



Winging It



The National Society for the Preservation of Tent, Folk and Repertoire Theatre



C O N F E R E N C E A T T E N D E E S 2 0 1 1

Another successful conference has come and gone. See the back page of this issue of *Winging It* for a copy of this year's program.

One of the highlights for us at this conference was Michael Zahs' program: *Frank Brinton's Magic Lantern Slides*. For many of us this was our first experience seeing a magic lantern at work and the large variety of slides that were available. In addition to this we had a vast array of experienced speakers including Richard Poole whom, I somehow managed to leave off the program. Needless to say we found room for him to speak. Unfortunately, Ann Richardson did not get to join us. She was traveling by bus from California and came into Denver just about the time that the spring snow storm hit. So, she ended up stuck in Denver. By the time she could have gotten to Mt. Pleasant, the conference would have been over. So, she ended up getting back on the bus and returning home. Maybe next year the weather will cooperate and we'll get to see Ann in Mt. Pleasant!

Tentative dates for next year are in this issue of *Winging It*. If you have conference ideas, please share them with us. Mark the dates on your calendar now and make sure you are here next year. And, by the way, the Brazelton is now a Comfort Inn and Suites—and it is really nice!

H. Gene Biby

FINAL CURTAIN—BILLIE TURLEY



Billie Frances Turley, 87, died on Thursday, March 10, 2011 in Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Billie was born May 10, 1923 in Fulton, Missouri and on April 26th, 1947 she married Leo Turley in Fulton. Leo died September 19, 1994.

She graduated from Fulton High School in 1940 and attended Northeast Missouri State Teachers College (now Truman University) in Kirksville, Missouri. She was employed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration as a County Office Manager and later as a State Administrative Supervisor of FHS offices of sixteen southeast Missouri counties. After she married Leo, they moved to St. Charles, Missouri where Billie became a secretary to nine instructors of the World War II On-the-Farm Training program at St. Charles High School. They moved to Mount Pleasant, Iowa in 1949. She then worked four more years for the FHA.

Billie and Leo began volunteering at Midwest Old Threshers (the Theatre Museum's parent organization) in the 1950s and she began employment with Old Threshers in 1972 and retired in 1988. She had worked part-time since then. She was a charter member of the National Theatre Society and was active in the affairs of the Theatre Museum since its beginning in 1973. She began writing news and history for Old Threshers in 1963, became editor of the organization's newspaper in 1973, and continued in that capacity for 30 years.

Since the 1950s, she had contributed news to the MT. PLEASANT NEWS, serving on occasion as a guest columnist. She was a local state reporter for the Burlington HAWK EYE for 18 years.

She had been active in Girl Scouting for 12 years, serving simultaneously as a troupe leader, consultant, neighborhood chairman, and Shining Trail member. In 1970, she was awarded Girl Scouting's coveted "Thanks Award."

She was a life member of the Henry County Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary Post #2561, was treasurer for more than 50 years, and served in numerous auxiliary offices and chairmanships at the local, district and state levels. She had directed the state auxiliary cancer aid and research program for 20 years. In 1959, she earned a VFW Auxiliary National Ernie Pyle Press Award for her local auxiliary.

She was chaplain of the James Harlan Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution; was president of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees Chapter #955 for six years; was a member of the Henry County Health Center Auxiliary; had served on the South Center Club special activities committee for more than 30 years; was an active member of the Henry County Bi-Centennial Committee during the national observance and serviced on the dedicatory committee when the County Time Capsule was buried near the Mt. Pleasant courthouse on Veterans Day, 1976.

She had been an advocate for veterans during her more than 50-year membership in the VFW Auxiliary; was active in the Henry County Veterans Avenue of Flags Memorial; a supporter of the State WW II Veterans Memorial in Des Moines and the National WW II Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.; and was a 30 year officer of the former Memorial Day Committee.

She was a member of the First United Methodist Church and had worked with youth groups and taught Sunday School for 17 years.

Survivors include: two daughters, Lt. Col. Brenda Jenkins, Rosemount, MN and Debra Schmidt, Ft. Wayne, IN; two grandchildren, James Schmidt and Mary Schmidt, both of Honolulu, Hawaii. For several years, the Turleys were foster parents. Those considering an expression of sympathy may direct memorials to the Midwest Old Threshers Foundation.

FINAL CURTAIN—TED DOELLMAN

Ted Doellman, 62, died Saturday March 5, 2011 in Quincy, Illinois. Ted was born November 1, 1948 in Quincy and was joined in marriage to Teri Cronin June 18, 1977. Ted was recently employed as a substitute teacher at Quincy High school. He also had managed a local photography store for many years. He had served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War. Ted loved acting and had appeared in many productions while attending Quincy University and as an adult at the Quincy Community Theatre. He had received awards for his performances both in college and with QCT. In 1972 and 1975 Ted toured with the Schaffner Players. His survivors include his wife and two sons, Anthony Doellman of Newark, Delaware and Daniel Doellman of Athens, Illinois.

FINAL CURTAIN—DOROTHY ENGLISH FORNEY

Dorothy English Forney, 91, of Fort Worth, Texas died February 11, 2011 in Fort Worth.

Dorothy (Dot) was born December 6, 1919 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Paul and Catherine English, owners of the Paul English Players. The English show was one of the most successful tent shows playing throughout the South.

After graduating from St. Joseph High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, she then attended Louisiana State University. An accomplished vocalist, Dot toured with many bands during the big band era. Dot retired after her marriage to William Forney in 1941. The couple raised four children.

Dot was a long time member of Theatre Museum. In 1992 she and her late sister Nelrose Bush attended the Theatre Museum Seminar where they received Honor Awards for their years in show business, Dot for 20 years and Nelrose for 75 years.

Dot is survived by her son Billy Forney of the home, daughters Diane (Jack) Massey, Dexter, Kansas, Patricia McDermott of the home, Jennifer (Max) Maurer, Seguin, Texas, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

On her 90th birthday Dot's family surprised her with a show business birthday party, complete with performances under a tent.

FINAL CURTAIN—LARRY WILLEY

Larry Willey, AKA Joy The Clown, died Tuesday, March 22th, 2011 in Gainesville, Georgia. He had starred in a local television show for a number of years and was a prominent fixture at birthday parties and other events in the North Georgia area. Most recently, he brought joy to both children and adults at the Corner Drugs in Gainesville scooping ice cream. As Larry Willey, he performed on the Sun Players in the summers of 1963 and 1964. After a performance of *Dolly of the Follies* on July 25, 1964, he married Ann Richardson in Newton, Iowa. They had one daughter Mary. Shortly after her birth, Larry and Ann were divorced. He was the father of three other daughters. He legally changed his name to Joy the Clown. In 1984, a fire in his home destroyed his home, costumes, and props but with a new nose, costumes, and props he continued his clown work. He had been performing with the local Special Olympics and the Lions Club-sponsored circus each year, and worked with safety programs in the schools over 25 years. He had been a professional entertainer since he was 7 years old. After moving to New York City, he served as Mayor John Lindsay's Official "Meeter and Greeter" for eight years. He was president of JTC Advertising Enterprises which produced and promoted family stage shows and circuses. A memorial service will be held in late May.

CONTACT US!

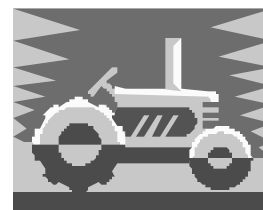
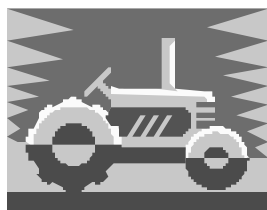
The Theatre Museum of Repertoire Americana
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Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

Museum's phone number: 319-385-9432

Museum's email address:

thetremuseum@iowatelecom.net

Our New Web-site: www.thetheatremuseum.com



AD LIBS BY GRACE SWANK-DAVIS

Greetings from beautiful downtown Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

We were all very saddened to learn Billie Turley had passed away on March 10th. Billie was a charter member of the National Society and she and her husband Leo were involved with getting the museum built in Mt. Pleasant. She served as the Society's Secretary/Treasurer for many years, retiring only after suffering a mild stroke a few years ago. In addition, Billie was the editor of this newsletter from its conception. She is the one responsible for getting me, for better or worse, to write this column, encouraging me and doing a little editing along the way. Anyone who attended our yearly Theatre History Conference in years past will testify as to her warm and gracious welcome, her efficient organizational skills, love of fun and infectious laugh! No one loved the trouper entertainment on Saturday night more than Billie; she was always a great audience! When I went to visit her in her retirement home, she was always upbeat and interested in what was happening at the museum and how her friends were. Two or three years ago at the conference when we took a group picture we held up a large sign reading "Hi Billie." I had it blown up to an 8"x10" and framed it and took it to her. She was so happy with it and kept it out where she could see it every day. It was a real privilege to have known a person of such high standards and ability. P.S. As a former reporter, she wrote her own obit.

We had our yearly Theatre History Conference April 15, 16 & 17. Our gathering was about the same as last year. Friday night Advisory Board member Roberta Wilkes and her husband Bill Dunn hosted a social hour supper at the Comfort Inn. I believe I'm right when I say that everyone had a great time. The hit of the night was Roberta and Bill's new puppy Jacquie who graced us with a short appearance.



Friday before things started, I found out that two grandsons of Ozzie and Harriet Nelson were to do a show in Fairfield, Iowa about 25 miles west of Mt. Pleasant on Saturday. It is a tribute show to their father Ricky. As many of you know, Harriet's parents Roy and Hazel Hilliard were in show business and were personal friends of Neil and Caroline Schaffner and we have a small file on them in our library. I featured them in the museum's 2007 calendar. We found out too late to mail them information about the museum so Advisory Board member David Wagaman took two of the calendars and some brochures, hopped in his car and hand-delivered them to their dressing room. Afterwards a friend of Collections Supervisor Martha Hayes told Martha that she had gone to see the show and that they had mentioned from the stage getting the calendars with the picture of their great-grandparents and how happy they were to have received them. Nice work, David!

At our yearly Executive Board meeting it was decided to ask Floyd & Doris Ditto, David Ripper and Bob Hollis to join the Advisory Board. We want to welcome them and we know they will all add much to the continuation of our wonderful museum. This means you guys will have to plan on leaving for home a half hour later next year.

Word from both Treasurer Claudia Streeter and Advisory Board member Billie Schuller (my aunt) that they both liked the new movie "Water for Elephants". They didn't see it together because Claudia is in Iowa and Billie is in Michigan.

I must mention that Roberta Wilkes took over the big job from Claudia Streeter of arranging for the food during the conference and did a great job! In addition, we would like to take this opportunity to give Claudia a big THANK YOU for the fine job she did for so many years!

We just got word from Mickey Lacey that some of those tornadoes hit the town he and Nancy are living in, Vilonia, Arkansas. Mickey tells us the town was torn up a bit but the storm bypassed their place. Thank goodness for that! Hope you have a basement, Mickey.

That's all for now and remember you are always welcome on the lot.

Grace

FINAL CURTAIN—MILDRED IRENE WATT

Mildred Irene Watt, age 91, of Grants Pass, Oregon, died December 15, 2009. She was born January 16, 1918 in Los Angeles to Edwin and Alice Leota (Spooner) Wallock. She married Roger Merrill Watt in 1939 who died in 1981. They had moved to Grants Pass in 1946 and she worked in sales at many local businesses. She was a founding member of Barnstormers Theatre. They were the parents of four sons, three daughters, fourteen grandchildren, and twenty great-grandchildren. Her grandfather was Franklyn Edward Spooner who joined the local theatre group in Centerville, Iowa around 1879 and he and his family trouped for many years—family included brothers, sisters, cousins, and honorary members. The Spooners were also connected to the Payton family of Centerville, another theatrical dynasty who started performing in that small Iowa town. (A clipping calls it “the cradle of thespian greatness” and lists over ninety performers.) Watt provided the Theatre Museum with much information concerning the Spooners, Wallocks, and Paytons.

FINAL CURTAIN—LARRY DIRKSEN

Larry Dirksen, age 74, of Rapid City, South Dakota, died Sunday, August 10, 2008 at home. He was born on July 17, 1934 in Algona, Iowa to Walter and Margaret (Shoemaker) Dirksen. He and his family moved to Mason City where he was a member of the high school wrestling team, graduating in 1952. After graduation, he joined his brother-in-law, Harry King Cole, on the road performing in tent shows across the central states including the Sun Players, Come Unto Me Passion Play, and Tilton’s Comedians. He attended Brown’s Institute of Broadcasting in Minneapolis in the early 1960s and then embarked on a long career in broadcasting, working as a disc jockey and newsman in Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota. He met and married Martheda (Mardy) Johnston in 1965. He received a certificate from The Society for the Preservation of Tent, Folk, and Repertoire Theatre for his twenty-six years of dedication to this medium of entertainment in 1991. He is survived by his wife, son David and his wife, and one daughter, Dawn. He was a licensed pilot, serving in the South Dakota Civil Air Patrol for twenty years. He enjoyed metal detecting, golf, and playing the guitar and bass.

INTERVIEW TAPES FOR SALE

We are slowly dispensing with all of our VHS copies of presentations at the annual seminar and interview tapes of troupers. Every year we sell a few more and our supplies are starting to run low. Make sure you get copies before you can’t. Following are the interview tapes we still have available. In the next newsletter we’ll have an updated list of presentation tapes that are still available.

- 1986 – Frances Moore Bader & Art Duncan (2 copies)
- 1987 – Carl Register (1 copy)
- 1988 – Joe McKennon, Carol Ross, & Mike Lacey (3 copies)
- 1988 – Roberta Griffin & Maxine Lacey (2 copies)
- 1989 – George Eells (3 copies)
- 1989 – Truly Truesdale Latschaw (1 copy)
- 1992 – Kenny Magoon, Lucille Baille, Mitzie Zarlington, & Bill Gray
- 1992 – Kenny Magoon
- 1994 – Virginia Hardesty & Trv Lyn Corbae
- 1997 – Buddy Manly (2 copies)
- ???? – Vic Hyde

**27th Seminar Tentatively Scheduled for
April 20, 21, & 22, 2012
*Come – Bring a Friend!***

THEATRE HISTORY CONFERENCE 2011

CURTAIN UP! LIGHT THE LIGHTS!

Friday, April 15, 2011

- 1:30 Informal Activities at the Theatre Museum
- 4:30 Registration and Social Hour--Comfort Inn and Suites
- 6:00 Supper-- Comfort Inn and Suites
(Social Hour and Supper compliments of Roberta Wilkes and Bill Dunn)
- 7:15 Welcome and Introductions
- 7:30 Social Hour (Pick Up Where We Left Off) – *Toby and the Tall Corn* Show During Evening

Saturday, April 16, 2011

The James V. Davis Performance Center of the Theatre Museum

- 8:15 Registration, coffee juice, rolls
Gift Shop open: Books, Scripts, Videos, T-Shirts, etc.
- 9:15 Welcome and Program Notes
- 9:30 **Session I: George Glenn Presiding**
Michael Zahs
Frank Brinton's Magic Lantern Slides
- 10:15 Coffee Break
- 10:30 **Session II: Gene Biby Presiding**
Joy Conwell
The Letters of Earl Newsom
- 11:15 Roberta Wilkes and Mickey Lacey
Manual for Putting Up a Tent
- 11:45 Michael Kramme with George Glenn and Richard Poole
Theatre Museum Curtain Collection
- 12:25 Announcements, Museum Update
- 12:30 Catered Luncheon at the Theatre Museum
Group Photographs

- 1:15 **Session III: Michael Kramme Presiding**
Roberta Wilkes, Esq.
Backstage and Onstage
- 2:00 Jane Rhoads and Rachel Crane
Step Right Up! Circus in Kansas
- 2:45 Jackie Floyd
My Research. What I Know and What I Want to Know
- 3:15 *Reflections on the Past*
Ann Richardson, Joy the Clown or Larry Willey
Friends of Billie Turley
- 3:45 Break and Brief Business Meeting, Election of Officers,
Adjournment
- 6:15 Dinner – The Mount Pleasant Golf and Country Club

The James V. Davis Performance Center of the Theatre Museum

- 8:00 More Reflections on the Past

Sunday, April 17, 2011

The James V. Davis Performance Center of the Theatre Museum

- 9:30 Coffee, juice, rolls
- 10:00 Advisory Board Meeting
- 12:00 No Host Luncheon at Jerry's Restaurant, Hwy 34E.
- 1:30-4 Museum and Library open