



## Valley Variety

By Margie Barron

### Giving Thanks at the Fabulous Follies

"Thank you, darlin's! I do hope you were made joyful by your visit to our little show... and visiting our wee village," began a note sent by Riff Markowitz, the impresario who is the force behind the "Fabulous Palm Springs Follies." He's send-

ing his note of thanks to everyone (if he has your email) who heads to Palm Springs to take the theatrical journey down memory lane with him at the historic Plaza Theatre. It's actually the audiences who should be thanking him, and the dapper Follies men, and the ageless long-legged lovelies who grace the stage every performance. The



Jill Gordon of the Follies holding the Toluca Times.



Greg Purdy and Dorothy Kloss of the Follies.

good feeling they give you puts a spring in your step and a smile on your face that lasts a long time. Thank you for that!

The Follies cast ranges in ages from 55 to 85 years "young," and they are the most inspiring ensemble you've ever enjoyed; kicking up

their heels in lavish, Broadway-caliber production numbers. And, oh my, the Las Vegas showgirl costumes on the gals, showing off their dynamite figures that could get wolf-whistles from frat-boys. Some are local gals like Jill Gordon, who greeted me by saying, "I

love the Toluca Times!" She went to high school in Burbank, and after an exciting career that had her singing and dancing around the world, she now shuttles from her home in North Hollywood to her Palm Springs home. Jill is a gorgeous 65 years and proud of it, and even prouder that this is her 12th year as a Follies showgirl.

Also standing out from the chorus line is Dorothy Kloss, 85, who is billed in the Guinness Book of Records as the "Oldest 'Still Performing' Showgirl in the World." That's what my friend Greg Purdy (the Follies media honcho) told me, so I just had to meet her, after seeing the tap dance solo she does to celebrate her 14th season with the Follies. Stunning with a sharp sense of humor, Dorothy told me she doesn't worry about her feet and body aching after a performance. "I soak them in vodka," she said with a wink. During her amazing life, she entertained for the USO during WWII, taught a young Bob Fosse how to tap dance, and made a full recovery from colon cancer two decades ago. Off season, Dorothy is in demand to lecture about the secret to her vitality and living life to the fullest.

The Follies have been around for 18 seasons, and the entertaining theme this year is "Get Your Kicks," saluting the trip folks used to make on Route 66 - when driving was fun! "The song and dance road trip celebrates the American Experience," Riff said. The incomparable Freda Payne ("Band of Gold") is the current guest star appearing during the three-hour show. And, now that the holiday season is upon us, the Follies also feature lavish Christmas-themed musical numbers, plus a dancing polar bear singing "Hanukkah in Santa Monica." "It may not be your notion of traditional holiday fare, but in Folliesland anything is possible," Riff added.

Yes, the "wee village" of Palm Springs is a great place to visit during the holidays. A short drive from LA, just over two hours on a good day. My husband Frank and I like to drive right to the heart of Palm Springs and check in the Palm Mountain Resort. We like it because it's a few footsteps away from the center of Palm Canyon Drive, a shopper's paradise of boutiques, restaurants and clubs. And it's a block away from the world-class Palm Springs Art Museum, which has impressive exhibitions that include awesome modern art. In the middle of all the action, the comfy and cozy Palm Mountain Resort gets great group and getaway business because it's just across from the historic Plaza Theatre, home to the Palm Springs Follies. It's a place to call home for awhile, and count your blessings. Thanks for being there. Thanks for the memories, with more to come.