

# arts/entertainment

## Stand-up comic works with individual style

By Peg Sheldrick

"Comedy," said T. Marnie Vos, "is a happy way of looking at a hurt."

For T. Marnie Vos, one of Lincoln's few stand-up comedians, it also is an occasional means of making a living.

Though she hardly fits the stereotype of the up and coming comic (that being a glib, tuxedoed young man on the Borscht Circuit), Vos has been plying her trade quite successfully for some time, most recently at last week's comedy night at O.G. Kelly's.

Her act doesn't fit the stereotype, either. Vos avoids what she calls "I-don't-care stand-up," which involves a series of unrelated one-liners.

"I like to do a routine that has a through line," she said. "I'm not saying that it's not funny—it's just not my style. I wonder if I have a style. Maybe I should get one."

According to Vos, "comedy is common in everyday life."

Of course, anyone who would wheel her ten speed next to a fur-wrapped lady in a Lincoln Continental and challenge her to a drag race can make that claim with some validity.

"Sometimes I get carried away at work," she said. "That's just energy, I guess." Her energy leads her to live her 32 hours a week as night manager of a local taco restaurant by telling customers the hot sauces are brought in daily from Mexico by burro train. She also has been known to stage taco shell relay races among her employees, as well as occasionally sending hapless helpers out back to clean the fly paper.

COMEDIC ENERGY has been part of her life a long time. As a child, she couldn't resist trying for laughs, even under the tensest circumstances, she said.

She remembers walking into an elementary school class late one day. Instead of slinking dutifully to her seat, she stopped inside the doorway and shouted, "ATTENTION!"

Everyone looked up.

"ATTENTION! . . . I love ATTENTION!"

It was the same at home.

"I used to like to make my sister laugh when I was small," she said. "My peak (was when) I made my sister laugh so hard her milk came through her nose. That was my new goal."

"My mother used to send us into the other room to rest and I'd make everybody laugh. She'd yell 'Don't encourage her! Stop laughing!'" Today, her mother encourages her to go into comedy, she said.

Though she always had the inclination, her specific ambition to do stand-up came in high school, she said. What started out as a one-shot after dinner speech ended as a first place finish in a statewide speech contest.

After that it was the school talent show, at which her speech about dieting sparked an invitation to speak at a Weight Watchers convention in Pershing Auditorium.

Until then, Vos had been writing mainly for herself. She then discovered she liked performing her material. "It was fun to laugh, to get up," she said.

THE DIET SPEECH earned her invitations to such places as the Hilton Hotel. After entering college, she found less opportunities to perform.

"I mean, you can do it at Burger King, but . . ."

She used her own writings for performances in a speech class, which made it hard for the teacher to grade her. The instructor didn't quite know how to react to a talk that was supposed to be about dating entitled, "The Gift of Celibacy."

Her next big opportunity to garner laughs and fame was the Bob Hope Talent Search staged at the university a few years ago. Vos made it to the finals "just because I was doing stand-up," she modestly asserted.

Then came a gig at last year's Masquer's Banquet, where she informed fellow thespians they should strive to be known "not just as drug addicts and homosexuals but as people with a cause, like Marlon Brando." She was a hit, and on the strength of her success has been invited to appear at a number of local bistros during the past few months.

So far, only a few performances have gone badly, one because she had no microphone, she said.

"People who could read lips enjoyed it," she said.

Working and attending school full time while trying to hone her talents is not the easiest way of life.

"It doesn't leave enough time to do what I feel like doing and want to get better at," she said.

"IT'S LIKE A DOG chasing his tail. No, it's not. At least the dog has his end in sight. Sometimes I don't."

Her goal is to move to Los Angeles, which she visited earlier this year. But that move won't happen until she can afford it. For now, she's working at her comedy, hoping someday it will be a foot in the door that will allow her to go on to acting and possibly directing.

"Some people can sing very well. Lots and lots and lots go into acting. Certain people are good at stunt falls. Certain people are good at dancing. All those things make a person a more sellable commodity," she said. "I can't sing and I can't dance. When comedy works for me, I think it could be like a stepping stone. And when it doesn't, I think about going into arson."

So far she hasn't been heckled. She has "no desire to exchange vulgarities," she said.

"If I did bad, there are a few people I'd like to say to me 'It wasn't so good' and comment on the act," she said. "I don't mind that, but I mind anyone to comment on (anyone's) work in a cruel way, with a lack of sensitivity. It's easy to sit back and comment, but can you sing? Can you make someone laugh? . . . Because you dare to be bad, you put yourself almost above other people, because you're doing something they wouldn't dare do."

VOS DOESN'T CARE for insults from the stage or from the audience.

"I would not like to laugh at the expense of someone else's hurt. . . . Obscene humor is cheap. I don't think it's necessary."

Ideally, "laughter is a healing thing. . . . I think it helps you move through hard times. You can dwell on things a certain way."

"There are things that hurt us all, like saying goodbye, loneliness. (My humor) is not directed toward myself or others. It's directed so we laugh together." Vos said she doesn't think much about being a woman in a predominantly male field. "If you're funny you're funny. If someone wants to judge me like that, they're putting those restrictions on themselves. I've never run up against prejudice."

Vos will appear next at O.G. Kelly's December Comedy night.



Photo by Maggie Golon

From left, Wayne Rollins, Jeffery Johnson, Chauncey Blakely, and Kathy Morrow collaborate on a song at Traditional Jazz night at O.G. Kelly's.

### Spontaneous performance 'cooks'

## Surprises common at O.G. Kelly's

By Bill Graf

At O.G. Kelly's Traditional Jazz Night Wednesday it was hard to tell who was having more fun—the crowd or the musicians.

The Traditional Jazz band, which consisted of Mac McCune on trumpet, Del Whitcombe on guitar, Jeffery Johnson on drums and Andy Hall filling Randy Snyder's place on bass, exploded into their first set with their theme song "Jumping At The Woodside".

But after they had finished the formality of playing their theme, all organization was thrown to the wind.

By the end of the first set it seemed as though guest performers were coming out of the woodwork.

Singing a collection of funky blues tunes, Kathy Morrow was the first to pool her talents with the band.

Also taking advantage of the open stage were singers Wayne Rollins and Chauncey Blakely, clarinetist Charlie Phillips and alto sax players, Jerry Boster and Ed Love.

Because the format was intended to be informal and spontaneous, nobody knew what would happen, not even Jeffery Johnson, jazz night organizer.

However, except for a little confusion between tunes,

the music was high quality. The Traditional Jazz band members seemed to have enough tunes up their sleeves to allow the guest artists to perform at their potential.

Hall, playing his first gig with the band, said, "This isn't what I expected. It's refreshing to have all these cats playing with us and have it fall together so nicely."

Hall added that the crowd also was a big factor in getting the band "cooking."

Blakely explained that he enjoys sitting in because the format is "loose and relaxed".

Whitcombe, a Traditional Jazz band regular said "The secret of the success of the jazz night is that it is relaxed and spontaneous."

McCune said the Traditional Jazz Night is more "free-wheeling" than his job as leader of the Mac Five.

"It's fun to lay back and do what we want. Lincoln has a lot of decent musicians and we've got good musicians. However, the good musicians are not real plentiful. To have a rhythm section like we have tonight makes my job a lot easier and more fun," McCune said.

"At the first gig we did for the Traditional Jazz Night, there were only 15 people. But those 15 people had a good time. Since then, it's grown. Each gig seems to get better and better," he added.