

LAST RESORT PLAYERS CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The spring of 1993 was an exciting time in Florence. There was a new hospital, a new Siuslaw Library, and, most interesting of all, plans for building an all-purpose event center were afoot. Bob Barker, a local resident with years of experience in theater, had urged that the building include a full theater complete with fly loft and full backstage facilities. Fundraising was in full swing.

At that time, the only venues for shows and concerts were the Siuslaw High School, the Elks Club and various churches. There was no place to hold large expositions and exhibits.

Barker had an idea that a popular play combined with an exhibit by local artists could help raise awareness of the need for a municipal facility and possibly money as well. Thus was born the Florence Performing and Fine Arts Festival.

A large metal truss supported tent (60' x 40') was erected by a



Original cast of the 'Loggers Lament'

crane, a stage was set up at one end with seating for about 100 spectators and a juried art show exhibition area in the rear. There were only two problems: there was no heat and no way to se-

cure the tent at night.

The second problem was more easily solved than the first. An RV was parked by the tent and several of us took turns spending the night in it as se-

curity guards — interrupted at intervals during the night when the real Florence police cruised by. Heat was another issue altogether.

The first annual Florence Per-

forming and Fine Arts Festival took place in September — and if you've ever camped out on the Oregon coast at that time of year, you know what the nights are like. WE FROZE! Actors and audience alike. Trying to solve the problem with generators only made things worse. The audience could hardly hear us over the roar.

But all agreed that the first venture of what was to become the Last Resort Players was a success. Our festival was eventually able to contribute \$5,000 toward the building of the Florence Events Center, 715 Quince St. And here we are 25 years later celebrating a quarter of a century run as the Last Resort Players!

We shared the tent during the day in 1993 with the fourth Annual Family Farm Music Festival and on Sunday morning with an Ecumenical Church Service and Gospel Music Fest.

The Last Resort Players

opened the Florence Events Center with "Music Man" in the fall of 1996 and have never looked back. We became the center's resident company, traditionally performing a musical on the first two weekends of November and two plays in the spring and summer.

Be sure to see the LRP's latest offering, "A Nice Family Gathering," opening at the Florence Events Center on June 8. Written by Phil Olsen and directed by Judy Kaplan, this family comedy is guaranteed to make you laugh and maybe even shed a tear or two. It's the story of a man who loved his wife so much, he almost told her.

Performances are Friday and Saturday evenings at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. June 8 to 10 and 15 to 17.

Tickets are \$18 and are available at www.eventcenter.org or the FEC box office at 541-997-1994.

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If the primaries were done away with, and the ballot had Trump, Clinton, Sanders, Rubio, Ted Cruz and others, perhaps the election would go beyond just tactical voting and become something more substantive.

"I think that psychology is a big part of it," Roberts said. "By giving people a new method of voting that allows them more expression on each candidate, I think psychologically it will break some people out of that trap where they feel like they have to vote for that person because the system is rigged to elect that person."

That's not to say that STAR would create a Trump loss or give another candidate like Sanders a win. The results could stay the same. But Roberts believed the process could help quell the divisive political party politics that has enveloped the nation over the years. Instead of voting for a party, people could just vote for individuals they think would just do a good job.

A FIRST STEP

STAR wouldn't be the end-all-be-all to fixing voting in America. It's just a first step.

"I think it's a powerful, revolutionary first step," Roberts said. "I don't think it's a cure-all patch for everything, but I think it's absolutely a step in the right direction for our voting method. Whatever changes need to be made to go along side of it, we can address those one at a time."

Even if money could be saved by not doing primaries,

how each candidate gets their name out to the public will still be based on campaign donations.

"Money will still be a huge component," Roberts said. "We do run into people who say that the number one problem is money in politics, and ask why we aren't working on that. We understand that, and we do see that as a huge problem."

"Because it's such an enormous task to work on money and politics that, rather than redirecting energy into ending Citizens United, we believe that this is something that is a smaller chunk of change that we have the capacity to effect here locally in our area. Rather than just being overwhelmed by money in politics, we believe this is an achievable goal here locally. It is a step toward freeing people to vote for their favorite candidates, which is huge."

And there are still questions about how STAR will be implemented in the future. Right

now, it is for non-partisan races. What will it look like when it gets into more heated, and financially backed, races statewide?

Will people become confused in how to use the system? And will they trust the mathematical algorithms used in the runoff?

That's something for the voters to decide in November,

when STAR is expected to be placed on the Lane County ballot.

For more information about the process, or to sign the petition to get STAR on November's ballot, visit www.starlane.us or www.equal.vote.

Beyond Lane County, STAR is also running a twin campaign in Multnomah County.

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