

Acting should be bigger than life. Scripts should be bigger than life. It should all be bigger than life.  
Bette Davis

JUNE 2012

The Newsletter  
of the  
Heritage Hunt  
Little Theater



# Play Time

Come play with us!



## ...And Now the Show is Over

by Kathryn and Gene Schmiel, Co-Directors

It's impossible to describe the feelings we had after the lights dimmed on the last night of *Old Hams*: a mixture of rich and intense sensations, a combination of exultation, relief, gratitude, sadness, satisfaction and appreciation. We were struck with the immediate realization that this was a unique experience, not to be duplicated again. . .until the next time!

So many factors came together to contribute to the successful production of *Old Hams*, so many people came forward to help. We counted at least 40 HHLT members who volunteered in one way or another. And we can't forget the enthusiastic Heritage Hunt audiences (nearly 400 in attendance). We are so grateful to everyone who brought friends and family to see *Old Hams*. What a pleasure to put on a show for an appreciative audience! We were thrilled with the new mikes (John Bisaga's suggestion) and very grateful for the purchase of them. They added immensely to everyone's enjoyment. We are very grateful to everyone listed in the program who worked so hard to contribute to the success of the production, and we also want to mention the many others who helped behind the scenes. Those included members who helped Ted Day build, paint, put up, and take down the set: Art Moscatello, Jack Merelman, Don Jewell, Walt Meyer, Jane Becker, Jean Gentry, Ed Prendergast, M.J. and Gene Brickach. We also want to recognize those who greeted and took tickets: Arlene Maroney, Sharon Ferguson, Lynne Block, Marlene Griffenhagen and Kathy Carrico. To those whom I have forgotten, I apologize. Many thanks to all of you!

Now *Old Hams* is over and the fall production is just around the corner. As the saying goes, that's entertainment.

On with the show! ▲

## —Calendar—

### June General Meeting

Thursday, June 21, 7pm  
Craft Room

### September

Annual Potluck Picnic TBA

### Fall Production Dates

October 23-25



## Inside

Local Theaters .....	Pg 2
Play Review .....	Pg 2
Prez Sez .....	Pg 3
2012 Board .....	Pg 3
Did You Know? .....	Pg 3
Pitfalls of a Little Theatre .....	Pg 4
Playwriting Contest Winner .....	Pg 5

## ATTENTION!!

A new feature has been added to *PlayTime*.

You now can click on any **BLUE WORD** or blue symbol (▲) to move you to other pages or websites.

## Local Theaters: X

by Bets Knepley

The McLean Community Players (MCP), a combination of the Great Falls Players, C.A.S.T. in McLean and the McLean Theatre Alliance, has been entertaining the community since about 1964. It is a 501(c)3 organization.

MCP welcomes new members, especially those who enjoy working behind the scenes.

All their performances are at the Alden Theatre located at 1234 Ingleside Avenue in McLean. Tickets (ranging from \$20 to \$14) can be purchased at the Box Office, by mail and phone and, also, on-line.

The Alden Theatre is wheelchair accessible. And it is equipped with an infrared audio system for those who are hearing impaired. It can be used with or without a hearing aid.

Their 2011-12 season ends with *Legally Blonde, the Musical* (which is based on the movie). Performances are from July 13-July 29. (This play is the 'hot' one of the year. Barter Theatre in Abingdon, VA is doing a long run of it and Reston will open its 2012-13 season with it!)

Their 2012-13 season lists *What I Did Last Summer*, next to normal, *Rumors* and *Damn Yankees*.

You can sign up to receive their newsletter and audition notices.

Check MCP's website for more info at

<http://www.mcleanplayers.org>



## Play Review: *The Porch*

by Joey Wagner

*The Porch* performed by the Winchester Little Theater was billed as "watch five amusing and all too familiar seniors spend Labor Day week-

end together in this hilarious comedy. It's a tale of enduring friendships and sobering revelations."

It sounded like a play that might work here in Heritage Hunt. I was very curious to see the set and took notes for future reference. There was a note in the playbill: Contains mature subject matter (More about that later).

The play is set in a neighborhood of an eastern Massachusetts mill town and opens with three ladies of a certain age discussing things that ladies of a certain age discussed in 2002—like the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal in ALL its ramifications. This was the "mature subject matter." Later, a conversation between the husbands is "mature" as well. It was racy but also very funny. I think Heritage Hunt could handle it.

As Labor Day continues, the three women and two men — their long suffering husbands — come to life as a mystery unfolds involving one of the ladies. It was easy to relate to these longtime friends.

I laughed a lot and generally enjoyed the play. Some of the dialogue was repetitive which made the play rather long, but the acting was good and the plot was interesting. Early on you are aware that a man has returned to town which upsets the widowed Alma. Who is he and why is she so upset about his return? The mystery unfolded slowly keeping interest high. The lead female character, Gert, was particularly well cast. Jude Wynne played her as a gritty, gutsy woman who has lived long enough to say what she thinks and not worry about what others think.

One of the reasons I like Winchester Little Theater productions is the unique theater. It is an old Pennsylvania Railroad freight station (circa 1895). Many of the windows and doors are original. You can still see remnants of the tracks overgrown with weeds behind the station.

The theater is small-long and narrow with only two rows of seats on the sides, and the tickets sell out fast. Check out their website [www.wiltonline.org](http://www.wiltonline.org) for the 2012-134 season. ▲



## The Prez Sez...

### Curtain Calls

*Old Hams* is now history. It was a big success. We had 394 in attendance, over the show's three-day run, which ended on May 17th. At \$8 per person, you can do the math to determine the gross. But more than the attendance and revenue side, our success can be measured by the involvement of a majority of the HHLT family participating in some phase of the production, including three of our newest members (\*). At the risk of leaving someone out, I'm going to give shout-outs to those who contributed:

**Directors:** Kathryn and Gene Schmiel

**Producer:** Jane Becker

**Stage Managers:** Sandy Thompson, Joan Patton\* & Helen Esposito

**Set Designers, Builders, Painters, Construction & De-construction**

**Crews:** Ted Day, Joey Wagner, Don Jewell, Ed Prendergast, Kathryn & Gene Schmiel, Jane Becker, Jean Gentry, M.J. & Gene Brickach, Art Moscatello, Chuck Breder, Jack Merelman & Roger Del Rosario

**Make-up Crew:** Sandy Iasiello, Margaret Gorzka, Treva Whyte & Phyllis Shrader

**Lighting, Sound, and Video:** Dave Milbradt, John Bisaga & Alan Skerker

**Photography, Posters, Programs & Publicity:** Ed & Bets Knepley, Joyce Mancinni & Bill Harrison

**Ticket Sales and Check-in:** Betty Hitchcock, Denny Cumber, Marlene Griffenhagen\*, Kathy Carrico\*, Arlene Maroney, Sharon Ferguson & Lynne Block

**The Cast:** Chuck Breder, Nanette Ross, Dot Schuetze, Lanna Krogman, Roger Del Rosario, Jack Merelman, Betty Hitchcock, Midge Teahan & Helen Esposito

**Understudy:** Joan Patton\*

It was my honor to work with all of you on several phases of this labor of love.

### Curtain Up

Not wanting members to be thinking of the next play before the current one was completed, M.J. Brickach has kept information for the fall production under wraps. She will have an announcement regarding the play at the meeting.

### High Finance

The board has struck a 2012 budget and will present it to the club. You know, from following the minutes and/or my messages, that the club spent \$1,600 on the purchase of eight microphone headsets. It was money well spent. The sound quality, during the production of *Old Hams*, was outstanding, and they were barely noticeable. We will have professional grade sound for years to come. A special thanks goes out to John Bisaga and LSTV for bringing them to our attention and urging us to purchase them.

### Farewell

*Old Hams* was Lanna Krogman's last show with HHLT. We all wish her the best as she relocates to Tennessee to be with her family. ▲

Walt

## 2012 HHLT BOD

President

**Walt Meyer**

Vice President

**Kathryn Schmiel**

Secretary

**Sandy Mills**

Treasurer

**Mary Glascock**

Activities

**Art Moscatello**

Membership

**Betty Hitchcock**

Member-at-Large

**Ed Prendergast**

## Did You Know...

by Bets Knepley

...that Elderhostel, or Road Scholar as it's now called, provides many theatre programs over the year? A great one is the *Summer Theatre Experience in the Berkshires*. You will attend four plays from a wide variety of theatres in the Berkshires and Vermont plus visit two museums (and more!). An award-winning actress, director and professor of theater arts will help you explore each play's characters, themes and productions. It lasts 6 days and 5 nights. The dates are: July 22-27; August 5-10; and August 19-24. Program # is 1565RJ.

I've been to many Road Scholar theatre programs, in Florida and New England. I'd recommend either, but New England has more variety. For more info, click on

<http://www.roadscholar.org>



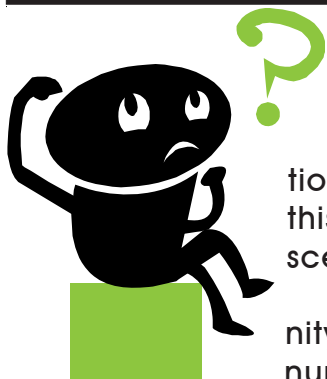
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## Pitfalls of a Community Theater

by Mike Polo from the Green Room

Below, you will find a list of organizational “don’ts” based on observation and experience with a number of theatrical organizations. Along with this list of “pitfalls,” you’ll find explanations of what kind of problems these scenarios can generate and why you should avoid them.

**Pitfall #1—Too many board members**—An ideal board for a community theater should be anywhere from 5-9 members, and always an odd number. More than that, and discussions and decision-making can get bogged down, leading to inaction.

**Pitfall #2—Too few board members**—Fewer than 5 board members leads to perception problems. A board must have enough people to assure diversity of opinion and thought.

**Pitfall #3— Too much detail dealt with at the board level**—Committees should be used to spread the work around. If a board spends too much time dealing with minutiae, important decisions get short shrift. Let committees of members handle the arguments and details and, if necessary, bring recommendations to the board.

**Pitfall #4— Unempowered committees**—Make sure committees have enough authority to do their jobs without having to come to the board for every decision.

**Pitfall #5— No budget for individual committees and shows**—Budgets allow committees and productions to spend money without board approval, up to certain preset levels. This again allows the board to deal with more important issues than how much to spend on toilet paper for this month.

**Pitfall #6— Non-member decision making**—Avoid this one like the plague. Create a membership standard and invest the membership with certain privileges, such as voting for the board, etc. Make sure that members are aware of the rights and privileges that come with membership.

**Pitfall #7—Inactive members voting for board members**—Be sure your bylaws spell out the voting requirements and make sure they go beyond paying dues. Require attendance at a set number of board or general meetings in order to vote. Require participation in other ways such as backstage or committee work. The privilege of having a say in how the organization is run has to be earned.

**Pitfall #8— Inactive board members**—If your board is composed of members of your theater company, a majority of them should be active members. A board composed mostly of people who no longer work on shows runs the risk of being out of touch with the needs and wants of the members down in the trenches.

**Pitfall #9— Not keeping members informed**—An uninformed membership tends to drift. They don’t feel as if they’re a part of the organization. Publish a periodic newsletter for everyone, letting them know about important board decisions and upcoming productions and auditions. Make your board minutes available to the membership. Keep them involved in what’s going on.

**Pitfall #10— Policies shared by word of mouth**—How does one get to be a director? What are the producer’s responsibilities? Write ‘em down and make sure they’re available to everyone. Policies are not bylaws. The board has to have the flexibility to change them as circumstances change, but they should not be changed on a whim.

*From the Editor: I found this article interesting. How do you think HHLT rates? Is there room for improvement? For changes? If you think there is, please notify a board member or email your suggestions to the editor ([bjknepley@comcast.net](mailto:bjknepley@comcast.net)). Thank you. ▲*



## First Winner of the Play Writing Contest

by Bets Knepley



Congratulations to winner of our first Play Writing Contest, Kathryn Schmiel. I thought it would be interesting for our members and potential playwrights to hear about our first winner's experience. So I asked her a few questions and she graciously responded. Thank you, Kathryn, for sharing.

**Question:** Why did you decide to enter the contest?

**Answer:** I have greatly enjoyed writing short stories, vignettes of experiences, poems. I never tried to write a play before, but having read a number (since joining HHLT), I thought it would be fun. I had a lot of ideas about the set, scenery, characters, costumes, fewer ideas about plot and action, but those kind of developed as I wrote.

**Question:** Have you ever entered another type of writing contest? If so, what was it?

**Answer:** No, I've never entered any contests.

**Question:** Have you ever written a play, novel, short story, poem, etc before? If so, what and when?

**Answer:** When we lived overseas (while Gene was in the Foreign Service) I wrote an occasional vignette about interesting (or what I thought were interesting) experiences we had. A couple of these were published in the *Foreign Service Journal* in a section for amateur writers.

**Question:** Where did you get the idea (plot)?

**Answer:** I had been casting around for plays that Gene and I might produce—light, humorous plays with a familiar factor (maybe a well-known author or previously produced Broadway play or TV show). I was considering various mysteries like Agatha Christie's (plays with a group of characters with a common threat). I was also looking for scripts of old TV shows like *Golden Girls* when I came upon a website for *Gilligan's Island*. The idea of a shipwreck plus mystery sort of jelled at the same time as the play-writing contest was announced. I knew that I didn't want to attempt anything deep or serious as I have no profound insights to offer so this idea seemed to work.

**Question:** Would you give us a brief synopsis of your play?

**Answer:** A random group of tourists go on a pleasure cruise around some fictional Caribbean islands. A sudden storm inundates the boat, and the tourists as well as the captain and his deckhand are swept overboard. All miraculously survive. Two of the passengers are quite suspicious, but not until the boat's radio is discovered (still amazingly working) do the remaining survivors learn that the suspicious man is an escaped convict. The remainder of the play involves the passengers' attempts to capture the criminal and his assistant and to be rescued.

**Question:** Did you outline the play...or what method did you use? Did you research on how to write a play before starting?

**Answer:** I guess I did a sort of research in that I studied plays for format. I don't know what you call it, but I realized from reading plays that all the factors need to be in place by the end of the first act and that the second act involves the resolution of the "conflict." I didn't write the play chronologically. When I got an idea for a scene (or a part of a scene), I wrote it down (on vacation, in the car, really anywhere), strung them together, eliminated some etc. I rewrote the opening a couple of times.

**Question:** Do you plan to direct the play?

**Answer:** I don't know. It would need some work for that.

**Question:** What are you planning to do with your huge prize—go to Disney World, take a trip around the world, buy FaceBook stock?

**Answer:** I bought the sofa and chair at Salvation Army that we used in *Old Hams*. I hope they will be used again!!! They were perfect for the set of Ophelia Davis's mansion.

**Question:** Are you planning to enter the 2012 contest?

**Answer:** No, not this year. I would like to on the committee though.

**Question:** Did you have fun writing the play?

**Answer:** Oh, yes. It was fun. I love creating characters and putting words in their mouths. ▲