November 13. The next step is to review and analyze the proposed budget and to add in the state aid as a revenue line item. The Mayor stated that he would like to provide another year with a zero tax increase on the municipal side of the budget, as last year's budget did not increase local municipal taxes for residents.

"I would like to thank Senator Coniglio as well as Assemblypersons Voss and Gordon for everything they have done to help Ridgefield continue to bring in money from Trenton, providing relief to our residents from the costs of living in our area", stated the Mayor.

The budget is to be adopted shortly after the announcement of state aid, and will be considered over the next few weeks by the governing body of Ridgefield.

ASK DR. JOSEPH PORTALE (continued from Page 8)

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
Away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts.
To the window that danced with a warm fire's light
Then he sighed and he said "It's really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night.

"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
That separates you from the darkest of times.
No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.

"My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December,"
Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always remembers.
My Dad stood his watch in the jungles of Nam.
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.

"I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile."
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
The red, white, and blue... an American flag.

"I can live through the cold and the being alone,
Away from my family, my house and my home.
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.

"I can carry the weight of killing another,
Or lay down my life with my sister and brother.
Who stand at the front against any and all,
To ensure for all time that this flag will not fall.

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right"
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,
Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?"

"It seems all too little for all that you've done,
For being away from your wife and your son."
Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.

"For when we come home, either standing or dead,
To know you remember we fought and we bled.
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

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FEATURE STORY (cont.)

Les Brown

continued from Page 5

Room of New York's Edison Hotel, for which Les received a hundred dollars a week - quite a salary for him in those days. The twelve-piece outfit wasn't an astounding success, but it satisfied the management and soon attracted booker Joe Glaser, who threw his support, financial as well as otherwise, behind the outfit. Thus began a warm relationship that was to last more than a quarter of a century.

Glaser was intensely devoted to the band. One summer, while Metronome was running its annual dance-band popularity poll, I received a telephone call from him. He wanted to buy 250 copies of the magazine. When I asked him why, he said he needed them for his friends, so they could use the ballot to vote for Les. When I told him we couldn't sell them to him because we wanted the contest to reflect a true picture of our regular readers' tastes (with our circulation, 250 votes could have made a strong impact), he said nothing and hung up. Our attitude must have made quite an impression, however, because for a long time thereafter, Les subsequently told me Glaser kept referring to me as "What's his name - the guy at the Metronome who couldn't be bought."

When it was formed in late 1938, the band had twelve men. As its engagements grew (it played the Arcadia Ballroom in New York City and also spent a good part of the summer of 1940 at the New York World's Fair Dancing Campus), its personnel also grew, in quality as well as in numbers. It featured a couple of excellent tenor saxists in Wolffe Tannenbaum and Stewie McKay; a brilliant lead saxist, Steve Madrick, who later became the chief audio engineer for NBC-TV's "Today" show; and starting in the summer of 1940, a very attractive seventeen-year-old-ex-dancer from Cincinnati named Doris Day.

Doris had been discovered by the Bob Crosby band, but something went wrong. One report had it that a member of the band made some pretty serious passes at the very young lady, which frightened her so that she gave her notice. In any event, Les heard her at the Strand Theater, was immediately impressed, and having heard the grapevine stories of her unhappiness, offered her a job in what was probably his most boyishly charming manner. She accepted and joined the band in New England in August of 1940, eventually to become one of its most important assets.

Twenty-five years later, Doris told me, "I was awfully lucky working with Les. The boys were so great. They softened things up for me when everything could have disillusioned and soured me."

Doris's stay with that band lasted less than a year. She recorded a few sides. Says Les, "I remember the first one was a thing called 'Beau Night in Hotchkiss Corners'. What was she like? Very easy to work with - never a problem."

How was she as a performer? I reviewed the band both at the Arcadia and at Gen Island Casino during the fall of 1940 and came away with this impression: "And there's Doris Day, who for combined looks and voice had no apparent equal; She's pretty and fresh-looking, handles herself with unusual grace, and what's most important of all,

sings with much natural feeling and in tune."

However, the band's chief failing still remained evident: it lacked intimacy. "Only at times does it ever get really close to the dancers," continued the same review. More novelties and more spotlighting of soloists were suggested.

That winter the band went to Chicago for a two-week engagement at Mike Todd's Theater Café. It stayed for six months. But before it returned East, Doris had left. She had fallen in love with a trombonist in Jimmy Dorsey's band, became Mrs. Al Jordan and retired temporarily.

During the following summer, the band really found itself. It spent the entire season at Log Cabin Farms in Armonk, New York, where the guys had a ball. Most of the men lived in houses in the area, and during the day they played softball and tennis and went through quite a health kick routine. The band took on a new, even younger girl singer (some reports say she was only fourteen, though she didn't look it) named Betty Bonney and with her made its first hit record, a timely opus called "Joltin' Joe DiMaggio". Inasmuch as the band was made up preponderantly of avid Yankee fans (Joe Glaser had a season's box at Yankee Stadium that Les and his friends frequently occupied), the effort proved to be quite a labor of love.

The band's approach, which up till then had been good but always quite serious, began to reflect the personalities of its members, and the rapport between musicians and audiences that had been missing for all the previous years was finally established. They had a very personable, romantic singer named Ralph Young, and a brilliant clarinetist named Abe Most, each of whom had a wild sense of humor. One of their favorite gags involved Most's pretending to sing a pretty ballad. Abe happened to have a horrible voice, but Ralph would sneak a mike off behind the bandstand and supply the sounds while Abe would lip-sync. Then, of course, as Abe would reach the climax of his chorus, Ralph would sing ridiculous lyrics or stop singing altogether, while Abe continued mouthing to no avail.

But the band's big novelty hits were performed by a cherubic baritone saxist named Butch Stone. "I caught him first when he was with Larry Clinton's band at Loew's State Theater in New York", reports Les. "I remembered he did a thing called 'My Feet's Too Big', and he broke me up. Right after that Larry was commissioned an Air Force captain, and so I offered Butch a job, and he's been with me ever since."

Stone was just one of many replacements Les started to make - not all of his own volition - when the draft started gobbling up some of the best musicians around. "It got so you wouldn't hire a guy," Les reports, "unless you were sure he was a 4-F."

But the band continued to sound better and better all the time. And it found the formula for reaching the dancers and holding them - not merely through novelties but via some lovely ballads, like "Tis Autumn", which Les arranged, and a series of swinging versions of the classics, most of them scored by Ben Homer, including such items as "Bizet Has His Day", "March Slav", and "Mexican Hat Dance".

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT EDITION . . .

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ASK DR. JOSEPH PORTALE

Recently a different kind of Christmas Poem was sent to me from an unnamed friend of my practice..... I wish I could say I wrote it, but I didn't. What I can say is that it speaks from my heart, as I wish each and every one of you, a very Happy Holiday, and a Prayer for Peace on Earth....
Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to You All !!!
Dr. Joe Portale, Susan, Catherine, Tina, and Tammy

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.

My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
And I crept to the door just to see who was near.
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
A lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.

Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.
The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,
Then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.

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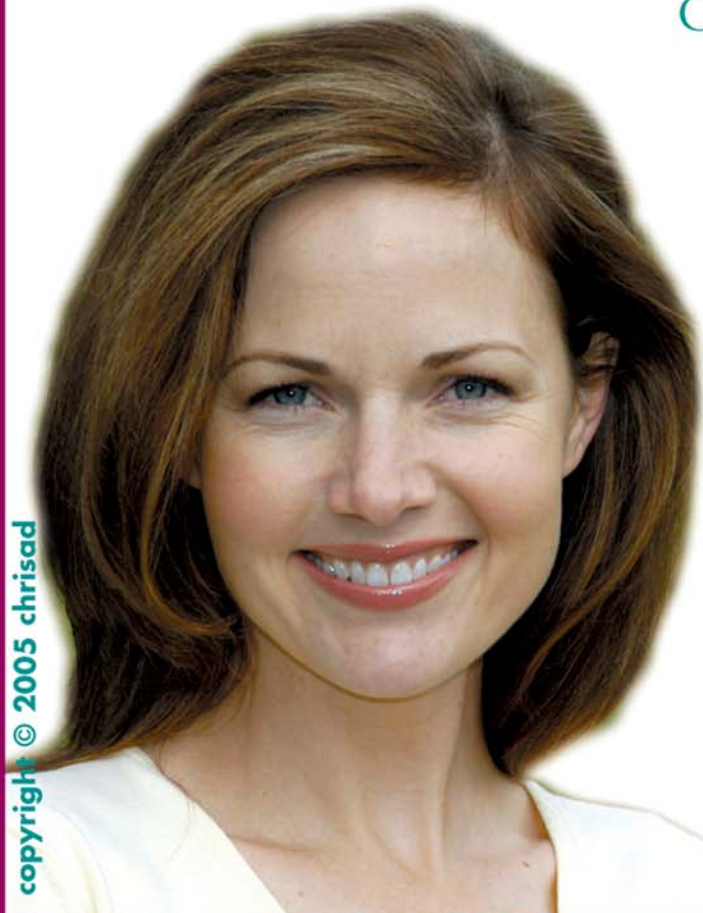
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