



(TH Photo by Debbie Clark)

TRAVELING WITH Bruce Weaver and Friends means a lot of road companions. Three of them took time after a show in Belmont to have a "family" photo taken with

Bruce and his son Bradley. From left, Horton, the Rhode Island Red rooster, Lenny, astride Bruce's knee, and Mortimer, looking amused while Bradley looks on.

Ventriloquist Act Shows The Magic's Still There

By DEBBIE CLARK
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BELMONT — A generation of youngsters grew up laughing with a funny, freckle-faced "dummy" named Jerry Mahoney. The magic of ventriloquism, courtesy of Edgar Bergen, also offered kids and adults the kind of entertainment they could believe.

Well, the magic is not gone as students at Belmont Central School learned last week.

The arrival of Bruce Weaver and Friends, along with son Bradley, from Knoxville, Pa., showed them even "dummies" can be a lot of fun.

A growing interest in ventriloquism led Bruce, a sixth grade teacher at Westfield Elementary in the Northern Tioga School District, and Brad, age 10, to perfect an act for the road.

THE COMBINATION of fast-talk, one-liners and an array of magic tricks all brought on by a small wooden puppet, won over the youngsters, and the adults in the audience, within minutes. The genuine relationship which Bruce has with his friends — lovable Jerry Mahoney; hilarious Horton, the Rhode Island Red rooster; and lovable yet mischievous Lenny — cut

through all the razzle-dazzle of the 1960s right into the kids' hearts.

And when Bradley brought out his pal Mortimer, one got the feeling this bunch of kids had been friends for years.

The father and son act continues at a fast pace interspersing quips about daily life with the "friends" whose puzzling magic tricks which always left onlookers wondering who was the "dummy."

Who felt foolish after the "disappearing water trick" which left Bruce with a wet trickle running down his pant-leg while Lenny looked on smugly? Or who outwitted whom when a whipped cream pie intended for the trouble-making character wound up in Bruce's face?

No matter, it was all in fun and the audience loved it.

Keeping adept at the continual patter with the friends requires quite a lot of practice by both Bruce and Bradley; their material is both borrowed and original.

BRUCE WEAVER and Friends have been entertaining at schools, churches, banquets, variety shows, scouting events and fairs for more than 20 years.

Bruce, like his son, started dabbling with ventriloquism at age 10 when his parents bought him a Jerry Mahoney puppet for Christmas. He performed as a youngster and through high school at local events, but college days found Jerry relegated to his suitcase.

But when Bruce began teaching he brought his old friend to the classroom, although he admits he does not often use the dummies for serious lessons because "when they're out, it's showtime."

Bruce is a recent graduate of the Maher School of Ventriloquism (home-study instruction) and is a member of the North American Association of Ventriloquists and the Society of American Ventriloquists.

Bruce and Bradley have previously appeared in Allegany County at Bolivar Central School and would like to do more entertaining here. For more information, write Bruce Weaver, Box 147, Knoxville, Pa. 16008, or telephone 814-326-4289.