

Ballet remains an elusive dream

Wed. Aug. 27, 1986

On Sunday I saw Rudolf Nureyev "and Friends" dance at the Great Woods Center for the Performing Arts in Mansfield.

The fortyish ballet dancer who defected from Russia years ago pirouetted, spun, leaped, and bounded gracefully across the stage on his toes.

He and his company performed intricately designed choreography, and I watched dreamily remembering my own stint as a ballerina years ago.

I had always loved fairy tales, and stories about princes, princesses, and damsels in distress.

Naturally, ballet with all its dainty frills, graceful maidens, and chivalrous male dancers appealed to me.

I was 6, and it was my mother's brilliant idea to enroll me in a ballet class at a local building set aside for community activities.

Mom bought me a little black body suit, black tights, and a pair of ballet slippers.

I was ready for life as a ballerina.

The very first session had me excited. I imagined the instructor would give us frilly little tutus, wind our hair up into buns, and teach us how to whirl and twirl prettily across the room.

Instead, I found myself leaning my too tall, thoroughly awkward and skinny body against a large brown barre in a bare, dimly lit romping room.

I couldn't get the hang of it. The instructor, whom I remember as a tall, hard, and intimidating woman with blond hair yanked back into a severe pony tail, had us hold our hands over our heads in a circle, put our heels together, and point our toes out to either side.

She wanted us to lift ourselves up on our toes, or perform deep knee bends from that position.

Not being the most graceful child in the world, I had a hard time learning the technique.

My arms would flail wildly out to the sides as I lifted them unevenly above my head, and it was difficult to control the direc-



The Blank Page

Karen Cubie

tion of my rapidly growing feet.

The instructor always forced me to stand near a large brown, heavily littered table, and I inevitably knocked things down.

I think I may even have accidentally tripped a few other kids, because one day the instructor asked my mother not to bring me any more. She said I knocked too many things over.

That was all right, though, I had already decided ballet was not my bag.

But on Sunday night, the grace and power of Nureyev and his troupe gave me a taste of the old yearning again.

Although my feet have stopped growing, and I am no longer skinny, I'm still a klutz.

I never mastered a somersault or cartwheel as a child, and I still can't do one today.

I still run funny, and my friends laugh at the way I catch a football.

But now that I'm older, I don't envy the ballerinas quite as much.

They endure long hours of travel, and spend even more time practicing.

They work for years fine-tuning their bodies and honing their technique, but unlike most careers in dancing, you don't improve beyond a certain age.

As a writer, the older I grow, the

better my writing skills should get. But the older a dancer gets, the more she becomes prone to injuries and less capable of performing intricate moves.

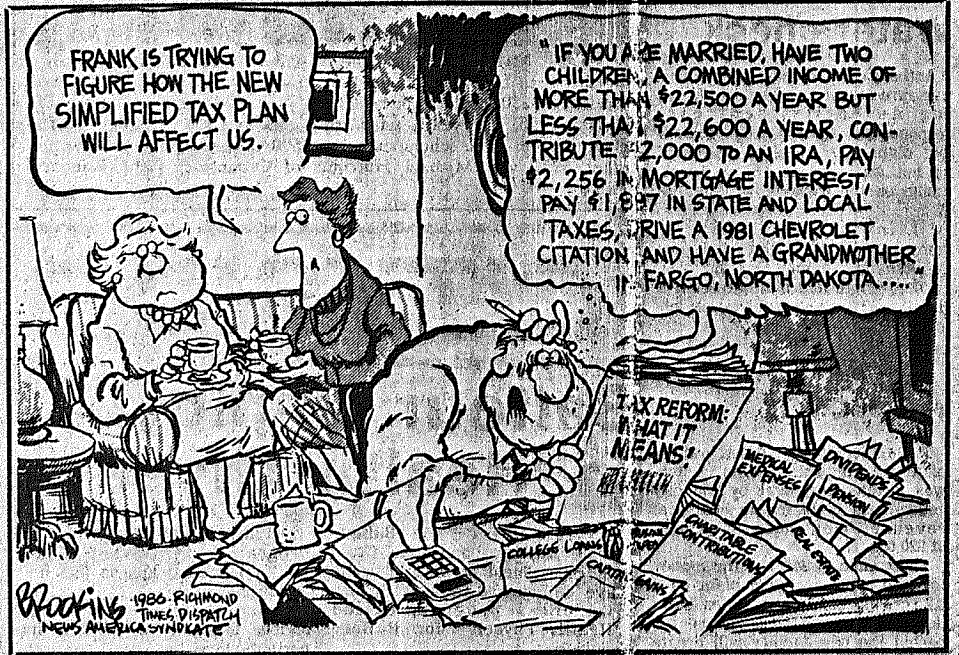
You could really see the difference between Nureyev and the younger dancers in his troupe. Although Nureyev gave a smoother, possibly more graceful performance, he was boring in comparison to his young "friends."

They leaped and flipped, and twirled through the air while he merely hopped daintily across the stage. He just didn't exude the same amount of energy as his younger cohorts.

I still wish I could dance, though.

Maybe I'll dig up that old black body suit and give it another chance.

But I just can't picture me wearing a tutu.



And now they're getting married

SCRABBLE, Va. — The Scarecrow and Mrs. King, I see by the papers, will start behaving "like real human beings" in the coming TV season. By George, it's about time!

For the past four years, I have been shouting every Monday night at the Scarecrow. His real name, of course, is Lee Stetson, and he's an agent of the CIA. "Scarecrow" is only his code name. His partner, a volunteer at the agency, is the divorced Amanda King. She is beautiful, and not just beautiful. She is intelligent, brave, spunky, a loving mother to her all-American boys. She is every man's dream boat.

"Kiss her!" I have been yelling

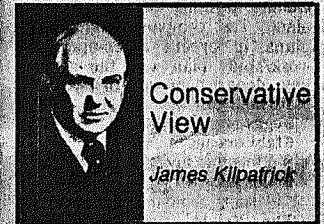
at the screen: The Scarecrow would rather kiss his sports car. "You nerd!" I have been crying. "Whassa matter with you, Stetson? Lost your nerve?"

One Monday night — I forget the story line — he climbed up a trellis at her home and through a window into her bedroom. Oh, boy, I said to the TV screen, now you're showing some gumption. No way. He sat on the edge of her bed and they discussed how they would nab some international villain. Then he climbed back out of the window and down the trellis and into the sports car, and I threw some leftover spaghetti at the screen. "Dope!" I hollered. "Unspeakable wimp!"

This has kept my adrenals pumping since 1982. Once I was in Los Angeles and missed the show. My wife telephoned me the next morning. "Did you see them hold hands?" she asked. She was breathless. I hadn't seen them hold hands, but well, it seemed likely start. Nothing happened the rest of the season. Amanda gave him a few longing looks but the idiot just holstered his pistol and looked the other way.

Now, it says here "after years of working undercover, Scarecrow and Mrs. King are going to be working under the covers this season. Literally." They are going to do what comes naturally. Scarecrow viewers, it says here, "will be pleased to see the consummation of desire."

Now that kind of dirty talk leaves me uneasy. I expect them to do a little necking. I'm a prude. I mean, after all, I'm a pretty sophisticated fellow, but I don't want the producer implying that they're — ah — going all the way. You know. Those of us who love Amanda want to see a ritz-



Conservative View

James Kilpatrick

on a great estate. Servants, horses, all that good stuff. She's forever feeding him. Will he propose? No. Will he even put an arm around her? Not him.

I will give you another dope. Dr. Rex Morgan. His nurse is named June. You can tell by the way she looks at him that she would love to be Mrs. Morgan. And she's beautiful, brave, spunky, intelligent. All he ever says is "cancel my next appointments."

It has been ever thus. Remember Dick Tracy? He went with Tess Trueheart for years and years before he popped the question. There used to be a magician named Mandrake. Top hat. Flow-

From our readers

Young memories of dog next door

I read Mr. Gay's article on Barney. So I decided I'd write how much fun it was with Barney.

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