



Staff photo by Brad Camp

Carl Nord, in addition to his softball activities, writes children's books and has a landscape maintenance business.

The patron saint of island children

By Kristan Hutchison
Staff Writer

Carl Nord could easily be a character in one of his favorite books — the cherry-cheeked man with an ever-present smile who turns children into movie stars.

On his own, Nord has done as much for island children as many organizations. It started when he was a freelance reporter for *The Review*, sent to cover the first girls' softball league. A photographer since childhood, Nord discovered a field full of kids eager to be on film.

In 1971, he bought a Super-8 movie camera through the mail and began making silent movies. For scripts, he adapted favorite novels, like the Nancy Drew mysteries, or drew inspiration from old adventure films and slapstick comedies.

He recruited huge casts of kids eager to see themselves on the silver screen. More than 650 children starred in the approximately 40 films he's made, so far. The largest

was a cast of 127 kids in "Suzette Meets the Perils of Pauline," filmed in 1976.

Often, Nord would take his young movie stars to shoot "on location." For many kids, it was their first visit to places like the Space Needle, the UW, or Woodland Park Zoo.

"It made you feel special. He was interested in what kids thought," said Rebecca Rekow, 23, who starred in Nancy Drew movies for many years as a child.

After editing and splicing the movies, Nord showed them in family living rooms. He visited on other occasions too, bringing gifts at Christmas, setting up treasure hunts, and taking rolls and rolls of film.

Nord, now 55, supports his hobby with a gardening and landscaping business he started in 1969. His oldest client is the Bainbridge Public Library, where he started maintaining the grounds 25 years ago.

When the library grew too big for one person to maintain, Nord was given the choice of working outside

on the grounds or inside with the books. He chose to be inside so he could be near the books. Every day of the year, including Christmas, Nord gets to to the library at 6 a.m., pulls the books out of the drop box and spends three hours cleaning and maintaining the library.

Nord never passes up a chance to see a new play in Seattle or a Mariners game. Last year was a record-breaker for him in both venues. He attended 25 plays and caught his first foul ball, "a leaping left-handed stab while clinging to my camera in my right hand."

Somehow, between all the plays and games, he still finds time to write Christmas cards to the kids he's known, now grown. They seldom write back.

"I always think I should get in touch with Carl again and invite him over for a movie or something," Rekow said. "But I know he's off with another group of kids and having a good time and that's the way it should be."