



Stage Write

The Newsletter of **ONSTAGE PLAYHOUSE**

Volume 16, Number 2

August 2006

The family dynamic shimmers with laughter and tension in *On Golden Pond*

By Bruce Wilde

An endless pine wood forest in the north woods of Maine suddenly opens upon a sky blue lake with a log cabin on the shore. For the Thayer family, this tranquil setting belies the struggle beneath the surface *On Golden Pond*.

Ethel and Norman Thayer are sharing their 48th summer at the cabin her father built in the early 1900's. Neal Sullivan (*Prelude to a Kiss*) is Norman Thayer. While adored by his wife Ethel, played by Lucy Albert, his sharp mind and clever wit is caustic to everyone but her. This has helped create a distant and strained relationship with their only child, Chelsea, played by Allison MacDonald; fresh from her role in the hit *The Foreigner*.

This family drama is engaged when local mailman Charlie Martin delivers a letter from Chelsea. Their years of 'summer love' have faded into the past but Charlie has never gotten over her. The letter announces that Chelsea will return home to celebrate Norman's 80th birthday with boyfriend Bill Ray, a dentist. What is not said is they will also bring Bill's son, Billy Ray. Chelsea and Bill are off to Europe and leave Junior behind. Billy becomes a surrogate grandson for the aging couple and, for Norman in particular, the son he never had.

Veteran OnStage actor Orrick Smith plays Bill Ray while Clay Alexander debuts here at OnStage as Billy. Jerry Young (*Birthday Suite*) completes the cast as Charlie Martin.

Ernest Thompson's acclaimed play *On Golden Pond* was later made into the hit movie starring Katherine Hepburn, Henry Fonda, and his daughter, Jane Fonda. The clarity of the characters and their relationships combine to form a memorable love story; full of depth, laughter and warmth.

On Golden Pond opens Friday, September 8 and continues through October 7. Curtain is at 8pm for Thursday, Friday and Saturday performances. Sunday matinees are at 2 pm.

Reservations are best made on our web site, www.onstageplayhouse.org. Or you can call (619)422-7787 and leave a message. Please reserve your tickets now, as this popular show is certain to sell out quickly.



Ethel (Lucy Albert) and Norman (Neal Sullivan) enjoy a tender moment during a visit to their cabin at Golden Pond.

photo by Tony Eisenhower

How Do We Choose Our Shows?

By Teri Brown, Artistic Director

One of the things I am asked most often is “How do you choose the season for OnStage Playhouse?”

Each year, beginning around October, we send out an open invitation to directors to submit shows they wish to direct at OnStage. Once all submissions are received, I begin reading all the shows and “shuffling” them into an order which will provide our patrons a season of balanced entertainment, and which will also provide our actors, designers and crew members artistic satisfaction.

When reading potential plays, several factors must be kept in mind.

NUMBER ONE: Will the audience enjoy the play? Your enjoyment is paramount. Obviously we can't please all the audience all the time. We must be satisfied, no matter how hard we try, with pleasing most of you most of the time. Quite a few times, though, the audience has surprised us by embracing shows we thought may be a bit controversial for our regular patrons; however, *The Laramie Project* still remains one of the most-talked about and enjoyed productions.

NUMBER TWO: Is it available? All of our plays are leased through publishing houses. Their contracts state that if the play is being performed by a professional company within a certain area around Chula Vista, we cannot produce the play during a similar period. That area most often includes professional theaters in San Diego and Orange County; and sometimes Los Angeles will be included on the list. We also contend with national touring schedules. If a show is on a national tour, then the rights are restricted. This exclusion has kept OnStage from staging several productions when that title was at the height of its popularity. For example, even though the tour never came close to San Diego, it took us two years to procure the rights to *Steel Magnolias* because of the Broadway revival and national tour.

NUMBER THREE: Stage limitations. Multiple set productions are almost impossible to stage in our space. If it were possible to change the set, there is no place to store the extra set pieces. There-

fore, within practical limits, we're limited to single-set productions. Obvious, also, is that we can't put dozens of persons at once on our small stage. Our stage is basically 24 feet wide by 12 feet deep. Unfortunately, *Noises Off*, a hilarious farce that *REQUIRES* a two-story rotating set will never be performed in this space.

NUMBER FOUR: Casting. Another challenge we encounter is talent. Can we find enough actors and actresses to perform the play to the standard of excellence we desire to achieve? It has happened in the past that we've tried to cast a play and have been unable to. This often happens when the play calls for an unusually high number of men. Some theatres will change the sex of a particular role (or roles) to solve this problem. However, the standard publishing house contract states that the play, as a copyrighted artistic creation owned by the author, is to be performed as written. And this also includes language. Cutting or substituting foul language is a violation of our agreement with the publisher.

NUMBER FIVE: Production costs. We must also be concerned with production costs. There are some plays we'd like to do... period plays, for example. However, the cost of renting or creating costumes for, say, a Shakespearean play would run into the thousands of dollars. That's way beyond our budget. And as a rule, musicals cost nearly three times as much due to the royalties.

You can see that play selection can be a challenge. On the other hand, we are proud of the 20 plus years and hundreds of plays we have produced. If you would like to suggest a particular play for OnStage (that fits within our parameters!), please drop a note to: Teri Brown, OnStage Playhouse, P.O. Box 120044, Chula Vista, CA 91912, or email me at teridtiger@yahoo.com.

New Lifetime Members

We'd like to recognize and express our appreciation towards David and Terry Camarata who have generously donated \$1000 a year to support our theatre for five years. They now have reached the distinction of becoming Lifetime Members of OnStage Playhouse.

ONSTAGE PLAYHOUSE

Thanks Our 2006-2007 Grantors

By Charles Nichols

Our ticket revenue does not cover our theatre's operating costs. Because of this, we continually seek out individuals and organizations interested in supporting our mission of bringing live theatre to the community. This year we sought out **The Parker Foundation** and proposed that it underwrite the cost of *On Golden Pond* with a \$2000 grant.

The Parker Foundation was established in 1971 from the estate of Gerald T. and Inez Grant Parker who shared a lifetime of devotion to the betterment of their community. In Mr. Parker's words, the Foundation is "...for charitable purposes leading to the betterment of all aspects of life of the people of San Diego County."

Mr. Parker was born in 1883 and raised in a small Illinois town. He studied physics at the University of Chicago under the Nobel Prize winner A. H. Michelson. Later he made a career change and became Vice President of the Commerce Trust Co. in Kansas City and headed the bond department. Inez Grant Parker was born in Oswego, Kansas in 1887. The daughter of a prominent horse and mule dealer, she became a proficient horsewoman and an accomplished driver of spirited teams. She founded the Friends of the Nelson Art Museum in Kansas City.

Because we were an unknown entity to The Parker Foundation, its Board of Directors appointed a committee-of-one, Ms. Ann Davies, to investigate us. She and her husband attended our July 22, 2006 special showing of Neil Simon's *Come Blow Your Horn*. Imagine our stunned surprise and astonishment when we subsequently received a grant from the Foundation of **\$5,000!**

To Mr. William E. Beamer, President of The Parker Foundation, Ms. Ann Davies and their colleagues, we send our grateful thanks for the Foundation's generosity. We pledge ourselves to merit their confidence in us by providing the very highest quality theatre to the community.

* * *

Again this year, **Supervisor Greg Cox** and the **County Board of Supervisors** expressed their confidence in what we are doing by awarding us a \$5,000 grant under the County's Community Enhancement Program. The grant is earmarked for our Advertising and Promotion Program. The cost of printing newsletters, flyers, posters, theater programs, our awning sign, postage, and selected ads is a sizable part of our budget. But it is absolutely essential that we continually communicate with our audience and our actors, directors and theatre technicians. So to Supervisor Cox and the County Board of Supervisors, we thank you for your generous contribution for getting this vital work done.

* * *

Mindful that all of us have a responsibility toward the coming generation, OnStage Playhouse decided that we could make a useful contribution by establishing a Student Intern Program in Theatre Arts during our 2006-2007 Season. We proposed this program to the **Chula Vista Office of Cultural Arts** and received a \$1,500 grant to fund an Intern Program for 12 interested students at Mar Vista High School. We have enlisted Kym Pappas, an experienced theatre person, to manage the program this year. Our thanks to the Chula Vista Office of Cultural Arts for the generous grant which enables us to undertake this Student Intern Program.

* * *

We are also greatly indebted to our loyal audience members and patrons whose generous donations make our theatre possible. You will find their names listed in each of the theater programs for our productions. Also, in the Theatre Lobby you will see a plaque with the names of people who have sponsored one of our theatre seats. Our thanks to all of you, for without your support "the curtain would never go up" on our stage.

Seat Donors for 2006-2007

We now have 35 seat donors with the following names being added this season:

Altrusa International Inc. of C.V.

Lynne Batchelor

Dr. & Mrs. C. R. Henkelmann

John & Eileen Ivey

Sandra S. Visconti

Jeanne W. Danis: Actress, writer, and supporter of OnStage Playhouse

By Bob Christiansen

Jeanne Danis, a popular local actress who appeared on our stage and was a contributor to this newsletter, died July 24, 13 days before her 79th birthday.

Jeanne was awarded “best actress” honors by the Associated Community Theatres of San Diego and by several local theatres. A navy wife and journalist by profession, Jeanne started acting when, as she put it, “I got bored playing bridge with the girls.” Her love of theatre was evident in all her performances, and she quickly became an audience favorite. Theatres she appeared at include The Old Globe, North Coast Rep, Coronado Playhouse, and Lamplighters, in addition to OnStage Playhouse. Her last appearance on our stage was in the November 2000 production of *Crossing Delancey*, where she played the beloved grandmother, Bubbie. Jeanne had been handling newspaper publicity for OnStage for several years.



She was born Jeanne Wilson in Plattsburgh, New York. Her father was a captain in the Army, and the family moved several times before settling in Los Angeles, where Jeanne graduated from Fairfax High School. She attended Mills College in Oakland, then transferred to Northwestern University, earning a B.S. in journalism. A few years later she met and married John Farwell Danis, a graduate of the Naval Academy. After a long Navy career, Captain Danis and Jeanne settled in Imperial Beach. Captain Danis died in 1993.

OnStage Playhouse will miss the talents of this great lady, but we will be forever grateful for the marvelous work that she did.

OnStage judges give season’s top honors to *The Foreigner*

Concluding a noteworthy season at OnStage Playhouse, our annual awards breakfast was held August 12 at Fredericka Manor. Many “Aldeas” were handed out and a great time was had by all.

Serving as Masters of Ceremonies at the event were Charley Miller and Jo Dempsey, who introduced OnStage judges Desiree Peters, Jonathan Sachs, Paul Roger, and Kathy Schaeffer. This season’s Judges Trophy went to *The Foreigner*, which also won Best Production of a Comedy honors for producers Betsy Keller and Bruce Wilde. Chad Oakley was awarded Best Production of a Drama for *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

Best Direction of a Comedy was shared by Dave Rethoret (*The Foreigner*) and Bob Christiansen (*Birthday Suite*). Best Direction of a Drama went to Marjorie Mae Treger for *The Crucible*.

Best Actor in a Comedy went to Mark Loveless for his performance of Charlie in *The Foreigner*. Best Actor in a Drama went to David Kelso as John Proctor in *The Crucible*. Best Actress Awards went to Carolyn Wheat Koenig, *Birthday Suite* (Comedy) and Summer Spence, *The Crucible* (Drama). Supporting Actor awards went to Charley Miller (*Birthday Suite*), Karina Montgomery (*Birthday Suite*), Cassi Jerkins, Edwin Eigner, Christopher T. Miller, Sally Stockton, and Nick Mata (*The Crucible*), and Joey Georges (*Prelude to a Kiss*). Ensemble Acting awards went to the cast of *Steel Magnolias* and the supporting ensembles of *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *The Foreigner*.

Topping off some very high scores for Set Design was the set for *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Brenda Leake, Designer. *Dancing at Lughnasa*’s lighting designer, Chad Oakley, also took top honors. The Barbara Silva award for years of service to the theatre went to Sheila Mura, and the Anisa and Bill Cox Award for Excellence Behind the Scenes went to Jane Russell.

The theatre is deeply grateful to Fredericka Manor for their gracious hosting of this important event.

President's Corner

By Betsy Keller

One of the things I love about theatre is the variety of people that you get to deal with.

For example, take our Board of Directors. Please!

No, I'm just kidding. Indeed, I am so proud of this diverse group and what we, with many other volunteers at our side and great financial support from the community, have accomplished in the years that I have been on the Board.

We have improved the look and condition of our facility, remodeled our dressing room, including an air conditioner, introduced new people to our theatre, both creative talent and audience members, improved our financial position, and so much more. And all this has been done while maintaining, in fact strengthening, the quality of our performances.

Our Board Members are active participants in the operation of our theatre, rolling up their sleeves to get things done even though it doesn't profit them a dime and requires lots of time, talent, and yes, often their own money.

The diversity of our Board reflects the diversity of the theatre community. Some of our Board members are in their late seventies and some are still in their twenties. We have retired school administrators and others still taking college classes. We have small business owners, a government employee, and a hotel manager. We have experts like our Artistic Director Teri Brown, an amazing actress who knows theatre inside and out (I think she is aware of just about every play that's ever been written), and then we have people like me, whose theatre experience is primarily as an audience member.

It's not that we always get along. Indeed, we often have differences of opinion. But we work together for the good of OnStage Playhouse and, well, I think the results speak for themselves.

That doesn't mean we aren't on the lookout for more people to join our team—both as volunteers and as future Board members. We have come far, but we can grow even stronger. So come join us. I don't promise you a rose garden, but you will be proud to be a part of promoting performing arts in your community.

This issue of *Stage Write* was produced by the volunteer efforts of Janis Vanderford, Bob Christiansen, Bruce Wilde, Charles Nichols, Teri Brown, and Betsy Keller.

ONSTAGE PLAYHOUSE AUDITION NOTICE

Two Rooms

Drama by Lee Blessing

Directed by James M. McCulloch

Sunday, September 10 and Monday,
September 11, 2006 at 7:00 PM

Roles are available for two men and two women. Auditions will be held at the theater and will be by cold reading from the script. Please prepare a one minute monologue. No appointment is required. Advance scripts are not available from OnStage Playhouse. Please arrive before 7 pm and bring a theater resume and photo to the audition. *Two Rooms* performs November 3 through December 1, 2006. If you have further questions, please email the director at jamesmcculloch@yahoo.com.

Around the County

We encourage you to support other community theatre companies in the county. Here are some of the upcoming shows being offered by our sister theatre groups in San Diego County.

Guys and Dolls

Patio Playhouse,
Escondido
August 25 - September 16
Call (760) 746-6669

Melodrama

PowPAC
September 22 - 24
Call (858) 679-8085

Romeo and Juliet

Coronado Playhouse
September 1 - 24
Call (619) 435-4856

Beyond Therapy

PowPAC
October 20 - November 12
Call (858) 679-8085

Blithe Spirit

Scripps Ranch Theater
September 8 - October 7
Call (858) 578-7728

Dracula

Coronado Playhouse
October 20 - November 26
Call (619) 435-4856

Stage Write



ONSTAGE PLAYHOUSE

P. O. Box 120044
Chula Vista, CA 91912

ONSTAGE PLAYHOUSE

Office Staff: Kimberly Garland
Technical Director: Chris Warner
Facilities Manager: Chad Oakley

Board of Directors

<i>President</i>	Betsy Keller
<i>Vice President</i>	Bruce Wilde
<i>Secretary</i>	Jane Russell
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<i>Members at Large:</i>	
Lynne Batchelor	Charles Nichols
Bob Christiansen	Janis Vanderford
Rosemary King	Dan Zisko
Lisa Moctezuma	

Theater telephone: (619) 422-7787

Visit us on the web at

<http://www.onstageplayhouse.org>
email: OnStagePlayhouse@excite.com

PLAYING AT ONSTAGE. . .

On Golden Pond

by Ernest Thompson Directed by Bruce Wilde
September 8 - October 7, 2006

Two Rooms

by Lee Blessing Directed by James M. McCulloch
November 3 - December 1, 2006

Performances are Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings at
8:00 pm and Sunday afternoons at 2:00 pm

OUR THEATER IS LOCATED IN DOWNTOWN CHULA
VISTA AT 291 THIRD AVENUE, NEAR F STREET.
LOOK FOR THE GREEN AWNING.

ONSTAGE PLAYHOUSE IS AN EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY ORGANIZATION.

OnStage Playhouse is supported in part by a grant from
Supervisor Greg Cox and the County Board of Supervisors.
Theatre renovation was made possible by a grant from
the Colonel Frank C. Wood Memorial Fund at
The San Diego Foundation.