

The Newsletter  
of the  
Heritage Hunt  
Little Theater



# Play Time

Come play with us!

## UPDATE: *Old Hams*

by Kathryn and Gene Schmiel, Co-Directors

### —Calendar—

#### March General Meeting

Thurs Mar 15 —7pm—Craft Room

#### April General Meeting

Thurs April 19—7pm—Craft Room

#### May Production

*Old Hams*

May 15-17

Clubhouse Ballroom



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### 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.

Ever wonder where the movie stars of the bygone era are, the comic actors, tap-dancers, dramatic actresses, players in westerns, historic dramas, or war movies have gone? The stars we used to see gracing the covers of *Photoplay* and *Motion Picture*, the stars "Entertainment Tonight" never talks about: where are they? In the spring production of *Old Hams*, you will get a glimpse into the lives of a fictional handful of those aging talents.

Rose and Iris Blume, who began their careers as a sister act in vaudeville, are sharing a room in the Burbank home of their long-time friend, actress Ophelia Davis. From vaudeville to the heyday of the studio system, they both made a successful transition to Hollywood. However, age and the changing nature of movies severely limited their role choices until they found themselves nearly penniless. Rose, angered and embittered by her reduced circumstances, is played by Nanette Ross who brings a strong personality to this key role. Iris, Rose's younger sister, with a soft, naïve nature, finds it hard to believe their situation could be so dire. Dot Schuetze is a gentle, incredulous Iris who eventually comes to appreciate the serious problem they face.

Colorful and flamboyant Clara Voyant played the beautiful, languid heroine in exotic adventure films. Now facing a future with no hero to come to her rescue, she deals with her fears by foretelling the future and retreating from reality. Clara is played by Midge Teahan who takes her character from pensive and musing to realistic when necessary.

Eddie Chambers and Gus Hall, longtime friends from their studio days, round out the residents of Ophelia's home. Eddie, who enjoyed modest success as a dramatic actor, is fearful of losing the only home and family he knows. He reassures himself by repeating, occasionally accurately, well-known lines from famous works. Jack Merelman, as Eddie, shows the vulnerable side of this former actor. Gus Hall, who spent his career playing second fiddle to Lon Chaney in a string of early horror movies, is eager to reprise his tough guy image. Walt Meyer as Gus shows both his bravado and affection.

Next month we will meet the other characters in *Old Hams*. In the meantime rehearsals have begun and are in the early stages. We once again thank everyone who has offered to help. We are very grateful, for it is definitely a team effort. ▲

## Local Theaters: VI

by Bets Knepley

The Elden Street Players were founded in 1988. As a community theatre, their all volunteer staff and casts are continuously striving to push the limits of what is possible in their intimate "black box space" at the Industrial Strength Theatre located in the Sunset Business Park in Herndon. There is no real stage to separate the audience from the players. This hybrid design combines the best of an open arena stage with the single direction focus of a traditional proscenium stage. The steep "rake" of their seats means that every seat is unobstructed.

ESP states "Our brand of theatre is not for everyone, for which we make no apologies. We try to offer theatre that is challenging and thought provoking, as well as entertaining." *The Times Community Newspapers* has written, "...the boldest area theatrical productions have come from the creative energy of the ESP."

I believe that ESP meets their mission statement. I have seen several entertaining plays there. I have seen several thought provoking ones. I have also left a few of their plays at intermission. Was I wrong to leave? Perhaps the rest of the play would have satisfied me and made me wiser or more tolerant? Would you leave a play? Have you ever left one?

ESP are performing six plays for their 2011-12 season plus five for their Young Audiences series. You can purchase tickets online—no reserved seating. Visit their website at <http://www.eldenstreet.com> for complete information about this interesting little theatre. ▲

Treasurer Mary Glascock reported a balance of \$9,539.64.

Vice President Kathryn Schmiel reported on the progress of our May production. She also asked for readers for the Playreading Committee.

Roger DelRosario reported on the Play Contest Committee, which has started reading the six submitted plays.

Walt Meyer reported on the no Friday-performance for our May production.

Membership Chair Betty Hitchcock announced that she had two new prospects.

Lois Potter asked for pictures for *A Hatful of Humor* and *A Few Good Years* for our scrapbook.

Joyce Mancini asked members to join a group that will attend the FCP's production on March 11.

Gene Schmiel suggested that we have a stand-in who will attend all rehearsals and be familiar with all parts in case a cast member is unable to perform.

Complete minutes can be read on the HHLT website. ▲



A big welcome to new members **GINNY** and **Charles Chapman**, **Kathy Carrico** and **Marlene Griffenhagen**. We're so happy that you decided to join our organization. ▲

## Play Review: *Smoke on the Mountain*

by Bets Knepley



*Smoke on the Mountain* is the first in a trilogy. Set in the 1940s, the trilogy is about the gospel-singing Sanders family. These three plays require a very skilled set of performers. The cast must be honest actors, good singers and able to play multiple instruments (or sign!). Since this combination is rare, those who have these talents often find themselves recast in productions across the country. And four of the Wayside cast have performed in seven to twelve different productions.

The story line is thin, but the music may touch your heart and get your toes tapping. I liked the characters, as each had a unique personality. And there were some very humorous moments. The trilogy is based on the Bible verse: "He who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke."

Between 1991 and 2001, *Smoke on the Mountain* was the most produced play in regional theater. The matinee performance we attended had a full house. Wayside Artistic Director Warner Crocker is always at the door, greeting his theater goers and thanking them for coming. What a nice gesture! ▲

## The Prez Sez...

### Much Ado About Nothing

That sums up our pursuit of changing the minds of the members of the Board of Directors (BOD) and the Food and Beverage (F&B) Committee felt like. On February 21, Kathryn Schmiel and I appeared before F&B. They took the hard line that the "No Friday" policy is a one-year experiment and they won't make any exceptions, even if a group is willing to pay for dinners. Kathryn and I felt there was nothing to be gained by taking another run at the BOD. So, *Old Hams* will be staged on May 15-17.

### All's Well That Ends Well

The six plays submitted for our first play-writing contest have been read and evaluated. The five members of the committee read the plays without knowledge of who the authors were, as the top sheets were removed by Jane Becker and put them in a sealed envelope. The winning play is being turned over to the play selection committee, with the author's identity still being withheld, for evaluation for inclusion in our library of potential productions. The winner will be announced on opening night of *Old Hams* and every night thereafter.

### Two Gentlemen of Verona

They have nothing on two women of Heritage Hunt. Kathy Carrico and Marlene Griffenhagen are HHLT's newest members. They made it to the birthday party, but if you didn't meet them, make sure you do at this month's meeting. To date, membership chair, Betty Hitchcock has brought in five new members.

### The Merchant of Venice

Shylock's soliloquy was just one of the acts at our 9<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Drama, comedy, song and dance were all on the playbill. Kudos to Art Moscatello for putting together a memorable, fun-filled evening.

### As You Like It

Many club members have expressed concern that our shows and performances by other groups, such as *Men in Song* and *Women of Note*, are closely grouped together. The board has been discussing the months in which we schedule our plays. At the meeting, we will discuss holding our performances in early March and late September to early October.

### The Taming of the Shrew

That can describe the feelings of the co-directors, producer, cast members, and production staff *Old Hams*. They are all hard at work and having a lot of fun learning lines, blocking, and working on all the pre-production planning. While it's still early in the process, things are falling nicely into place.

### The Tempest

This play praises the glories of reconciliation and forgiveness. So, if you reconcile your outstanding dues you'll receive the forgiveness of Treasurer Mary Glascock.

### The Comedy of Errors

Some might argue that's a description of this message! See you at the meeting. ▲

Walt

## HHPACC Needs Your Support

by M.J. Brickach

A few years ago, HHLT was one of the original donors to the Hylton Center, pledging \$2,500 to buy a seat with our name engraved on it. Our name is also in the

pro-grams and on the wall. The HH



group has been supporting, fund-raising and garnering support for the center over the past 5 years.

We've worked hard to organize seven fund-raisers here. The time has come for our final fund-raiser, Sunday, April 1 at 3pm in the Ballroom. It will be a **Trivia Contest**, consisting of answering 60 questions in six categories as well as deciding whether a second set of 60 statements is "**Real or Not Real.**"

The cost is \$20pp. Prizes will be awarded. You can bring your own team or come alone.

It would be great if many HHLT members decide to compete! I will be the Mistress of Ceremonies and look forward to seeing you there.

Spread the word, as we'd love to fill the Ballroom with contestants! ▲





## The Spotlight Is on 'Lucky' Joe Ganey

by Bets Knepley

Member Joe Ganey was born and grew up in Buffalo—the second youngest of ten. He grew up in a home with one phone, one TV, one bathroom, one car. He and his wife Peggy (and Golden Retriever, Muskie) moved to Ferrier Court three years ago.

He worked 31 years for Eastman-Kodak before retiring with a permanent disability after suffering a massive stroke at 51. His doctors thought his chance of talking and walking again were slim. But Joe believed that “You control your disability or it controls you.” And control it, he did, but it took many years to regain what he had lost. Since his stroke, Joe has become a strong advocate for those who have suffered strokes. He has volunteered 1500 hours at a local hospital. He served as a Eucharistic Minister for the home bound. For 18 years he has shared his experiences with graduating therapists at Shenandoah University. Joe says, “I have learned life is precious and nothing should ever be taken for granted, especially our health.” He considers himself as ‘lucky’ to have beaten the odds and regained his health.

We have Ed Prendergast to thank for encouraging Joe to join our group. Joe thinks HHLT has helped him with his memory and sharpened some of his other skills. Joe was one of our members who entered our Playwriting Contest. He also belongs to the HH Bocce and the Nine Hole Golf teams.

Be sure to give Broadway Joe a big hello and bow when you see him. ▲



Broadway Joe

## Our Ninth Birthday Party

by Art Moscatello, Activities Director

Forty members gathered in the Mountain View Room on February 16 to celebrate HHLT's ninth anniversary. In true thespian fashion, the theme of the evening was a private showing of a playlet appropriately entitled *The Ninth Anniversary*. The playlet was produced and directed by our Activities Director, Art Moscatello, with talented characterizations by LT members.

The playlet consisted of two acts with an intermission for the birthday cake and beverages and engaging in chit chat with background music by Jack Merelman.

**Act I:** Scene 1: Jack on the piano; Scene 2: Art Moscatello walking down HHLT's Memory Lane; Scene 3: Cancelled due to illness (Gene & MJ Brickach musical duet); Scene 4: Ina Mayer & Joyce Mancini in a *Teachers' Gems* skit; Scene 5: Walt Meyer's interpretation of a Shakespearean soliloquy in today's environment; Scene 6: Helen Esposito, Treva Whyte, Natalie June & Faye Green in a Line Dance.

**Act II:** Scene 1: “Broadway” Joe Ganey talked of his HHLT encounters; Scene 2: Roger delRosario's portrayal of a Shakespearean soliloquy; Scene 3: Kathryn & Gene Schmiel's portrayal by of two lovers in *Yesterday*; Scene 4: Denny Cumber & Jane Becker in a political humor skit; Scene 5: Art Moscatello in a song & dance number; Scenes 6, 7, 8 & 9: *That's Entertainment* sung by Tony Bennett; door prizes (brandy and wine to Kathryn Schmiel and wine to Dot Schuetze); piano selections by Jack Merelman; and an OPEN Mic (which was CLOSED due to no takers).

**Credits:** Special thanks for Walt Meyer's photography; Bets Knepley's assistance for HHLT memories; Lois Potter for HHLT's photo album; Betty Hitchcock's assistance with door prizes; and Sandy Iasiello's assistance in serving the birthday cake.

I purposely gave a blow by blow accounting of the big “bash” so those of you who did not/could not attend—wish you had and will make sure to attend the next one. ▲



Dot & her wine



Ooo la la!

## 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**

## Do You Know?

*by Bets Knepley*

That every year there is a Senior Theatre Festival? This year's will be held in the heart of New Orleans from June 3-7 at Harrah's Hotel & Casino. You can attend performances and workshops representing the very best in Senior Theatre designed to help you perform at your highest level.

Also Senior Theatre is coming to Washington, DC this August. All things Senior Theatre are featured in these sessions at the ATHE conference.

Complete information on these two events can be read at [www.seniorthetre.com](http://www.seniorthetre.com) ▲



*Newsletter is edited & published  
by Bets Knepley*

<http://www.hhlittletheater.wordpress.com/>

## Consider this...

*by Bets Knepley*

Many of us in the HHLT, complain and mutter about our stage and its availability. Hey, I know because I am one of them. However, after reading about the facility situation of other little theaters, I have 'sorta' changed my mind.

When I directed & produced our first play, *Don't Say No to the USO*, we all moaned and groaned—no lighting, no sound, nowhere to construct or store scenery, no dressing rooms or bathrooms, etc. Well, we did pull it off and had a great deal of fun and laughs along the way. Boy! Are we tough old birds or what?

Many of the local little theater performances that I attend are in the theater's own facility—Wayside, Warrenton, Fauquier, Elden Street for example. Others share a facility—Prince William, Vpstart, Reston, Castaway, McLean and Providence.

Owning your own facility may seem like a great option. But there as many cons as pros. In the recent past, several local theaters have run into financial trouble covering their costs (Wayside and Fauquier—due to long-planned expansion and maintenance expenses).

The other option, sharing/renting, can be frustrating schedule-wise. Some little theaters have to create site-specific seasons. One performed their plays on a puppet stage, so they had to be very creative in their choice of plays. Others must tear down their sets every night because the space will be used during the day.

Both options have restrictions of some kind and in order for a little theater to survive, they learn to adjust, adjust, adjust.

I think that we are fortunate in that we don't 'directly' have to cover any maintenance/rental costs. All in all, in spite of all the Heritage Hunt rules, regulations, policies, I think we have a nice space here for our plays—and an almost 'built-in' audience.

But there is the fact that our 'built-in' audiences are shrinking. Over the past eight years our audiences have decreased from a total of 800 to around 390. Is it because of the fact that most of the HH performance groups use the same cycle (April/May and Oct/Nov)? I think that this may be the case. So, I'm asking the Board and members to consider changing our cycle to Feb/March and Aug/Sept. There are certain risks with this cycle also, but it may be worthwhile to try this for several years.

If you agree with the two opinions above or disagree, please email me ([bjknepley@comcast.net](mailto:bjknepley@comcast.net)) your comments. Thank you. ▲

