



Mrs. Elizabeth Duncan of Washington Valley Road, Warren, jokes with Jean Shepherd, author, at an autograph signing yesterday in the Bookhouse, Front Street, Plainfield.

## A day of golden memory

# Fans flock to see Shepherd

By HOLLIS BURKE

PLAINFIELD — They were all there. The gang from McDonald's, Gino's, and even a White Sox fan or two.

They lined up by the hundreds, all ages, shapes and sizes. They had one thing in common — their love for Jean Shepherd, writer, WOR radio cracker-barrel sage and humorist. He was signing his name here yesterday to his new book, "Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories," a collection of tales of his boyhood neighbors the Bumpuses in Indiana and others.

"My son's girlfriend proposed to Shepherd. I don't think she really meant it though," a woman gushed. "Oh, here he comes!"

The whole line of fans strained to look. "Keep to the left please," a voice pleaded.

THE AUTHOR strode in waving and beaming, clad in orange shirt and blue jeans, with multi-color patches on his leather vest. The orange shirt matched an orange table cloth and orange trifoma flowers at the Bookhouse on Front Street. He had just come from two hours of signing at the Plainfield Book Shop. Nearly 1,000 copies were signed during the afternoon.

Everyone besieged him with "Where's Ernie?" "What ever happened to Watanabe?" Watanabe was too long ago. He was way back in 1958 when Shepherd began his nightly spiel on WOR and told how his Aunt Minnie threw Uncle Carl's welfare false teeth down the air shaft and how he refused to apply for another set.

A girl with an anti-pollution T-shirt approached. He grabbed the T-shirt and began signing it with symbols, one which he said indicated the "bellybutton." Shepherd told her, "I like pollution — makes me comfortable and secure. Whenever I see a

beer can floating down the river, I know I'm home."

Shepherd's secretary, Lee, said, "We came in a limousine supplied by the publisher because the last time we came here, Jean's car was stripped for souvenirs."

PEOPLE will stand in line for anything. Many times they reach the head of the line looking for Jean Shepherd, the folksinger," the author said.

Not all fans brought books to be signed. One 12 or 13-year-old lad brought the box his nose flute came in. Another asked "Shep" to sign his white plastic kazoo. The kazoo and nose flute are standard on "Shep's" radio show. He obliged a fellow ham radio operator by signing his call letters "K2ORS."

Another girl brought a collage made of "Mary Jane" and "Ovaltine" wrappers, a "Dracula" advertisement and a drawing of the "Magic Mountain" at the 1939 New York World's Fair. The work was her impression of "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash," another Shepherd book. He was rapt in admiration.

To a White Sox fan he said, "You don't become a White Sox fan. You're born one, like you're born Rumanian . . . If they end up first, it's because all the others quit. It was a big day for my old man when they came in third."

Another fan, a girl with long hair and hot pants, told him, "Girls like to dig caves too." On women's lib: "It's not going to make any difference. Let's face it, the sexes are different. Would you really want it otherwise?"

FOR MANY, Shepherd forged a link between generations. "My Dad said you forgot the green felt cloth when you were talking about the Army pay table." Another lad and his mom left a note, "Please come to our house for meat loaf and

red cabbage."

A blind youth told "Shep" to please transcribe his new book into a "talking book" soon.

Shep had a word for each. Spying an "Indian motorcycle label sewn to an Explorer Scout shirt he asked, "You have an Indian? What year?" The youth replied, "1934."

"That's a classic. Worth money."

Many items of tribute collected on the author's table.

Some brought "Twinkies" pastries. Others brought candy.

The Hoosier told the gathering, "It must be difficult to live in New Jersey — so close to civilization." He urged them, "Petition the Assembly to make The Flagship (Route 22 — Union) the capitol. They can all meet on the bridge and sail the Ship of State."

At another point he said, "I love Great Eastern Mills on a Saturday night — and the loudspeaker which booms. In ten minutes, there will be a donut sale."

The line of fans kept coming in. "Keep to the left, please."