

Cottage Theatre's latest is T-O-O funny

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel



courtesy photo

(from L to R): Logainne Schwatzandgrubennierre (Madison Baker), Chip Tolentino (Joel Ibanez), William Barfee (Donovan Seitzinger), Leaf Conebear (Kyle Carrillo-Enders), Olive Ostrovsky (Brittany Dreier), and (on the floor) Marcy Park (Maeve Dahlen).

I didn't expect to be tickled as much as I was while watching "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee." The whimsical frustrations of middle school were delivered accurately and comically by both the younger and older members of the cast, and quite frankly, hit close to home.

The title is as much of a synopsis as you could really search for. The play is about a spelling bee in Putnam County where contestants have previously won other bees and look to win this one as well. The characters' hopes are portrayed through various emotions such as hopeful, desperate and extremely boastful. Executive Director

Susan Goes describes the play as a "hilarious romp through middle school," and I couldn't agree more. Within the play you find pubescent struggles, first crushes and principals driven to alcoholism — it was almost a flashback.

There are five original contestants of the spelling bee, but three more are added from audience members who are unsuspecting and have no idea of the dialogue or choreography of what was to come. When each person's name was called up to spell, announcer Rona Lisa Perretti (played by Tracy Nygard)

would tell a fictional fact about the character's life which always ended comically and uncomfortably for the contestants from the audience.

The top performance was definitely by Ward Fairbairn, who played the cynical and often annoyed Vice Principal Douglas Panch. Panch was the character that would call up the spellers, say the word they had to spell and give a definition or use the word in a sentence should the contestant ask for it. It was those instances that were the main generator of humor. It was Fairbairn's eloquent, pe-

dantic and sarcastic responses to these questions that really put the audience in an uproarious laughter.

However, we cannot forget the performance of Joel Ibanez, who played the character of Chip Tolentino, a typical anxiety-ridden middle school boy who struggles with puberty. His song about his unfortunate erection during the spelling bee was the most outstanding number of the play. Any adult male could understand the plight of Chip Tolentino.

The female characters were not outdone, however. The voices of Madison Baker, Brittany Dreier and Maeve Dahlen truly put the music in the musical. Dreier's character, Olive Ostrovsky, perfectly pinpoints a middle school girl having her first crush on Willame Barfee (Donovan Seitzinger). Seitzinger, too, presents an outstanding standoffish personality (and sinus infection) in "the tough kid" of any middle school.

Overall, the play was an absolute success. While the writing is undeniably a great piece of work, the story is truly brought to life by an extremely enthusiastic and talented group of cast and crewmembers.

For her birthday, Pruitt presents a gift



photo by Cathy Bellavita

Phyllis Pruitt talks to a crowd of more than 25 guests about the 150-year old family quilt she donated at the celebration of her 90th birthday hosted by the Cottage Grove Museum and Cottage Grove Genealogical Society on Saturday afternoon.

PERLOW

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prison, where they would soon be released because there was no capacity to keep them. The jail levy has at least helped us hold people until they can appear in court."

Grant funding stemming from the passage of House Bill 3194 has helped the District Attorney's Office hire more lawyers to prosecute such low-level offenses, Perlow said, funding that will be available until 2017.

"Our numbers of support staff are really low, and it's not sustainable," she said. "If we lose those grants or our workload changes substantially, we can't keep up with capacity. But until the grants give out in 2017,

LRAPA

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"We're a little nervous about Eugene, and we're not quite where we want to be in Oakridge, but it's a pretty good report for Cottage Grove."

Hough said that complaints received by LRAPA have decreased in all categories in recent years except those related to open burning and home wood heating. This year, the agency will hold a public hearing aimed in part at discussing proposed changes to LRAPA's outdoor burning guidelines, which gov-

ern the burning of yard waste such as limbs. Outdoor burning is permitted during many days of the spring and fall and is prohibited during the winter and the dry summer months to help prevent wildfires.

Proposed changes include a limit to the size of ceremonial fires, which Hough said has been abused by events in recent years including a gathering in Florence. Changes would also prohibit outdoor burning in barrels "based on a frequent pattern of burning garbage and other

"Not everybody is going to

get the same plan or the same treatment," she said. "There are assessments to see who is ready for drug and other treatments, and when. It's more about testing how a person's brain works and how they learn, with the goal of getting people into programs when they're most ready to succeed."

Parole and probation has received funds from the state that are being reinvested from the savings realized from trying new programs like these, Perlow said.

"For the first time in a long time, you're seeing everybody working at a new level, together," she said, including the County jail and local mental health professionals. But time

will tell whether this new model can work in the long run.

"We hope to keep and even improve a higher service level, but I don't see money returning from Secure Rural Schools funding," Perlow said. "If we can keep showing savings to the state, we hope the public will see the value and we can talk about another levy to specify exactly what we need."

Perlow acknowledged, however, that passing another levy could be tricky.

"Public trust is so low for government in general and in Lane County specifically that we're going to have to put forth a lot of effort to earn it back," she said.

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Proposed changes include a limit to the size of ceremonial fires, which Hough said has been abused by events in recent years including a gathering in Florence. Changes would also prohibit outdoor burning in barrels "based on a frequent pattern of burning garbage and other

prohibited materials and inefficient combustion," according to Hough's presentation. The burning of grass clippings based on the heavy smoke it creates would also be banned under the proposed new regulations, as would the burning of fallen leaves for the same reason.

LRAPA has recently updated its website to showcase continuous air-quality data, and the website, located at lrapa.org, also showcases any home wood heating advisories, though Cottage Grove does not have stat-

utes that prevent wood heating on days of poor air quality.

Cottage Grove City Councilor Mike Fleck served as chair of the LRAPA board in 2014 and will serve again this year. The communities of Cottage Grove and Oakridge share a seat on the LRAPA board, alternating which town holds the seat each year. Hough said the Oregon legislature approved a plan where both communities could hold a fixed seat on the board, but those communities have to approve such an arrangement.

OFFBEAT

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out with a few passes, touch-and-gos and gentle turns — the yoke in one hand and the flight manual in the other. And it was going pretty well, he thought. But then he realized that the landing gear was stuck.

He flew the plane around for a while, trying to figure out how to get it unstuck. Finally he realized he'd just have to bring the plane in on its belly and hope for the best.

So down came Art Lacey in his new, doomed warbird, landing in a shower of sparks with a screech of tearing metal.

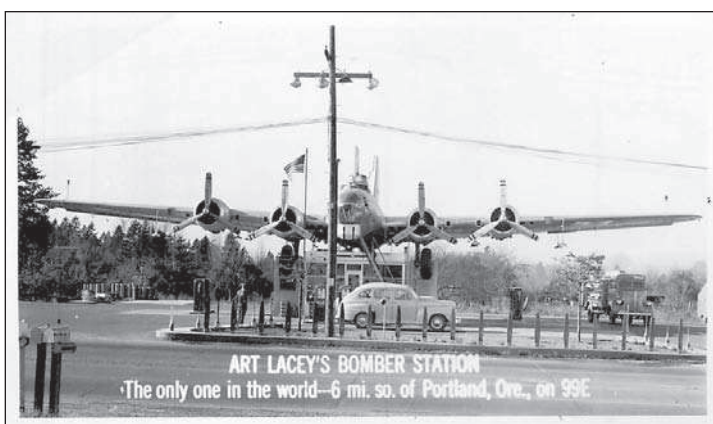
Although the cat was now out of the bag, the manager felt bad about the broken landing gear — and probably a little relieved, too, since his customer wasn't dead.

"He turned to his secretary and said, 'Have you written up the bill of sale yet on that B-17?'" Punky recounted. "And she said no, and he said, 'Worst case of wind damage I've ever seen.' And so he sold him a second B-17."

The second plane set Art back just \$1,500 — a special deal the manager made him, knowing he'd spent all his money on the first one.

Of course, faking the copilot was no longer going to work, so Art called his wife long-distance and asked her to send two of his friends down with a case of whiskey. The booze was to be used to bribe the local fire department to pump the fuel out of the old B-17 and into the new one using their fire truck, and it was a powerful enticement; Oklahoma was still a dry state at the time.

Everything worked as planned, although Art had to kite a check in Palm Springs to



The Bomber as it appeared just a few years after Art Lacey installed its signature airplane in 1947.

refuel the big plane; luckily, he made it home to cover his paper before it could bounce.

But when he got home, Art found his troubles had just begun. The city of Portland wouldn't issue permits to bring the plane from the airport. It was just too big, even after the wings were dismantled.

But Art was in so deep now, there was no turning back. He scheduled the move for the dark of night, well after the bars had all closed. He hired two teenagers with hot cars to accompany the motorcade, with instructions to floor it and race off recklessly into the night if the police should appear — the idea being to draw the cops away from the plane. The truck drivers were instructed that under no circumstances were they to stop before they arrived at the gas station, no matter who ordered them to. And he promised to pay any tickets anyone was written by any cop for his or her part in the move.

The move's only mishap was a drunk driver who, seeing an airplane bearing down on him, thought he'd accidentally driven out onto an airfield and panicked and skidded into the ditch.

City Hall officials were, of course, furious. But after their

fully completed, and the Alliance is working to raise the necessary funds to get it done; when it is, the Lacey Lady will be one of just seven B-17s remaining in flyable condition. Full details of their project are at www.b71alliancegroup.com.

(Sources: "The Art Lacey Story," www.b71alliancegroup.com; Bamesberger, Michael. "The 'Lacey Lady' B-17 bomber, a Milwaukie landmark, comes down from its perch," Portland Oregonian, 13 Aug 2014; Spitaleri, Ellen. "Lacey Lady's New Home," Portland Tribune, 10 Nov 2014)

initial attempts to punish Art resulted in some very unflattering newspaper coverage, they gave it up, fined him \$10, declared victory and went home.

Art was able to pay half his fine with the \$5 collected from his friend. He promptly had his airplane mounted above the gas pumps and renamed the place "The Bomber." And there it sat for the next 63 years, bringing in hundreds of thousands of curious gawkers and customers alike.

Over the years the Lacey's added a restaurant and a small hotel. In the early 1990s they closed the gas pumps, and the big B-17 started to look increasingly forlorn up there, exposed to the weather and the occasional predations of vandals.

Then, in 1996, the family decided to do something about it — and the B-17 Alliance was born, dedicated to restoring the "Lacey Lady," as they've dubbed the bomber.

Currently the bomber is in the B-17 Alliance Museum and Restoration, located at McNary Airfield in Salem (3278 25th St. SE). The museum is open Fridays through Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The multi-million-dollar restoration still has a ways to go before it's success-



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