



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

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The museum is open from  
Memorial Day  
to Labor Day  
Tuesday through Sunday  
10:00-4:30

During the winter months  
the museum is open by  
appointment

**The Winging It**

Editor:

Grace Swank-Davis

Contributors:

Mickey Lacey

David Ripper

Grace Swank-Davis

Contact us at :

E-mail:

thetremuseum@yahoo.com

Telephone:

319-385-9432

Web-site:

thetremuseum.com

405 E. Threshers Road  
Mount Pleasant, IA  
52641

# Winging It

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

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Winter 2014

### President's Message

#### Happy Holidays to all!

This year has been an eventful for the Society, so much news to "wrap up" I hope you will forgive my run-on.

On the positive side: We have seen an increase in membership, stabilized and increased our treasury, recruited and increased volunteer hours, collected more donated memorabilia and research material.

We have been blessed through these efforts to be in a position to add to our collection with rare purchased materials while working hard to modernize our methods of cataloging and cross-referencing our collection.

We have made great strides to position ourselves to attract monies to modernize our displays and research library with the goal of better communicating our mission to today's audience. We are well on our way and, with continued effort, we hope to make both academic research and public education/enjoyment more "user friendly" if you will.

The Society has been more visible within the Mt Pleasant community and we have been able to demonstrate what an asset we are to Mt Pleasant/Henry County/Iowa tourism. This was accomplished through our involvement with the local Chamber of Commerce "Alive After Five" event, which we hosted this past summer, and we became involved at Iowa Wesleyan College with booths to inform students in the community about the Museum and library.

We also produced our first live theatre event in many years. A wonderful, well attended, stage adaptation "Toby's Corntussel (Bugtussel) News." Adapted from the first week's scripts of Neil and Caroline Schaffner's popular 1930's radio serial, lovingly and accurately performed by the professional Iowa Theatre Artists Company. A production which not only made a modest profit, but I am sure would have made Neil and Caroline proud!

There are too many people to thank within this note. (Grace will be angry with me if I take up too much space in the newsletter.) WOW WHAT A YEAR!

We were saddened in 2014 with the loss of Old Thresher's long time Director Mr. Lennis Moore. Lennis was a great supporter of the Society and was individually responsible for the relationship and generosity we enjoy with Midwest Old Settler's and Threshers Association today.

In addition, at this writing, our collection supervisor Martha Hayes has been battling ill health and has not been able to assist with her vast knowledge. I am sure that all of us wish her the best.

Despite these losses we continue, with your help, to keep up the momentum and make 2015 an even more successful year for our mission!

David



**Editor's note As we were going to press, we learned of the passing of our dear friend and Collections Supervisor, Martha Hayes. We will have a full obit in the next issue.**

### Ad Libs

By Grace Swank-Davis

Greetings from beautiful downtown Mount Pleasant, Iowa

As our illustrious president, David Ripper has pointed out, we have had a lot going on at the museum this year.

We were very pleased to have the Iowa Theatre Artists Company present *Toby's Corntussel News* in the museum's James V. Davis Performance Center. The show was staged from the museum collection of Neil & Caroline Schaffner's radio scripts of the 1930s and 40s. The professional company came from their theatre in the Amanas for one night's performance as a benefit for the museum on October 9. We are very grateful to them for their hard work in adapting the scripts into an entertaining 90-minute show.

Our web site: [thetheatremuseum.com](http://thetheatremuseum.com) was hacked this fall! Nothing could be accessed passed the first page. National Society member, Mark Tubbs volunteered to be our webmaster (at least I think he volunteered) and repaired the site for us. Great job Mark, thanks so much. Also, member Mark Peper will now be in charge of our Facebook page, The Theatre Museum of Repertoire Americana (he volunteered too).



As hard as it is to believe, we are still acquiring artifacts. Among the great things we have received this year are five wonderful post card photos of the Hila Morgan Show. Taken about 1918, they are of the inside and outside of the tent with Hila and her cast. Great photos. Also, a post card photo of Prentice's Big Vaudeville Show with cast in front of the top. Taken about 1910. Bill Slout sent us a big box of his research files. I can't wait to go through that.

We want to welcome new members:

Mark Brocksmith, Salt Lake City, UT

Alan Biebarth, Chicago, IL

Mike Marx, Hannibal, MO

Welcome and hope you can come to the Theatre History Conference, next April 17, 18 & 19, 2015

Everyone sure had a great time in Parson, TN, this past October as you tell can by Mickey Lacey's story on page 4. I went to Miami Beach at that time to visit some dear friends, but I will make my plans to visit Parson next year for sure.

That's all for now, Happy Holidays to you and yours and all the best in 2015! And remember, you are always welcome on the lot.

Grace

## YES! I want to be a part of the Theatre Museum.

### Membership Levels

Student.....	\$15	Business Supporter.....	\$100
Individual.....	\$20	Director's Circle.....	\$150
Family.....	\$30	Angel.....	\$500
Actor's Circle.....	\$50	Gabriel Himself.....	\$1,000

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Please return your payment with this form.



*THE THEATRE MUSEUM*  
*MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA*

# **CALL FOR PAPERS**

**The National Society for the Preservation of Tent, Folk & Repertoire Theatre  
presents the**

**Annual Theatre History Conference**

***“Relevance of Repertoire”***

The conference will focus on the variety of entertainments  
that toured the heartland of America. Papers may include, but are **not**  
limited to:

**TENT REP CIRCLE STOCK TAB SHOWS**

**OPERA HOUSES SHOW BOATS MINSTREL SHOWS**

**“UNCLE TOM’S CABIN” SHOWS**

**Please send proposals to**

**[theatremuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:theatremuseum@yahoo.com)**

**Or 405 E. Threshers Rd, Mount Pleasant, Ia 52641**

Check out our website at: [thetheatremuseum.com](http://thetheatremuseum.com)

And our Facebook Page, The Theatre Museum of Repertoire Americana

**The 2015 Conference is  
Friday, Saturday & Sunday  
April 17, 18 & 19**

**The deadline for papers is March 15, 2015**

## The Rivertime Players

By Mickey Lacey

What a great weekend for the “old” troupers of yesteryear! The terminology of “You are always welcome on the lot” became very true to Dick Ellis, Roberta Wilkes, Mark Peper and myself when we all invaded Mark Tubbs, Shane Bridges and the cast and crew of the Rivertime Players Show on the 17th and 18th of October in Parsons, Tennessee.

For the fear of sounding overly dramatic, these young troupers and their audiences made us feel young and accepted again as the professional and sought after performers we actually were in the business (if I do say so for ourselves.)



The laughter never seemed to stop for their show.

Although the weather was a headache for the crew for the first two of four weekends for the troupe, the tradition of “The show must go on” took force. They worked for full houses each weekend. Including the weekend we were so graciously invited to work with them.



Robert played piano for their intermissions and the candy sales with her own compositions and songs with the sounds of the old Rep Shows. Dick and I did a few bits and songs from the glory days. Gotta tell you folks, the corn is still selling strong. We all were very well accepted. I have to add the timing and delivery that Dick used in the routines as what I'll call a *G-String Toby*, is still as sharp as ever (We really didn't want to exit.)



Where did the weekend go? It all seemed to pass so quickly. I for one, didn't want to leave. I wanted to milk the moments forever. After our last performance on Saturday night the 18<sup>th</sup> I left the lot to return to my room at the motel. I have to say I hardly slept a wink that night. The following morning Dick, Roberta and I (by chance) ran into each other in the parking lot of the motel for a last, 'See ya later.' It reminded me of a show closing for the season and everyone was heading out to catch a deadline for circle stock, school assembly booking or club dates for the winter months. Didn't want to leave them either. Didn't want to lose the moment.

As we drove our separate ways, I got probably a couple miles out of town when the urge to quickly turn into a strange driveway to turn around and head back to “the lot.” Which I did. When I got back to the lot the morning mist was still on the grass and top. I got out of the car and slowly just walked around the tent. Every once in a while grabbing a guy line to make sure it was taught. I finally raised the sidewall and stepped under it into the tent. I seated myself in the back of house in one of the original “soft pine” chairs and just gazed at the stage front.

My memory seemed to carry me back to the glory days of trouping. “I have to get out of here. I'm getting too sentimental.” As I drove away, I couldn't help but look in the rearview mirror one more time. Didn't realize at the time I guess, just how much I loved the business. I hope I can come back again.

Thank you Rivertime Players...thank you! The memories were beautiful. Please carry on.

Mickey Lacey



## School days on Rep. And, I don't mean Repetition

By Mickey Lacey

Continued from previous issue.

There are always different personalities to adapt to with all the different teachers. Most were always pleasant. One teacher I remember well was one I can vividly see. After all the years that have pasted, I don't recall her name. However, I can still see a glimpse of her face in my memory. I don't remember the grade level I was in at the time but the town was Brownsville, Tennessee. When on Bisbee's show, I would always look forward to seeing her. At one time, she actually contacted my mother and offered to keep me in her home for the balance of the school year. Mom later told me that she was so taken aback with her that they even corresponded for a long time. Mom said she would always ask how I was doing with my schoolwork. I wish I had been older at the time to realize just how special that was. However, my mom did.

I was already doing specialties at a young age. Actually, it was a little bit of a hindrance to me at that early age, in regard to the manner of schooling I was doing. I had to try and keep the show business aspect completely separated from the school days. As my dad had always said and kept reminding me, "The hardest crowd to entertain is the people that know you." I always tried to remember that, even at that early age. Most certainly, in my later years I've found it to be a lesson well learned. Another not taught in school.

When looking back I am still in wonder of just how my mother approached the "powers" of each school. Explaining my way of schooling to them and enrollment in their school. I wish I had the time back to sit and talk to her about it. That had to be among the tops in a "booking" example for any "booking agency."

My transfer to an upper grade level would be...yes...more tests. They would always take place whenever the school I was in at the time was taking their final exams. I would not be cut any slack during that period. No special tests. Whatever their curriculum was at that point is what I had to deal with. I never failed a grade by the way.

The year we winter quartered in Springfield, Missouri, I enrolled in school for my freshman year in high school. Dad spent the winter months working club dates in Springfield and Joplin, Missouri. My mother did personal appearance bookings for the cast of the nationally televised *Ozark Jubilee* show starring red Foley with Boob and Neva Brasfield as Uncle Cyp and Aunt Sap. Of course, Boob was a major factor getting us to winter there and recommending mom a booking agent for the jubilee's personal appearances.

While in Springfield, I began making a lot of good friends. I didn't have to worry about the making of close ties to a potential audience. I was really enjoying being an average teenager. Of course, as time went by, I did however start doing a few Elvis tunes with my guitar at parties, etc.

I had made good friends with the Archer family that winter. Their son, Rusty, and I became real good buddies. To make a long explanation, Rusty approached his parents with the idea that I stay with them to finish the school year out. They were a good family and wholeheartedly agreed as long as my parents agreed. So, the families met and spent time together. It was decided that I could stay with the Archers until the end of the school year. The following winter we returned to Springfield. At the time I began playing a few dates myself, which is a whole different chapter in my life.

I returned to Springfield at the beginning of my junior year. About this time, the school was putting together their annual talent assembly. Each year they would do their assembly for the school and then they would make the trip to Joplin to perform at the Joplin school. In turn, the Joplin school would do likewise. It was a big occasion for the schools.

With the auditions for the assembly coming up, a group of my buddies talked me into auditioning for the assembly (against my better judgment.) Elvis was coming on strong then and I was doing a lot of his material. I don't remember what I did for the audition but it wasn't Elvis. Between the auditions and the opening performance my buddies talked me into doing a couple of Elvis things (again, against my better judgment.) But...I did.

The first number was a ballad or something; the second was a rock like number. It wasn't all that great; however, it gave the students an opportunity to start screaming and yelling, as they had seen on television. I have to say...I really ate it up.

As I made my exit, I was met by the dean of boys. He was a slight built, horn rimmed glassed redheaded guy. A perfect Dudley-Do-Right type of guy. The type you'd love to see trying to drive a stake! In a stern, overly dramatic voice, he said, "Young man...you will not be going on the trip to perform in the Joplin assembly!!!. My short fuse immediately fired up and I replied to him, "Well the hell with you, I usually get paid for this anyway!! That was the time I left school behind and began a fifty-year career working clubs.

My education wasn't exactly what my mom and dad would have wanted for me, I'm sure. However, looking back over my life and sixty-five plus years in show business, my education has served me well. I don't think I would trade it for anyone's.

Let us know if you would prefer to receive your copy of *Winging It* by e-mail. Just drop us a line at [theatremuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:theatremuseum@yahoo.com)

Please make note of our new  
e-mail address:

[theatremuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:theatremuseum@yahoo.com).

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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO  
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WITH LOTS OF  
HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY

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Glad to hear from you folks who are coming back in  
the spring and from others who would like to spend  
the coming summer with us.

Folks that whisper down a well  
About the goods they have to sell,  
Are not so apt to get the dollar  
As those that climb a tree and holler.



*Freddie  
and  
Lillyan  
Poole*

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