

## Everton Bandshell By Julie Showalter

1996

In 1955 the main street of Everton, Missouri, was one block long. On the south side were Elsie Grisham's General Store, three empty buildings, and a closed-down movie theater. On the north side were a drug store with a soda fountain, a feed store, the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank, and a vacant lot. In the middle of the street at the end of the block by Elsie's stood the field stone band stand. On the front, a concrete square said, "WPA 1937."

In the summer people would drive in on Friday nights for the shows. Anyone could be in a show — my sisters and I sang twice on Friday nights and my friend Sara Grant and I told jokes once. Some people sat on blankets at the foot of the band shell, but most sat in cars angled so they could see the performers. After each number they would honk their horns — quick tap-tap-taps like clapping.

The summer I was going into third grade, Maryln Gillespie sang in the shows. She would get out of Johnny Bryant's black Ford pickup, walk through the group at the base of the band stand — blonde hair, ballerina slippers, a tight-waisted, full-skirted dress with half a dozen can-can slips underneath. She would sing Hank Williams songs — "I'm Walking the Floor over You," "If you've got the Money, Honey, I've got the Time," strumming her own guitar. She was sixteen. She could yodel.

More than anything, I wanted to be Maryln Gillespie.