

# Instructor gives regards to Broadway

Laney Fouse  
Staff Writer

Susan Mach, instructor and playwright, finishes up her last class for the week. It's Friday, late afternoon and like everyone else, she's ready to go home. It's no wonder.

Mach starts her week early Monday morning at Linfield College in McMinnville, teaching a three hour, intensive playwrighting course. From there she heads to CCC where she teaches English Composition in the afternoon, three days a week. Then, on Monday nights she can be found teaching another playwrighting class at Portland State University. Besides all this, Mach finds time to do her own playwrighting.

Although this is Mach's first year as an instructor at Clackamas, she's conducted several workshops on the poet, Hazel Hall (1886-1924). Her interest in the Portland poet served as the underlying motivation to write her play "Monograms." The title comes from a Hazel Hall poem of the same name. The play, according to Mach, is not about the poet's biographical background, but instead strives to... "re-capture the lyrical spirit of Hazel Hall and to imagine what her creative life might have been like," she said.

"Having to deal with someone's history and biography is really difficult," acknowledges Mach. Apparently, the whereabouts of Hall's journals, as well as the letters she received from other people, is unknown. There were only four sets of letters available in private collections that

Mach was able to access.

Mach recalls, "I had all these holes in my research. . . [but] I read in a letter she wrote to Walter Evans Kidd that she wanted to be known only as a poet and not as a person. Her story is in her poetry. It was while reading "Monograms" (the poem) that it hit me. The whole first scene is about that poem and drawing from it, I went from there."

Hazel Hall, who was confined to a wheelchair, lived her life mostly through her imagination. The play entails Hazel's journey of discovery, acceptance of herself as a poet, her relationship with her sister, and her infatuation with poet, Vachel Lindsey (1879-1931), who visits her "but only in her imagination," according to Mach.

The playwright completed "Monograms" in 1991, after which, she did several stage readings.

"Whenever you try to get a play produced, you take it around to various theatres. If they are interested, they will ask you to do a stage reading. A stage reading is when you get a group of actors together and just read the play for the producers. They then decide whether or not they want to produce it."

In 1993, the play was performed on Portland Repertory Theatre's Stage Two. At the end of 1994, the play was moved to Portland Rep's Main Stage. But, the success didn't stop there. "Monograms" is scheduled to open in New York City, this April at an off-off Broadway house called Theater For The New City.

Mach professes, "It was kind



Photo by Lora Wahrgren

**English Instructor Sue Mach's play "Monograms" will open off-Broadway in New York City this April.**

of weird the way [this] happened." When the script was first submitted to the producer, Mach had no means to help with production costs. In the meantime, she had sent another script to the same producer, who chose to produce "Monograms" based on the fact she liked Mach's work so much. The playwright's only disappointment--she's flying to New York to meet with the director of her play and will miss seeing Edward Albee.

What's next? Mach is working on a play called "Angle of View." The story is "about a woman who goes to work for one of those TV series like *Cops*. It's really about how this woman betrays her subject."

A stage reading has been tentatively scheduled for Feb. 26 at Portland Rep. but due to a commitment by one of the actors, the reading may take place earlier or the role may be recast. "Angle of View" is going through the same process that "Monograms" went through a few years ago. According to Mach, "Angle" is scheduled for a reading in Boston as well.

Stage readings play an integral part by providing the playwright with feedback from colleagues and producers. The reading also gives the writer a chance to hear how the play sounds or is received by an audience.

"You can feel the energy of how people are reacting to your work," Mach said. "If you work with actors and without an audience, it's just not the same because you become enmeshed in what's happening on stage. When you have an audience, you can feel the 'dead spots' . . . you can feel it in your gut. It's not like you can just stop the play and say, could you please say this instead of that."

As most writers will admit, criticism plays a significant part in successful writing. But Mach concedes, "There are sometimes when I do a stage reading when I've worked particularly hard on a script and I just want to get through it. I'm just not ready nor in a state to hear the [criticism] yet. I've learned that it's okay. . . You don't have to be tough all the time. Your ego gets to be fragile after a while, and when stuff doesn't work, you need to back off and get yourself centered, and then go back in again."

Mach attended Pacific University in Forest Grove, where she majored in English and Theatre. She earned a Graduate Degree from Boston University, and has a Master's Degree in Creative Writing. She wants to teach writing full-time and continue playwrighting. "You really have to make a commitment to do the creative things because they are the easiest to let go."

## Bassett: nominee for USA Today Scholarship

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Shane Bassett, a 21 year old student, has been nominated as CCC's representative in the annual competition for the All USA Academic Team Scholarship.

To be eligible for nomination, a student must possess a cumulative grade point average of no less than 3.25. The nominees must all be in pursuit of an Associate Art, Associate of Science or Associate of Applied Science Degree. Unlike other scholarships that can be applied for, students must be nominated by an instructor. Bassett was chosen from a field of five nominees who were selected by CCC instructors for their outstanding academic achievement.

Reacting to the nomination, Bassett declared, "It was pretty much unexpected." Pursuing a degree in the field of Elementary Education, he credits his faith as the underlying factor for wanting to teach. He quotes from the Bah Writings, "Each human being is a mind rich in gems of inestimable." His goal is "to uncover [those] gems and polish them."

When asked what he thought made him academically successful, Bassett replied, "I study not for a grade or honors, but because I enjoy the learning and knowledge." He feels that being married to his wife, Crystal, helps him take life more seriously which in turn keeps him focused.

Team placement will be announced on Feb. 23, 1996. If Bassett is selected for the 20 member First Team he will receive a \$2500 cash award. Two other teams comprised of 20 members each will also be chosen. These members will receive certificates. Being nominated for the competition is an honor itself. Only 150 nominees are chosen each year from two-year colleges across the country.

The awards will be presented during the annual convention of the American Association of Community Colleges on April 15 in Atlanta, GA. The event takes place during the Phi Theta Kappa President's breakfast and will be presented by the President of USA Today.

Bassett, a former Massachusetts resident, works as an Assistant Teacher at Child's View Montessori School in Portland. His propensity for teaching children extends across the globe. He spent a year working on a children's education project in Trinidad in the West Indies prior to moving to Oregon. If he should place on the First Team, Bassett would like to spend one semester overseas, preferably in a Spanish-speaking country.



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