

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

By Marlene Davis Stanger

When school broke up for the summer holidays, the Muizenberg children braced themselves for the arrival of the holiday crowd.

I once wrote a song about teenage angst set in my hometown, the only one I knew, and some of the lines were – “we wore Bermudas, they wore waist chains. We spoke right to you; they would play games...” it was talking about the difference between the local girls and the Joburg girls and the Zim girls who seemed so grown up and sophisticated and experienced in the realm of early infatuation and all that this entailed.

But we made friends anyway and all of us were unified in entertainment and fun of the summer – the daily outdoor morning Vic Davis variety show and talent contest upstairs from the Snake Park, and the Pavilion entertainment at night. Interspersed with the Socials at the Herzl Hall in Wherry Road.

Vic Davis was an elderly, white haired gentlemen who played the trumpet and, quite remarkably, when one looks back on this, was able to keep hundreds of children and young teens enthralled and engaged as he invited our peers up on stage to compete in talent contests. He probably was not as old as we thought he looked.

The songs of Elvis sung by some of the local guys we thought were skates! The local Cape Town kid – I recall his name was Benny Kay - singing Goody, Goody... Fifty-five years after the fact I watched a Netflix movie about the three wives of the 60s teenage pop singer, Frankie Lymon, and finally realized the source of this song that had been buried in my memory from the days of Vic Davis.

The pavilion concerts included appearances by the legendary Max Collie, and I remember sitting with my heart beating so fast as he asked members of the audience to interlace their fingers and turn them out and then suggested that some of us might not be able to pull our hands apart...and from this group, he selected his voluntary victims for the night.

His work was mesmerizing as he got people to run around the pavilion hall being chased by imaginary dogs, to eat an onion that he suggested was an apple, to pretend they were in the shower and sing at the tops of their lungs, to totally slump like sacks of grain when he clapped his hands and yelled sleep.

We would never tire of watching people make complete idiots of themselves for everyone else's entertainment.

As a much younger child, I remember going to a concert – could have been a battle of the bands type thing – with my parents, my granny, and her relative Yetta Sebba and Yetta's husband, Senia (Senior?) the Sebba's son, Michael, who was about 7, was playing in a band with Anton Fig on drums and Keith Lentin on guitar as well. They were all under the age of 10. Well, some of them went on to live the dream.

As older teens, another form of entertainment was having people over and playing records or having summer parties. But if you had a party, you risked people arriving from all over the peninsula because, even without cell phones and the internet, it was insane how people heard about parties in all the

suburbs and if there was an 18-year-old with a license, they would arrive and, alternately, we would arrive!

I remember one summer party at my neighbour's house when his parents were away. The police had to be called to get the people out. He was the one who called them. It became a bit of an emotional mess.

A few years later when I turned 20 and had a big party at my parent's home (I told them I didn't know where I would be for my 21st so could I have it early), I realized that I too was the victim of the word having spread. I arrived in my bedroom to go to sleep at about 4 am, after everyone had finally left and I had tidied up to the extent that I could, and I found my Weimaraner puppy, Lucky, curled up on my bed and a complete stranger – a young guy – asleep in my sister Netty's bed. She already lived in Israel.

I told him he had to leave. But my ride has already gone, he said. Where to you live, I asked him. Bellville. HAHAHahaha

I said I didn't care and bye!

Today, he might have called Uber.