

Pioneer journalist shares past, present

TAM OLIVER

A & E editor

Priscilla L. Buckley will be reading from her memoir *String of Pearls* tomorrow at 7 p.m. in the Gregory Forum.

For 27 years, she served as managing editor of the *National Review*, founded by her brother William F. Buckley, Jr., from its inception until she retired last year. President Ronald Reagan once described her as "one of the sharpest conservative minds in the country."

Additionally, Buckley will give a presentation, "From Gutenberg

to Gates: how print production has changed," on Friday, April 13 at noon in CC127. She will be discussing the mechanics of print production and how the advent of technology has shaped news produc-

tion.

At the age of 23, Buckley, a graduate of Smith College, landed her first big job at United Press Radio in New York City during WWII. She has the distinction of being one of the first journalists to report the end of the war.

In an excerpt from *String of Pearls*, she describes the momentous day.

"I would write the first fifteen-minute radio news broadcast on the end of World War II."

Priscilla Buckley
Journalist

"As I walked in the door it was apparent nothing much was happening, but just minutes later we got the word that Truman, who had become president on Roosevelt's death in April,

would speak to the nation at 7 p.m., and in London, Clement Attlee, who had replaced Churchill in July, would speak to the British people at midnight, when BBC ordinarily went off the air.

"This was it: the BIG ONE...I would write the first fifteen-minute radio news broadcast on the end of World War II. I have it still, on faded teletype paper. Not world-shaking prose, but competent and comprehensive. The FLASH—"Japan Surrenders"—went out at two seconds after 7 p.m. My fifteen-minute broadcast cleared the line at 7:48 p.m. August 14, 1945."

Her recently published book is filled with autobiographical recollections of a world of journalism that is quite different from the one of today. It is centered on her first experiences as a correspondent in Paris.

According to the Senior Editor Richard Brookhiser at *National Review*, her memoir *String of Pearls* is "full of great stories, clear-as-a-bell memories and laughs. A lost world of journalism lives again."

Buckley is at Clackamas Community College by invitation of English Instructor Kate Gray. Both the reading tomorrow night and the workshop Friday are free and open to the public.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF FPG INTERNATIONAL

Priscilla L. Buckley, journalist and author, will read from her memoir tomorrow night at 7 p.m. in Gregory Forum and host a discussion of changes in journalism at noon Friday in CC 127.

Talented cast sustains *A New Brain*

TAM OLIVER

A & E editor

Spending the evening attending Portland Center Stage's first musical, *A New Brain*, is a pleasant experience, although not profound.

The play explores the liberating qualities of the near death experienced by composer, lyricist and writer William Finn. With co-writer James Lapine, the music Finn created during that time in his life was developed into the autobiographical musical, *A New Brain*.

Shortly after receiving two Tony Awards for *Falsettos* in 1992, Finn was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. This turned out to be a misdiagnosis, but while he contemplated the very real possibility of imminent death, his first thought was of the music he would never have the chance to write. When he returned from the hospital, he sat down at the piano and found that music flowed from him like never before in his life. This became the substance of this musical.

The play's main character, Gordon Schwinn (Darrin Baker), is a songwriter who makes a living writing songs for a large, demanding television frog named Mr. Bungee (Steve Wilkerson). Feeling that writing for the tyrannical amphibian is stifling his creativity, Gordon is complaining to his friend

Rhoda (Susannah Mars) over lunch, when he begins to feel strange and collapses face first into his baked ziti.

He is rushed to the hospital where he is quickly diagnosed with a possibly fatal brain condition. Scheduled for life-threatening surgery, Gordon laments the music he may never be able to write. Though consoled by Rhoda, his mother Mimi (Michele M. Mariana) and his lover Roger (David Ayers), he sends them away the night before the surgery so he can be alone to possibly compose the last song he'll ever write.

There is no dialogue in *A New Brain* so the success of the work depends on the stage settings, lyrics and actors' performances.

The settings, which were sparse, worked well in that they didn't distract from the impression that the action was taking place inside Gordon's head, except for one scene in which a mast with sails appears for a song Roger sang about his love of sailing. This might have worked fine for the audience on the main floor, but from the balcony the sight of a set of sails unattached to a boat appeared ludicrous.

As for the actors, their performances were sincere and their

singing clear and well enunciated. However, one performance stood out above the others. Bernadine Mitchell plays the bag lady that Gordon first encounters when hurrying to lunch with Rhoda and continues to encounter throughout the play with equal parts belligerence and panache. She is a commanding presence as she sings and swaggers across the stage. Also notable was the crystal-clear quality of the voice of the minister played by Edward M. Barker.

"A New Brain" is an entertaining production, but it lacks the depth that could be expected from

a close call with death. It feels more like a work in progress needing more humor to be considered comedy or more emotional penetration to be deeply felt as drama.

Although the cast was flawless, talented and exuberant, they didn't have enough to work with to have a

great production. It was difficult not to try to imagine what the same

group of actors might do with a work with more substance..

Performances of *A New Brain* will continue at Portland Center Stage through the matinee on Sunday, April 22. Tickets range from \$10 for those under the age of 25, to \$15-\$43 general admission. Box office: 503-274-6588; Gen-

eral information: 503-248-6309 or www.pcs.org.

Mitchell, as the bag lady, "is a commanding presence as she sings and swaggers across the stage."



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Thursday, April 12

Breakfast: Turkey, bacon, pepper jack omelet w/ toast
Grill special: Southwestern grilled veggie sand. w/ potato salad

Entree: Beef stew in a bread bowl
Budget Entree: Vegetable curry

Friday, April 13

Breakfast: Turkey, bacon, pepper jack omelet w/ toast
Grill special: Southwestern grilled veggie sand. w/ potato salad

Entree: Fresh halibut fish tacos
Budget Entree: Spicy noodles + veggies

Monday, April 16

Breakfast: Chef's surprise
Grill special: Chef's surprise
Entree: Greek salad w/ chicken
Budget Entree: Penne pasta w/ sausage

Tuesday, April 17

Breakfast: Chef's surprise
Grill special: Chef's surprise
Entree: Rigatoni w/ bleu cheese
Budget Entree: Focaccia sausage melt + salad



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