



The University of Nebraska Modern Dance Ensemble was well-received on the Chatauqua '75 tour, as they brought to Nebraskans a dance style many had not seen before.

By John Kalkowski

In a flicker of nostalgia, old-time entertainment came to Nebraska this summer in the form of Chatauqua '75, an array of politicians, vaudeville acts and home-grown talent, all under one big top.

The traveling Chatauqua tent shows were popular throughout the country at the turn of the century. Chatauqua '75 was developed by the University of Nebraska and many organizations throughout the state as a Bicentennial activity.

The Chatauqua '75 tour made stops in Chadron, Scottsbluff, McCook, Hastings, Norfolk and Nebraska City May 30 through June 10.

Chatauqua

When Chatauqua '75 began, NU President D.B. Varner said he was skeptical about the success of a revived Chatauqua in an era of modern entertainment such as television and contemporary motion pictures.

But the revived tent shows proved so successful that Varner said he was "in error."

Another series

The university already is beginning its initial planning for another series of Chatauquas - Bicentennial Chatauqua - during the summer of 1976, according to Don Jacks, who will be the Chatauqua director.

Next year's Chatauqua will not be the same show, he said.

This year, the tent shows featured many national political figures, such as Gen. William Westmoreland, former Army chief of staff; Ramsey Clark, former U.S. attorney general; and Terry Sanford, Democratic presidential candidate.

There also were several national entertainment figures such as Will Geer, "Grandpa" on television's "The Waltons" and Will Rogers Jr.

Play a highlight

One of the highlights of Chatauqua was a musical play, *Portraits*, written by UNL Professor David Bell and student Alan Nielsen. The play was performed by UNL's Repertory Theatre.

Also on the tour was the Scarlet and Cream Ensemble, UNL's traveling music show group.

Although the Bicentennial will not be a carbon copy of this year's, it will compare in many ways, Jacks said.

Next summer's Chatauqua also will be a tent show, he said. As the planning for the tent show continues, an issue of major consideration will be money.

This year, the university received \$85,000 for the show from various organizations interested in promoting cultural and Bicentennial activities. The Nebraska Bicentennial Commission and the Humanities Council contributed thousands of dollars toward the show. Each town on the circuit also gave \$2,500 to the university for the show.

Jacks said that though a deficit was expected, the tent shows were enough of a success to break even.

Show to change

To receive large amounts of money, several aspects of the show will be changed, Jacks said. He said some organizations already have told him they would not finance the exact same show next year.

To change the show, he said he would like to see the university and national parts of the show packaged into specific show periods. Different towns could then add whatever amount of local talent they want.

He said it is likely that Chatauqua will not visit the same towns that it did this year.

The popular *Portraits* also will not show again. Bell and Nielsen already have begun writing a second musical play dealing with life in the Midwest.

Last year, the two wrote *Portraits* in a 60-day period. This year, they will have considerably more writing time.

Singers to repeat

Jacks said that plans for next year's Chatauqua also will include the Scarlet and Cream singers and the University Modern Dance Ensemble, who he said were both well-received.

This year about 60 students from the university participated in the Chatauqua as entertainment or technicians. Jacks expects to have about the same number of students in the show next year.

The Chatauqua probably will feature persons whose names are well-known, but who are rarely seen on television or other media. That would include persons like novel authors and other figures, he said.

Folk entertainment

"We also will lean toward more folk entertainment," Jacks said.

Folk craftsmen and entertainers could be an integral part of the show, he said.

The Chatauqua idea originated as a means of bringing the University of Nebraska to the people of the state. With good planning, Jacks said, next year's Chatauqua could easily be more successful than this year's.



In the tradition of the original Chatauquas, Chatauqua '75 staged its traveling show under a "big-top tent" which held several hundred persons.

The Scarlet and Cream Singers, UNL's "ambassador's of song," were a "super hit" as they sang their way into the hearts of the Chatauqua audience, according to Don Jacks, Chatauqua director.

