

The Columbian

Life

Section D

Today's weather picture by:
Ashley Simcox,
9, Vancouver, Kings
Way Christian
School



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2005



DAVE BARRY

Hit the deck (but not mine)

Today's Do-It-Yourself Project Is: How To Build a Deck.

There's nothing like adding a deck to transform an ordinary home into a home attached to a mass of inexpertly nailed wood. And just imagine the family fun you'll have this summer with a deck!

"Come on, kids!" you'll call to your children. "Let's go out on the deck and have some fun!"

"Shut UP," they'll gaily reply, because they are engrossed in a Sony PlayStation video game that they've been playing for 11 consecutive weeks. "OK then!" you'll say, stepping out onto your new deck. "You kids are just going to miss out on all the AAAAAAAAA." This is the noise you make when you pick up a splinter the size of a harpoon.

Yes, a deck would certainly be a great addition to your home. But if you're like most people, you're reluctant to tackle such an ambitious project, for fear that you lack the "know-how," or will sever an important limb.

Well, you can stop worrying. For one thing, they are making amazing progress in the field of prosthetics. For another thing, building a deck is NOT as hard as you think! I've watched TV personality Bob Vila do it many times, and he is a regular "do-it-yourselfer" just like you, except that he has knowledge, skill, an unlimited budget and a large staff of experts. So let's get started!

Step one is to select a site for your deck. You should do this in accordance with the principles of "feng shui," an ancient Chinese philosophy whose name means, literally, "new fad." Feng shui (pronounced "wang chung") teaches us that where we locate our household items affects our happiness by controlling the flow of "ch'i," which is a life force that is always around us, everywhere, all the time, like Regis Philbin.

You may be skeptical, but feng shui is actually based on solid astrological principles that have been scientifically verified by Shirley MacLaine and other leading Californians. These people pay feng shui consultants serious money to come to their houses and tell them things like what direction their beds should be pointing. If you think I'm making this up, check out any feng shui publication, such as Feng Shui for Modern Living ("The World's Biggest Selling Feng Shui Magazine"), which is filled with useful tips, such as this one: "Keep your toilet seat down ... to prevent ch'i being unnecessarily 'flushed away.'" (You know how true this is if you've ever had to pay a plumber to fix a toilet clogged by a big glob of escaped ch'i.)

My point is that, unless you want all your ch'i flowing onto your neighbor's driveway, you need to locate your deck in exactly the right place. In my experience, the ideal location for a deck, considering all factors, is: indoors. Just lay some boards on your living room floor and tell everybody it's a deck. This way, you can enjoy your deck without going outdoors and turning yourself in-

BARRY, page D3

DAVE BARRY is a columnist for the Miami Herald. His classic column was originally published May 28, 2000. He is currently taking a leave of absence from writing his weekly humor column. Write to him c/o The Miami Herald, One Herald Plaza, Miami FL 33132.

"It's kind of like an addiction that I can't stop. ... I guess I also could consider it a need for constant attention, if I broke it down raw. Isn't everybody in entertainment that way?"

IMPERSONATOR BLUES

By BRETT OPPEGAARD
Columbian staff writer

Back tilts the can of RockStar energy drink. Clinton Roberts slurps what's left, bounces out of the Chevy minivan — borrowed for the night from his parents — and lights a Camel. It's dusk. He's standing next to an overflowing dumpster in the parking lot behind Rocky's Place, a tavern off the main strip of a small Portland suburb.

"Smells like raw sewage," Roberts sniffs. "That's the kind of classy places I play."

His muttonchop sideburns are trimmed to half of their usual size. He's dressed in black, trying to look like a young Elvis Presley. A sequined white jumpsuit hangs in the back of Roberts' van, for later. A sign outside of Rocky's reads: "Fabulous '50s party. ... Put on your poodle skirt. Slick back your hair. Prizes for best costume."

Clinton Roberts believes luck will land his Elvis act in Vegas

This Saturday night in Gladstone — away from his 4-year-old son — isn't for the contest. Roberts will make \$300 to perform as an Elvis impersonator. But just as important to him, this is another shot at connecting the dots of his dreams. All it will take is that one person to show up. Just one person who happens to know that well-connected mogul ready to entice him to give up his swing shift job as a forklift driver and leave his

Vancouver mobile home for a regular gig in Las Vegas.

If not at this tavern, then maybe the next. Taking another long drag of his cigarette, then stubbing it out, Roberts gathers the family members milling around the van. It's a support group that includes his mother, Cindy Trask, wearing a poodle skirt, and his grandmother, Brenda Campbell. Roberts' 15-year-old sister, Jenny, is at home, watching his son, Cole. Roberts leads the entourage through the tavern's back door, saying, "Let's go see what we're dealing with."

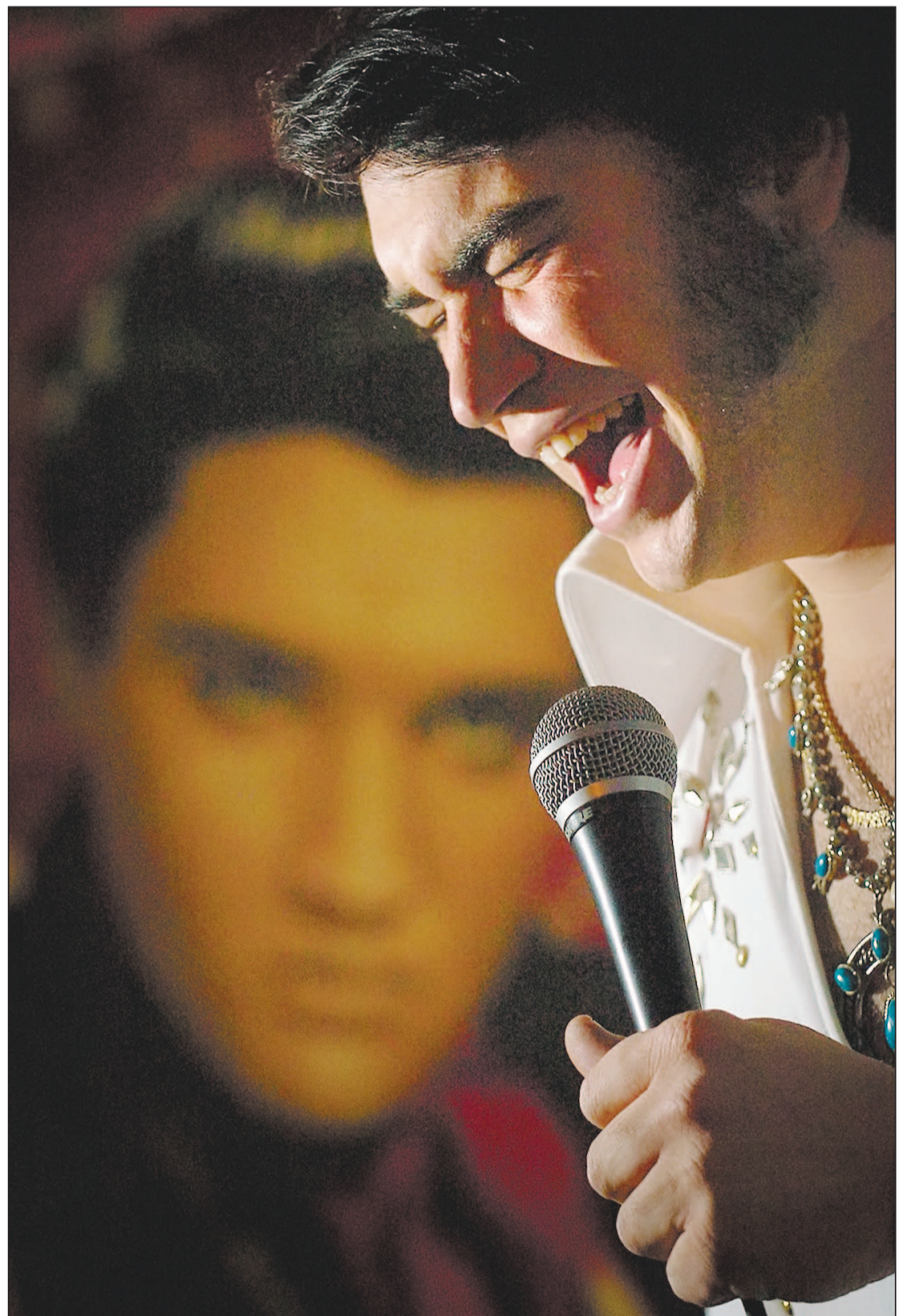
Far from Graceland

Of the estimated 35,000 Elvis impersonators in the nation, only a small percentage make a living at this type of work. Most of those are in Las Vegas and Branson, Mo., or near Graceland, the Presley family compound in Memphis, Tenn. The Midwest has a few, as does the South. With the tether of joint custody keeping him near his ex-wife's home in St. Helens, Ore., Roberts can't be in any of those places. But every once in a while the 23-year-old gets to see what he's missing.

When the timing is right, Roberts can slip away to a big convention or gathering of Elvis impersonators. He has seen them in virtually

ELVIS, page D6

Top: Clinton Roberts dedicates much of his life to Elvis impersonation.
Right: Roberts relaxes with a cigarette on the front porch of his east Vancouver mobile home. He gets frustrated at times that he hasn't been able to develop his act into a full-time occupation.



Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian



Did you know?

Using a fake name, Elvis Presley once entered an Elvis look-alike contest in his adopted hometown of Memphis, Tenn. He took third place.

your Guide:



Travel: Ripley plans to expand its portfolio of oddball 'Believe it or Not' attractions /D4



Books: 'Kite Runner' author shares his Afghan roots /D8

Coming Monday:

Manufacturers help unshackle imaginations /D1

Nazi camp liberator stands tall

Holocaust survivor, American who freed him meet once again

By SANDY BANKS
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — For 60 years, it percolated in Sam Goetz's mind, rising to the level of obsession — this need to find the American soldier who had loomed so large in the most critical moment of Goetz's life.

On May 6, 1945, Goetz, then 16, was among 18,000 prisoners liberated from the Nazi concentration camp at Ebensee by the U.S. Army's 3rd Cavalry. The squadron commander, a tall, young sergeant, climbed down from his tank and pronounced them free.

We "kissed his hands and touched his uniform, as if touching a saint," Goetz would recall years later in his memoir, "I Never Saw My Face."

"Each of us wanted to make sure the man was real ... that this was neither an illusion or a dream."

Goetz spent years combing through war archives in Washington, D.C., without ever learning the soldier's identity. "I was haunted by it," says Goetz, now an optometrist in West L.A. "Who was that man in the first tank? What is his name? Is he alive today?"

On the last Saturday in October, Bob Persinger — now an elderly, bespectacled, gray-haired veteran — strode through the lobby of a Los Angeles hotel and reached out to shake Goetz's hand. The Holocaust survivor stared back, measured reality against his memories, then opened his arms for an embrace.

And the soldier who had seemed so tall 60 years ago stood cheek-to-cheek with the man he'd saved.

Memories abound

The Holocaust is not the kind of experience you put behind you. For most survivors, there's no making peace with memories from concentration camps where millions were humiliated, tortured and forced to bear witness to unspeakable brutality.

How do you write the final chapter of the story, now that both generations — victims and liberators — are passing?

About 120,000 Holocaust survivors live in the United States — 10,000 of them in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Los Angeles is home to one of the largest and most active survivors' groups in the world, The 1939 Club, which takes its name from the year Adolf Hitler invaded Poland. Goetz served as the club's president in 1965-66.

Some survivors arrived warped by anger and bitterness. Others spent years locked in silence and shame. Most, like Goetz, healed through hard work, avenging the evil done to them with their eventual success.

"For years, many didn't even



MARK BOSTER/Los Angeles Times

Holocaust survivor Sam Goetz, left, and Bob Persinger reunite 60 years after Persinger's U.S. Army squadron liberated the concentration camp where Goetz was a prisoner. Such reunions are important to Holocaust survivors.

talk about it with their children," Goetz said.

It wasn't until the 1970s, "when these Holocaust deniers began to surface, with all their talk about the 'lies of the 6 million' (Jews killed), that I couldn't keep quiet. I said education is the only way we can leave our legacy."

So he went to officials at the University of California, Los Angeles, and proposed a Chair on Holocaust Studies. He helped raise the money, most of it through small individual donations, because institutions and corporations "didn't want to get involved." The chair was created in 1979, the first at a public university in the country.

Twenty years ago, Goetz organized a project to videotape the testimonies of Holocaust survivors. "I realized the survivors are dying at a fast rate," he said.

For Goetz, the horror came the week after his 14th birthday, in June 1942. Already, the schools in Tarnow, Poland, had been closed to Jewish children. Marauding Gestapo agents began roaming the city's Jewish quarter, shooting Jews at random.

Sam's parents were herded at gunpoint with thousands of their neighbors onto trains bound for Belzec, a concentration camp where German military officials were pioneering the use of gas chambers for mass killings. In one week, 8,000 of Tarnow's Jews would be executed or imprisoned in



Left: Bob Persinger in Austria in 1945. "To treat human beings like that I couldn't have imagined."



Belzec. During its 10 months of operation in 1942, historians say, 434,508 Jews died in Belzec's three gas chambers. Only a handful survived.

Shuffled through camps

In September 1943, Sam, too, was deported from the Tarnow ghetto and moved among a series of concentration camps, where inmates were beaten, starved, forced to endure Eastern European winters shoeless in flimsy cotton pajamas, and worked to the point of collapse and death.

Bob Persinger knew nothing about concentration camps when he was drafted at 19. In March 1943, he left Iowa for a year of training in Georgia, then boarded a British ship for Europe. He saw comrades fall to German attacks as they patrolled through England, France and Germany. But nothing had prepared him for Ebensee.

"We had never even heard about the concentration camps

A 1938 photograph shows Goetz, 10, left, with his brother, Bernard, 17, top, and his parents. Goetz, now a West L.A. optometrist, wrote a memoir of his wartime experiences, "I Never Saw My Face."

until a few weeks before the war ended, when I read in the Stars and Stripes (the U.S. military newspaper) about one of the camps, maybe Bergen-Belsen, and how the American (soldiers) were running into this."

His reconnaissance unit was patrolling "a beautiful little town" in the Austrian Alps. Persinger was dispatched to check it out and report back.

He rolled his tank up to the compound's barbed-wire gates. Inside, thousands of people — dressed in rags, looking more dead than alive — were "milling around like bees," he said.

"We stopped and peered down in amazement. We couldn't believe what we were seeing." There were "dead bodies scattered here and there, all over the ground." Thousands of inmates surged forward, as thin as skeletons, shivering in filthy, flimsy striped pajamas.

The German camp commanders had deserted and left elderly Austrian civilians in charge. Persinger emerged from his tank, snatched a rifle from one of the guards, broke it over the turret of his tank and hung it over a lamppost beside the gate.

"It brought on such a roar; it was pandemonium. ... The prisoners surrounded us, dirty, open sores all over them, loaded with lice.

"I'd seen death before, but nothing like that. I remember thinking: If everybody could see this, there wouldn't be

nothing like wars anymore. To treat human beings like that ... I couldn't have imagined."

Closing the circle

For Goetz, the reunion with Persinger was an important step toward closing the circle.

The hunger among survivors to connect with those present at their liberation can be universal.

"By finding that person, you construct some element of goodness in that landscape of evil," said Saul Friedlander, chairman of Holocaust studies at UCLA. "So this soldier, he was not the army of liberation, of course. But he symbolizes the good side for those who have experienced the worst. It helps them psychologically to remember the idealized goodness of the liberators. That explains the yearning."

Goetz mentioned to a patient, a World War II veteran, his attempt to track down the mystery soldier. The patient was heading to Austria for a commemoration marking the 60th anniversary of Ebensee's liberation. A few weeks later, the phone rang and Persinger was on the line.

Honor for the liberator

In late October, Persinger and his wife, Arlene, flew from their home in Illinois to meet Goetz and his wife, Gertrude; speak to college students about the Holocaust; and accept an award at the annual luncheon of The 1939 Club.

More than 300 people gathered at the Beverly Hills Hotel to honor the man who, in Goetz's words, "liberated 18,000 people on May 6, 1945."

Persinger insists he was "just a soldier, one little peon." The real heroes, he said, are the men and women who persevered, without succumbing to self-pity and rancor, to "get their education, raise their kids, make something out of themselves after coming out with nothing. I have nothing but respect for these people. They're head and shoulders smarter than I ever was."

Still, they rose for a standing ovation when Persinger walked to the lectern, then again at his speech's end. When the cheering stopped, the dancing began. Dozens of gray-haired men and women crowded the floor, offspring in tow, linked arms and circled around the room in a rousing version of the hora.

The man who "freed our people in their darkest hour" rose above the crowd on the shoulders of the sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors. He was, at that moment, as tall as Sam Goetz had remembered him.

Videotaped testimonies of Holocaust survivors, including Sam Goetz, can be seen and heard at www.1939club.com.

Church & School PA Installations

MUSIC WORLD
THE PLAYER'S EDGE

Battle Ground
502 E. Main St.
687-1768

Hazel Dell
7916 NE 6th Ave.
573-5575

musicworldstores.com

Premium Comfort Footwear

www.whentheshoefits.com

Fisher's Landing
819 SE 160th Ave.,
Vancouver
Next to Wild Oats & Borders

(360) 882-8962

When the Shoe Fits

YOUR NATURAL HAIR COLOR WAS ONLY a suggestion.

PERFECT LOOK
FAMILY HAIRCARE WITHOUT APPOINTMENTS

J&M Plaza (360) 574-4374 • Evergreen Plaza (360) 892-5539 • La Camas Center (360) 835-7034
Fisher's Landing (360) 260-3121 • Vancouver MarketPlace (360) 735-8404 • Salmon Creek Fred Meyer (360) 546-5083 • 162nd Place (360) 449-3851 • Andressen Marketplace (360) 693-3399
Battle Ground Market Center (360) 687-6920 • Mill Plain Fred Meyer (360) 896-3331
Heritage Market Square (360) 449-3131 • Vancouver Plaza (360) 567-1763

Visit us at: perfectlooksalons.com

CLAIROL PROFESSIONAL
save 15%
ON ALL HAIR COLOR SERVICES

ALL HAIRCUTS \$10.00
Includes shampoo.

Hurry, offer ends 12/10/05. Coupon must be presented at the time of service. No double discounts.

Barry:

From page D1

to essentially a Dunkin' Donuts for mosquitoes.

If you insist on having a traditional outdoor deck, follow these steps:

1. Go outside and, wearing steel-tipped work boots, carefully pace off an area the size of a deck.

2. Mark the corners by driving stakes into the ground, using a No. 6 Whacking Hammer. If you hear screaming, you have lawn vampires, and you should call your Realtor immediately.

3. Drive to a giant mega-warehouse home-fix'n's superstore that runs TV commercials wherein cheerful, knowledgeable employees help you find exactly what you need.

Take beef jerky, as you will be wandering the aisles for days, because those commercials are a big pile of ch'i. You will need to purchase the following deck parts: beams, joists, posts, bevels, headers, footers, thrusters, barristers and 8,000 metric feet of galvanized mahogany.

4. Nail these items together in the shape of a deck, as shown on the Bob Vila show.

That's all there is to it! Time to invite "the gang" over to enjoy some outdoor fun on your deck!

IMPORTANT SAFETY TIP: Send smaller, more-expendable members of the gang out onto the deck before you try it.

NIGHTTIME SAFETY TIP: Everybody should wear garlic.

NEXT WEEK'S HOME-OWNER TOPIC: Faster Gardening through Dynamite.

"Carpets clean enough to eat off of"

AQUA CARE
CARPET CLEANERS

(360) 576-0097

NEW AND USED FURNITURE

Sofas & loveseats (incl. leather), recliners, mattress sets, bunk beds, bedroom furniture, dining, curios, computer desks, appliances.

LOWEST PRICES ANYWHERE!

Open Sun-Thurs 9:30-8
Fri 9:30-3
Closed Sat.

bargaincenter

10205 NE 72nd Ave. 573-2582

relaxation

elements
day spa and salon

360.604.8345 • 16096 SE 15th Street
www.elementsdayspasalon.com

"A Place Like Home"

Padden Interiors
Embellishments for the Home

Blinds, Window Treatments & Bedding

5206 NE 78th Street, Vancouver • 360.699.5443
HOURS: Tue.-Sat. 10am-5pm

IMPERSONATOR BLUES

Clinton Roberts has joint custody of his 4-year-old son, Cole, with his ex-wife in St. Helens, Ore., keeping him tethered to the Northwest.



Elvis:

From page D1

every ethnicity — Mexican, African American, American Indian, Chinese, Taiwanese. He has seen a dwarf Elvis as well as one over 7 feet tall. Some are microphone-stand thin. Some are heavier than 300 pounds. He knows there's a place for him in there.

The Northwest, Roberts acknowledges, isn't the most nurturing area for this kind of thing. He's aware of only about a half-dozen serious impersonators in the region. Yet there are loyal pockets of people who buy his act for weddings, birthday parties, fairs and festivals. Around here, he gets most of his work at small-town taverns.

Since his basic material never changes, Roberts obsesses over the details of his interpretation. Once in character, he never says anything Elvis didn't say. He moves only as Elvis moved.

Roberts says that his mama played only Elvis tunes to him in the womb. A third-generation Teamster, Roberts knew driving trucks and other heavy equipment would be part of his destiny, just as it was for his father and uncle, grandfather and great-uncle. But friends at St. Helens High talked him into taking a part in the chorus of the musical "Grease." He participated in every one of his high school's plays after that, earning three first-place medals in state competitions.

After graduation, he thought his performing career might be over. Then, he happened to see an Elvis impersonator performing at the Portland Rose Festival in 2000. He did some research. Bought some videotapes and then tried out his act at the Vernonia Senior Center's weekly luncheon. Roberts has been refining the show ever since. Quips, lyrics and choreography all have been laboriously extracted frame by frame from various films of concert footage, "Elvis on Tour," "Aloha from Hawaii," "The Great Performances."

"(Becoming a purer incarnation of Elvis) started my whole life focusing on what I can do better, which has led me down some curvy roads," Roberts says. "It's kind of like an addiction that I can't stop. ... I guess I also could consider it a need for constant attention, if I broke it down raw. Isn't everybody in entertainment that way?"

Earlier in the day, before heading to Rocky's Place, Roberts prepares for the show in the dining room of his parents' home in east Vancouver. His son, Cole, plays in the backyard. Roberts needs child-care help from his family a couple of days each week as well as on performance nights. The single father blasts his head with nearly every droplet from a can of VO5, anticipating that his black hair will take a vigorous shaking tonight.

An uncle, Tim Pedersen, is enlisted to operate the sound system that Roberts rented for the performance at Rocky's. Pedersen is a last-minute replacement and hasn't done this before.

"All you've got to do is push play," Roberts reassures. "At the end of every song, it's very obvious. Just hit pause."

As Roberts autographs 30 red scarves that he intends to hand out to the exuberant ladies in the audience, Pedersen blurts, "I'm as nervous as a whore in church."

Roberts doesn't acknowledge the comment as he finishes gathering his things. He opens, then gulps down an entire RockStar energy drink. He could use a new white jumpsuit. He's regularly reattaching sequins and repairing rips in this one. He mentions that he was carrying 260 pounds on his 6-foot-3 frame in December before dropping 30 pounds over the course of the year. When he's this thin, the jumpsuit belt slips over his hips, and he has to constantly be tugging at it.

He attributes the inadvertent weight loss to the heavy labor involved in his job, moving around palettes in a Red-daway Trucking warehouse in Clack-

mas, Ore. He also doesn't get enough food or rest, trying to balance work, fatherhood and his career as an entertainer, which needs constant stoking.

He says he generally won't sacrifice time with his son for Elvis impersonation, so he doesn't travel to the many contests and auditions offered throughout the nation each year. Without a solid Elvis job in place, he won't be moving to Las Vegas or Branson, either. He would take that chance on faith, if Cole wasn't in the picture. But whatever frustration his parenting situation creates fizzes when he sees his son's face and thinks about how much the boy counts on him.

Roberts, in turn, doesn't sleep much. He doesn't date or have an active social life. He takes just about any opportunity offered to him and religiously practices in front of his videos. He keeps hoping that the right person will come along and find him.

"A lot of times, I don't even sleep on Friday nights," he says, as a way to prepare for Saturdays. "I don't get home (from work) until about 3:30 a.m., then I get out the sewing machine and start making scarves, write a new song list, polish my boots."

No business like it

After bolting through the back door of Rocky's with family in tow, the first person Roberts passes is a young woman leaning over a pool table, her cigarette smoldering nearby. After hitting the shot, she straightens up to reveal a volleyball-sized lump stretching out her shirt around her stomach. She takes a few drags while looking over Roberts and his crew, then returns to the game as they hoist a black back drop and place stage lights around the dance floor.

Heavy timbers line the walls of this nearly windowless tavern. At the end of a row of video lottery booths, there's a brightly illuminated Elvis pinball machine. A flashing jukebox plays "Crash," by Dave Matthews. The dance floor is under construction, with tape holding down one side. Roberts masks the makeshift stage with a tube of multi-colored lights and then positions the spotlights he's created out of coffee cans.

Sweat slides down his nose as he smokes another Camel. "Get me a Bud Light," he says to the waitress, "to loosen up." He orders a Corona for his uncle, who sits anxiously in front of the sound system.

Roberts' family takes over the tables next to the dance floor. Behind them are about 10 people invited by the tavern's manager. The other dozen people in the place keep shooting pool and chatting as Roberts begins.

"I'd like to sing my first record for you," he says.

After hearing the initial few notes, he snaps at Pedersen, "That's the wrong one. Back it up. Back it up. Start over." He looks over the set list, then sheepishly comments, "You were right. I was wrong. I thought I'd put something else on there."

The music begins again. Roberts' hips start gently wiggling to the familiar sounds of "Heartbreak Hotel." He finishes that tune and slogs through a series of ballads. As added percussion, the pool balls occasionally crack. The waitress walks around taking orders. Patrons drink their beer and every once in a while glance at the stage. One of Roberts' boisterous relatives urges, "Play something fast." His grandmother tries to start a clap-along, but only Roberts' mother joins her.

He keeps pushing through the material, though, for the next 90 minutes. The pregnant pool player leaves early in the set. The only people paying attention after awhile are his family members and a few of the folks at the bar manager's table. Roberts takes a break, downs the rest of his drink and heads out the back door to the van to retrieve his white jumpsuit for the second half of the show.

Outside, near the dumpster, he uses a red scarf to wipe the sweat from his head. He lights another cigarette.

The boisterous relative, uncle Scott Campbell, follows him out and states, "Those songs were too slow."

"But it's too hot in there for me to do one fast song after another," Roberts replies.

"I tell ya, Clinton," Campbell says. "It's time to pick it up. As a spectator, it's getting kind of boring in there."

"I know it was crap, most of it," Roberts says. "But that (portion of the show) was supposed to be from the '50s, and when I do most of those songs (in that style), I have to raise my voice up about an octave higher than I should have to sing. ... This is the crap you have to go through to get the big gigs."

Roberts drops his cigarette butt and grabs his white jumpsuit from the back of the van. He takes the costume into the tavern's single-stall bathroom, which is so small that he has to change with the door open. When he comes out, in the white suit and white boots, most of the people cheer.

That momentum gets cooled quickly by the costume contest. At first, there are only three entrants, including Roberts' mother, for the three prizes. After some coaxing, though, the tavern's manager walks up to the stage in a white T-shirt with a pack of cigarettes rolled up into his sleeve.

Roberts' '70s version of Elvis entices one guy to come over from the pool tables and sit down to watch. During the rendition of "Johnny B. Goode," a few people dance. Roberts tosses his grandmother a scarf during another number, but she turns around to talk to a relative as he makes the move. The scarf drops to the floor.

The place clears out well before his allotted time is up, leaving him singing just to his family during the final hour.

During "Are You Lonesome Tonight," he injects the lyrics "Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear / Fuzzy Wuzzy has no hair / Who cares?" It's a line Elvis used in concert to a lame crowd. Over the four hours, he performs about 60 songs, including hits such as "Blue Suede Shoes," "Can't Help Falling in Love" and "Blueberry Hill," plus a couple of medleys. He doesn't get any tips. Afterward, he acknowledges he's had worse nights, particularly when the crowd contains abusive hecklers.

"A lot of humiliation comes with this job," he says. "A lot of stuff that you just have to swallow."

What keeps him putting that white jumpsuit back on again are the other times, when the crowds are larger, more enthusiastic, more appreciative of his talents. His most recent performance, at the Wayside Tavern in Scappoose, Ore., turns out much better.

The patrons clap and cheer and dance and sing along, including a couple of co-workers curious enough to make the long drive. They were intrigued after hearing Roberts offer impromptu snippets of his act at the office. A few of the middle-aged women in the crowd fawn over him, make lewd comments and beg for one of his scarves as he sings "Happy Birthday" to a 61-year-old in their group.

"Some days, I might wake up dreading to have to sing those songs again," Roberts says. "But then, I can get on stage, with an atmosphere where people want you to do your thing. And that sets you on fire again."

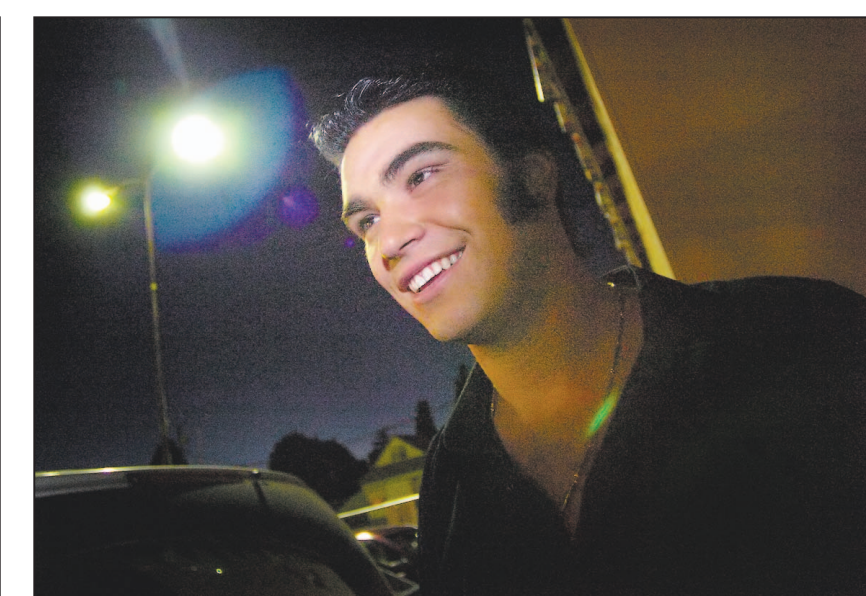
Roberts thinks he's as good of an Elvis impersonator as anybody else in the country. He just needs the right person to come to one of his shows. He increases those odds every time he performs, he says, wherever that might be. He's determined that's how he will become a star some day.

"I've just always got my feelers out for somebody that has a connection that I don't have," he says. "I never (turn down) a gig, because you never know what's going to happen."

"It's all by chance, he adds. "I'm pretty damn sure I'm close."



Vancouver's Clinton Roberts, 23, wasn't born until five years after Elvis Presley's death. But fueled by a love of the music, Roberts studies videotapes to faithfully try in his act to re-create the iconic image. Besides the lyrics, Roberts carefully chooses to use only banter that he's heard Elvis use with his crowds. And Roberts' moves, here at Rocky's Place tavern in Gladstone, Ore., are all taken directly from choreography in films. Top: Roberts' dressing room at Rocky's Place is a single-stall lavatory.



Above: After seeing Roberts perform parts of his act at the office, co-workers Mariko Froehle, center, and John Brogan drove to Scappoose, Ore., to see his most recent show. Above: Roberts contends that any performance — anywhere — could have someone in the crowd who could catapult his career.

Photos by Steven Lane
of The Columbian

"Some days, I might wake up dreading to have to sing those songs again. But then, I can get on stage, with an atmosphere where people want you to do your thing. And that sets you on fire again."

"I never (turn down) a gig, because you never know what's going to happen."



ON THE WEB
Video footage of Clinton Roberts:
www.columbian.com