

Dessert storm III looms

■ Windmill Players plan third dessert theatre evening

HIGH RIVER—Hup, two, three, four, five, six, seven one-act plays will form the Windmill Theatre Player's battalion of entries for this year's Regional One-Act Festival, Feb. 17 and 18.

An advance guard will storm the stage of the Highwood Memorial Centre Feb. 10 and 11 in the WTP's Dessert Storm III, the third such campaign to assault High River in the last three years.

Not only is all fair in love and war, but you'll get a pretty fair deal in this barrage of plays, interspersed with a volley of songs designed to undermine the dreaded winter blahs. These, together with several secret weapons in the dessert line are sure to result in certain victory.

Five of the legion of seven one-act plays in the fray are authored by local playwrights and are sure to hit some targets close to home. Audience-goer casualties are likely to range from wounded hearts to contusions of the funny bone.

Friday night's onslaught will include:

Boxing Day by Larry MacKillop is a comedic blitz on the tender topic of AIDS and homophobia. Brief and to the point, it attacks the subject through humor and goes straight through to the heart.

Polite Conversation by Karen King portrays a cold-war standoff in a campus dorm between two female room mates. Though the animosity is camouflaged, the audience is exposed to what the two are reluctant to reveal to each other through theatrical asides.

Thursday Continued also by Nanton playwright Larry MacKillop, depicts, with humor

and sensitivity, the daily battle of life waged by a man who has suffered a brain injury.

Married Bliss, by Mark O'Donnell is a clash of wits and words in a familiar love triangle with a twist that gives new meaning to the notion of a play-on-words.

Survivors of Friday's attack on the winter doldrums can return Saturday to a new set of plays that include: **Nosey Parker** by Rose Scollard a play that reveals the familiar battleground of the war between the sexes. The siege is finally won by an unexpected missile of astounding accuracy and power.

Courtship by Steve Penman also depicts some of the tactical moves of courtship as a senior gentleman enlists another to take up arms again on the battlefield of love and friendship.

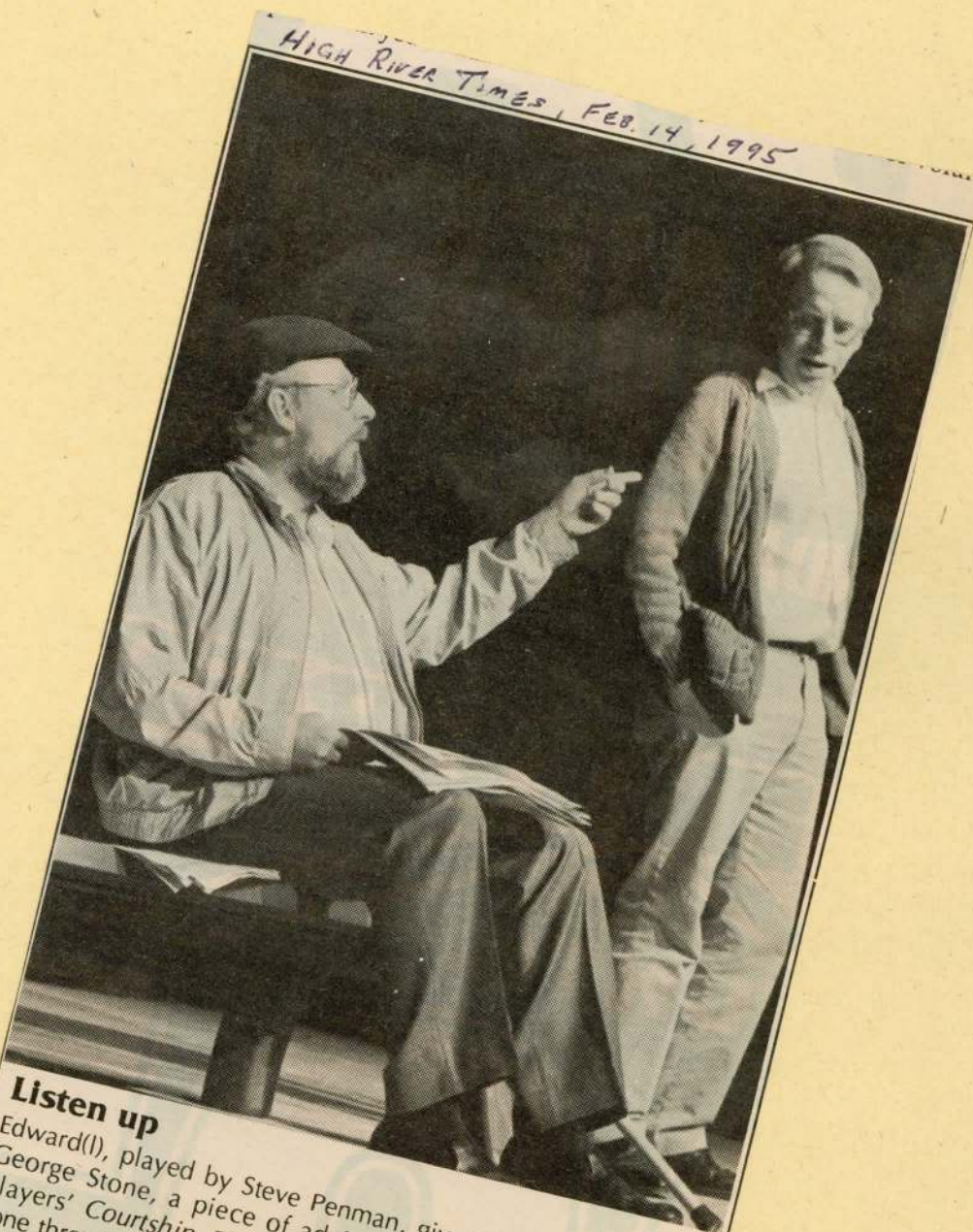
Stalag 69 by Michael Green is a

delightful foray into coarse acting with stock characterizations of members of a POW camp. Despite the valiant efforts of the cast, the play cannot survive the carnage brought on by an inept stage crew and a bombastic director.

The WTP Dessert Storm Troopers will provide musical interludes between the plays and a barrage of desserts will be provided to fuel the strength of the theatre goers.

Dessert begins at 7 p.m. with curtain time at 8 p.m. both evenings. Reinforcement desserts will be available at intermissions.

Tickets, including dessert and theatre events will be available at the door. Due to environmentally-based rationing, recruits are invited to bring their own mess kits including cutlery, plate and mug. For more information call Joann Newton 652-3469.



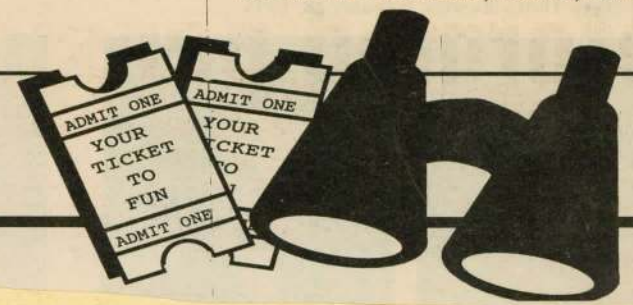
Listen up

Edward(I), played by Steve Penman, gives David, played by George Stone, a piece of advice in the Windmill Theatre Players' *Courtship*. The Windmill Theatre Players host the zone three regional one act festival February 17 and 18 at the Memorial Centre.

Photo by John Barlow

After Hours

HAPPENINGS IN HIGH RIVER & DISTRICT



Performances highly praised

By Steve Penman

The 1995 Alberta Zone 8 One-Act Play Festival was a great success. Total audiences of about 200 saw 10 plays over three sessions on February 17 and 18 at the Highwood Memorial Centre.

Adjudicator Robert Loucks of Edmonton applauded the high calibre of performances from all the entries and indicated he had a difficult time selecting the best overall production. Citing his criteria of good acting, good direction plus an overall balance and unity of purpose in the entire production, he selected Windmill Theatre's entry *Courtship*, directed by Steve Penman and Shannon Simington as his choice to represent the zone at the Alberta Drama Festival in Westlock on March 17 and 18.

The CDM Welding and Machining award for Best Actress went to Maxine Morrison of Strathmore for her role in *A Little Something For The Ducks*. The Western Feedlot award for Best Actor went to George Stone of Windmill Theatre for his role in *Thursday Continued*. The Windmill Theatre award for outstanding

individual achievement went to Mark Aitcheson of Windmill for his strong and diverse characterizations in *Nosey Parkers*, *Boxing Day*, *Married Bliss*, and *Stalag 69*.

Loucks felt it was important to acknowledge some of the other strong theatrical work he noted during the weekend. He named BraggArts Theatre's production of *Specter*, directed by Hazel Parker as the runner up for best play. He also gave honorable mention for directing to Bill Tupkal for *Thursday Continued*, Darlene Goodwin for *Nosey Parkers*, Greg Smyth for *Married Bliss*, and Ruth

Aitcheson for *Polite Conversation*.

The strong acting in the festival was acknowledged with honorable mentions going to Ro Montgomery and Ray Fox in *Boxing Day*, Janet Goodwin and Laura Wall in *Polite Conversation*, Arlene Duff in *Tongue and Tail*, David Wood and Ro Montgomery in *Thursday Continued*, Cindy Whalen and Bob Parker in *Specter*, Laura Wall in *Stalag 69*. George Stone and Steve Penman in *Courtship*, and the ensemble work of Leah Ritz, Mark Aitcheson, Bill Stevenson and Ruth Aitcheson in *Married Bliss*.



Ro Montgomery as Quincey Ross and Mark Aitcheson as Harry Miller in *Nosey Parkers*. Photo by Dave Down

2A — REGIONAL — Week of February 13, 1995

WTP hosts regional drama festival

By Steve Penman

HIGH RIVER—Do you love theatre? Do you want to share in a celebration of creativity? Are you curious about the calibre of theatre in this area? Ever wondered what foolish things your friends do when they go off to do their "drama" thing?

If your answer to any of these questions is yes, you'll want to attend the 1995 Alberta Zone 8 One Act Play Festival this weekend at the Highwood Memorial Centre in High River. Windmill Theatre Players, in association with the Alberta Drama Festival Association, is hosting the festival.

There will be three sessions over the weekend. Friday, Feb. 17, beginning at 7:30 p.m., will see the presentation of four Windmill Theatre entries — *Nosey Parkers*, *Courtship*, *Boxing Day*, and *Married Bliss*.

On Saturday at 1:30 p.m., the audience will see *A Little Something For The Ducks* from

Strathmore Theatre Players, *Polite Conversation* from Windmill Theatre, and *Tongue and Tail* from BraggArts Players.

The final session, Saturday at 8 p.m., will offer Windmill entries *Thursday Continued* and *Stalag 69*, plus *Specter* from BraggArts Players.

All of the festival entries will be adjudicated by Robert Loucks, a professional actor and director from Edmonton. Loucks will offer his comments about the plays at the end of each session. At the conclusion of the festival, he will select one play to advance to the Provincial festival in March. He will also recognize outstanding individual work by presenting several awards.

Everyone is welcome to any or all sessions of the festival. Festival passes or tickets for individual sessions are available at the door. Anyone with questions can contact Steve Penman at 652-7913.



1995 Zone VIII One Act Festival

After the final adjudication was complete, Courtship with Steve Penman and George Stone is off to the provincial festival. Stone was awarded the best actor award for his roles in Courtship and Thursday Continued. Maxine Morrison got the best actress award for her part in A Little Something for the Ducks. Adjudicator Robert Loucks said the Zone VIII festival is one of the best he has ever seen.

Photography by Dave Down





WINDMILL THEATRE PLAYERS
and

adfa Alberta
Drama
Festival
Association

host the

1995
ZONE VIII
ONE ACT FESTIVAL

FEBRUARY 17 & 18, 1995
HIGHWOOD MEMORIAL CENTRE
High River, Alberta

SESSION ONE
SESSION TWO
SESSION THREE

February 17, 7:30 pm
February 18, 1:30 pm
February 18, 8:00 pm

Windmill Players wind up for drama Gone to Glory

By Shirley K. Hartig

HIGH RIVER — Windmill Theatre Players are breezing along with plans for the spring production, *Gone to Glory*. The cast has put in several rehearsals and are working diligently under the direction of Shannon Simington and Karen King, assistant director. Joann Newton as (Lulu), Leah Ritz (Winnie), Neil Demers (Bakpak), Elizabeth Quan (Teddie), Ro Montgomery (Googie), and Bill Tupkal as (Pug) are the cast of *Glory*.

While there are many poignant moments and memories throughout the play, *Gone to Glory* teems with comedy.

Glory is based on the plight of two elderly ladies dwelling in a remote area of B.C. Lack of work and money force Lulu and Winnie to find a more economical lifestyle. Despite their situation, their sense of humor abounds. Their lives remain virtually unchanged for several years until they are visited by recently divorced Googie, their new landlord . . . er . . . landlady, who has definite plans for her property. Undaunted, Lulu begins on her latest plan for success and it just might

Using Winnie as her model, Lulu has plenty of material to work with. But, the rewards are distant and a solution is needed now. Along comes Lulu and Winnie's young vagabond friend, Bakpak, his new acquaintance, Teddie, and a crazy but profitable plan. Winnie, a star?

How could the ladies have known that their unique predicament would be a blessing in disguise. An answer to their prayers. Teddie, an ambitious, determined lady brings in her assistant, Pug, and the idea is becoming reality. Even Googie helps out!

That this is a must see play bears repeating. *Glory* is an

excellent, entertaining script that leaves a lasting impression.

Opening night is fast approaching and tickets are now available. Dinner theatre reservations from Marlene at 652-7605 and regular tickets at Pickersgill's, 652-2252.

Regional one-act festival

Steve Penman and George Stone, along with director, Shannon Simington won best play at the Regional One-Act Festival Feb. 18. They will compete at the Provincials in mid-March. George Stone captured the best actor award and Mark Aitchison won the outstanding individual dramatic achievement award.

4 — REGIONAL — Week of February 20, 1995

Windmill Theatre rehearses drama

By Shirley K. Hartig

HIGH RIVER — Winter is almost over and that brings forth two exciting concepts. Spring is just around the corner and Windmill Theatre Players' next play, *Gone to Glory* will soon be opening.

Gone to Glory courses a gamut of emotions from amusing to sad, optimistic to dismal. Romanticism clashes with an iron will. It will tug at heart strings as the main characters find themselves in a no win situation, as if their lives hadn't been hopeless, already. Like a raging river, pride blocks the path to common sense.

Is there a solution?

Each WTP's production involves a multitude of plans, preparations, and workers. Everyone gets into the act. While rehearsals are happening on stage, other WTP are busy as bees with set planning, searching for props, sound tracks, wardrobe, and other tasks. Memorizing lines and blocking would seem to be enough work for the actors, however, they fulfil some of the above duties, too.

Director Shannon Simington has been moulding the cast into their respective characters since mid-January. Many lengthy rehearsals will eventually culmi-

nate into a must see production opening March 30. How fitting, since the opening scene takes place in March.

Set Director Steve Penman has the challenge of turning the Memorial Centre outside-in as this set promises to be a bit different.

This play will have six performances. The dates for dinner theatre are March 30, 31 and April 1. Sunday matinee April 2 and regular performances April 7 and 8. Tickets will be available soon. Do plan to attend because all the effort going into each production is done for the benefit of the audience.

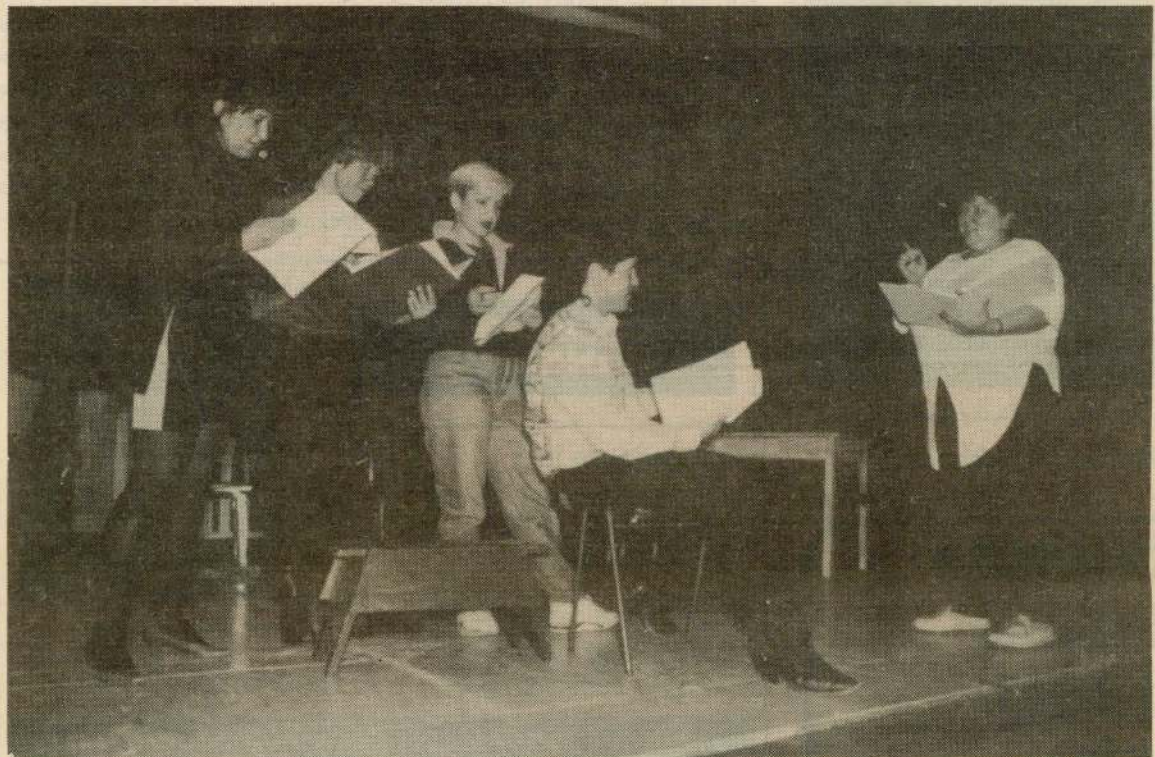


Photo by Shirley Hartig

Ro Montgomery, Joann Newton, Leah Ritz, Neil Demers and director Shannon Simington rehearse *Gone to Glory*.



Irreconcilable differences

Helen Rogers and Ro Montgomery rehearse a scene from the Windmill Theatre Players' upcoming spring production entitled *Gone to Glory*. Photo by Dave Down



Grrr-umpy

Teddie, Helen Rogers, wrestles with Googie, Ro Montgomery, in rehearsal of Windmill Theatre's production of *Gone to Glory*, a play about two destitute elderly sisters. It runs March 31 through April 8. Photo by Dave Down



Wagons east!

Lulu (Joann Newton) tugs a wagon with all her worldly possessions in Windmill Theatre Players' heartwarming spring por-

duction, *Gone to Glory*. Performances continue this weekend.

Photo by Dave Down



Windmill's glory

Lulu (Joann Newton) laments about future with her elderly sister in Windmill Theatre's spring production *Gone to Glory*, a story of plight in poverty. Photo by Dave Down

REGIONAL, MAR. 20, 1995

Windmill play opens Friday

■ Gone to Glory

By Shirley K. Hartig

HIGH RIVER — There are only nine sleeps left until *Gone to Glory* opens at the Memorial Centre. However, the cast and crew may not be sleeping all nine with opening night fast approaching.

Changes have been made in the cast and schedule.

One cast member has been replaced due to illness. Helen Rogers will perform the character of Teddie. On opening night, Helen will have had only three weeks to learn her part.

The play will open on March 31 instead of the originally planned date of March 30.

Glory's characters range in age from early 20s to over 80. Winnie, the oldest, is in her 80s and life has never been easy for her. Once a very pretty girl, Winnie, like most girls her age, had longed for a home and family. However, frustration and poverty, along with the pains of aging have created an irri-

table old woman. Despite it all, Winnie clutches a secret within her heart.

Winnie's sister, Lulu, is a bit over 60. Her life has been a bitter disappointment as well. Except for a few events, her life story could be a replica of Winnie's. Yet, their personalities differ. Where Winnie is irritable and worried, Lulu remains patient and optimistic.

Their friend, Bakpak, is in his early 20s. Young and carefree with a heart of gold, he is content with simply getting by. Working wherever, at whatever, yet only enough to finance his further adventures down a new trail.

On the other hand, Googie is accustomed to wealth without work. In her mid-40s, she had led a rather sheltered life until now. Recently divorced, she is totally unprepared for the cruel world outside of the country club or for managing finances. As Googie put it: "He made it, and I spent it."

Whereas Teddie, a talented young lady welcomes a challenge.

She is ambitious and determined to succeed in her chosen career. The plight of Lulu and Winnie might just be her ticket to success. "It'll put me on the map," said Teddie.

Pug, Teddie's assistant, observes the whole scene without passing judgement. His quiet nature allows him the luxury of calm while nothing is going according to plan. He just keeps on rolling.

Lines have been learned, blocking memorized, costumes found, the set constructed and the stage set for *Gone to Glory*.

Plan to attend because the actors love to perform and performing is an act of love for the audience.



Windmill Theatre Players
presents

gone to glory!

A Touching Comedy
by Suzanne Findlay

Highwood Memorial Centre, High River

DINNER THEATRE:

Friday, March 31, 1995
Saturday, April 1, 1995

- Doors Open at 6:00 pm
- Dinner at 6:30 pm
- Bar Service Available

Tickets - \$22.50

Phone Marlene at
652-7605 for reservations.

REGULAR THEATRE:

Sunday, April 2, 1995

- Show Time 2:00 pm
- All tickets \$6.00

Friday, April 7, 1995

- Show Time 8:00 pm
- Adults \$8.00

Students/Seniors \$6.00
Saturday, April 8, 1995

- Show Time 8:00 pm
- Adults \$8.00

Students/Seniors \$6.00

Tickets available at Pickersgill's Clothing

Theatre group appreciates press coverage

The Editor:

Windmill Theatre Players would like to convey their appreciation to the staff of the *High River Times*. Their continued support and assistance with advertising productions over the years define the true sense of community media.

For Windmill's 20th anniversary last fall, *Times'* staff "dug" through years of files to retrieve photos and articles covering Windmills' plays back to the first production. Then, several photos were republished for old times sake along with various articles regarding the anniversary program of *Musical Memories*.

For our most recent production, *Gone to Glory*, the *Times* published several articles and photos leading up to the big event. Although advertising had been done through different media

channels, according to the audience survey, the majority in attendance read about the play in the *High River Times*. Therefore, WTP thanks a great staff for publishing

a fine paper and look forward to your continued support.

Shirley K. Hartig (Publicity)
Windmill Theatre Players
High River



28 HIGH RIVER TIMES Tuesday, March 21, 1995



Windmill Theatre is focussed on its spring production, *Gone to Glory*.

Photo by Dave Down

Theatre has long been a part of High River

Windmill Theatre Players once again are announcing an attractive offering of both dinner theatre and regular theatre appearances this spring.

It is startling to remember how long this organization has been presenting amateur theatre productions, entertaining a great many people, and gathering provincial kudos along the way. It all started in December 1973, organized by Sadie Gardiner, Wally Geres, Joanne Hall, Paul Neville, Helen Reinders, Chris Tannas, and Ruth Tarasoff, with a grant of \$25.

Their first production in 1974 was *The Matchmaker*. They have been producing sophisticated, well performed and popular entertainment ever since.

The Memorial Centre has been their centre of activities and a great deal of their profits have gone into upkeep of that building. However, they have not been alone in providing popular entertainment. Teen Town, Rotary, schools, the Friendship Senior

were quick to express dissatisfaction over poor performance. In 1903, in the *High River Eye Opener*, Bob Edwards turned drama critic,

reported that a travelling group were not only "a strutting second class show" but even their name was misleading.

"Monday night attracted an audience of eight, on the second night, one lone Chinaman," claimed Edwards, adding, "High River turns up en masse to greet talent, passing up the rotten stuff."

By 1907, The Star Opera House on what is now Fourth Ave. West was booking touring companies which *The Times* reported would please High Riverites knowing "such a treat is in store for them" and which they "await with eagerness."

Across the tracks, in the east business section, Clayton Hall was staging the same style of eagerly anticipated live entertainment. And High Riverites on both sides of the railway tracks obviously held the same high stan-

shows, Chautauqua, theatrical and dance groups, bands, musicians both amateur and professional, all trod the boards of the stage of the theatre above the Old Town Council rooms for many, many years. And the town and district responded gratefully — no more eggs, fresh or rotten; no audiences of eight citizens or one lone Chinese gentleman. Young and old, all took pride in their town Opera House and the entertainment it had to offer.

And, after its demise, the Memorial Centre replaced it.

Thanks to Windmill Theatre Players, as well as other community groups, both the community spirit and the community centre, as well as the quality of entertainment, have been kept alive; part of an early and long-lasting community tradition.

MEDICINE TREE COUNTRY

Lillian Knupp



been among local entertainers at the centre. The well-used stage has also seen the presence of many outside groups, including university choirs, bands and a group from the Winnipeg School of Ballet.

The history of live theatre in High River goes back to the earliest days of the community. Symphonies, choirs, band concerts and opera have had their supporters, ever since the days when the only music available for social events in Buck Smith's Topping House might be limited to Dan Riley's fiddle and Wally Conklin's mouth organ.

In the late 1890s Bavis Hall, situated on Macleod Trail near the present site of the Memorial Centre, was attracting travelling entertainers. Highly dramatic melodrama was popular. It is reported local audiences, many of whom travelled by horseback some distance from neighboring ranches, set a high standard and

any claims their disapproval was expressed in too rank odor. Having driven one travelling troupe to walk the railway tracks to Okotoks in a rainstorm after their show was ended abruptly by a critical audience, the latter would express resentment over false reporting. The eggs thrown, they claimed, were not rotten, as the producer had stated, but had been freshly purchased that day from Joseph Limoges' High River Trading Company.

With the advent of the Opera house in the Town Hall, egg throwing became improper behavior, unsuitable for dignified surroundings. The Opera House would feature both refined entertainment and attendance. The local Business Girls' Club, the high school, operatic diva Odette de Foras, bands, choirs, dance groups and Sunday school, Teen Town and community organizations, all would stage elaborate performances. Travelling minstrel





Creator of *Glory* would be impressed with WTP stage

CONTINUED FROM Page 8
bestowed — a natural vagabond with a carefree heart. There is no malice in Bakpak, and only enough guile to make him an able survivor! Demers has no trouble filling Bakpak's shoes.

Despite stepping into the role of Teddi at short notice, Helen Rogers is comfortable and plays her part as the ambitious, determined and talented young film maker with confidence and understanding. In real life, one might imagine some of Teddi's qualities in Ms. Finlay, the play's author.

Bill Tupkal, Windmill's dependable work-horse, portrays Pug, Teddi's cameraman, a small role that rounds out a stellar cast that has imbued this production with some memorable performances.

Steve Penman has designed many outstanding sets during his association with Windmill, but none as creative and unique as this production. He utilizes the whole theatre as his stage: the

road and main lodge (in the viewer's imagination) somewhere beyond the auditorium entrance, and the far aisle serves as a path from the town, up a sloping ramp to the stage setting of the cabin and adjacent woodshed. Penman has used the "raked stage" technique (the cabin is build on a backwards

slope) facilitating an uninterrupted audience sight-line. I fancy the author would be very impressed with Penman's set with its attendant atmosphere of poverty and despair.

Shannon Simington has directed *Gone to Glory*, with loving care and attention to detail. She exhibits a firm hand and complete understanding of the plot and its players. *Glory* is about human emotions laid bare for all to witness, and Simington allows us to get inside the minds of her characters. Her handling of the startling conclusion, where a

stunning family secret is revealed under the most unusual of circumstances, is particularly powerful.

Other credits include Cheryl Suitor-Fox (producers), Karen King (assistant director), Greg Smyth (stage manager), Dave Burton (lighting), Mark Aitcheson (sound), Sheila Rowland (make-up) and Joann Newton and other cast members (costumes).

Those who saw *Gone to Glory*, will be talking about it for some time to come. I hope you were among the fortunate.



Joann Newton brought Lulu to life. Photo by Dave Down

HAPP

Talent bel

By Paul Hanner

Director Shannon Simington is no stranger to Windmill Theatre Players' spring production of *Gone to Glory*, by Canadian playwright Suzanne Finlay.

Simington first directed this bittersweet comedy-drama in 1991 for Peak Theatre Players in Sundre. That production was voted (in an audience survey) as the most popular play in five years.

Normally conservative in its play-selection, Windmill opted this time to go with this little-known work on the strength of Simington's enthusiastic recommendation. This appears to have been a wise move, on the strength of a capacity crowd's standing ovation at the conclusion of Friday's performance at High River's Highwood Memorial Centre.

Set in the present day interior of British Columbia, the two-hour, two-act play covers three months in the lives of two elderly sisters, Winnie in her 80s and Lulu in her 60s.

The sisters are the current

occupants of a derelict cabin, once part of a vacation lodge, now deserted and in ruins. A combination of unemployment, inadequate pensions and unwelcome old-age have led the sisters to this crossroads in their unfulfilled lives. Their circumstances are not unlike the poverty and squalor depicted in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* and Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*.

As the play opens Winnie and Lulu have just been advised by new landlady, the recently-divorced Googie, that the land is up for sale, and the sisters will have to move out.

Shortly after, Bakpak, a personable young drifter and Lulu's friend arrives from his travels,

with companion Teddi, a fledgling film producer.

Teddi is quick to see the potential of the sisters' plight, as the subject of a documentary-drama on poverty, loneliness and old age.

Googie, the flighty landlady, is encouraged to join the film makers, in return for delaying the sale of the land; a decision that leads to many hilarious situations.

The play's strength lies in its examination of the elderly, and their ability to cling to the slender threads of hope in the ever-increasing agony and torment of the twilight years.

As Lulu and Winnie, Joann Newton and Leah Ritz give immense performances. They are

never off-stage, and their every word, movement and nuance is immediately identifiable with the aged. These young actresses are to be commended for their complete immersion in their difficult roles. Both play off each other so well and their timing is near-perfect.

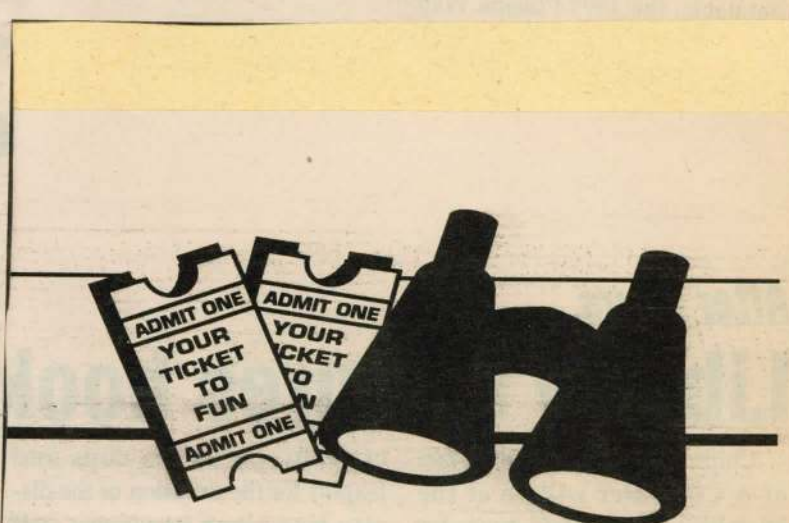
Special mention must go to Newton's performance, in light of the fact that this was her first acting role for Windmill, following several years behind-the-scenes in various capacities.

Ro Montgomery's Googie is a

delight, an insecure woman with expensive tastes, but beneath the exterior of a voluptuous figure lies a very vulnerable human being. Montgomery brings a rare combination of sophistication and naivete to her role, the mark of a seasoned player well beyond her years. In the audience were some 40 students from Calgary's Wilma Hanson junior high school where Montgomery teaches drama.

Neil Demers as Bakpak, the sisters' "free spirit" friend, conveys all the qualities the author

CONTINUED ON Page 9



ugh in *Gone to Glory*



Leah Ritz gave an outstanding performance in her role as Winnie in *Gone for Glory*. Photo by Dave Down