

Tawas Bay Players Newsletter

February/March 2017



In Memory of George Robson by Barb Hunter



Without a doubt, this has been one of the most challenging seasons in all TBP's history. Over the years, we've lost many beloved members, and each one meant something very special to our group. This past fall, we were hit doubly hard when we lost long-time member George Robson so soon after Debbie DeBois passed away. Both Debbie and George served this theatre with a dedication, determination, and passion that helped to make this group the community fixture it continues to be to this day.

George joined the players with his wife Kay during the group's presentation of *Fiddler on the Roof* in 1983-1984 and considered himself happily bit by the TBP bug. A long-time officer on the board of directors, George worked tirelessly to promote the theatre and secure a permanent home for us all. He hauled hundreds of sets in and out of the old community building, attended countless work bees, built sets wherever they were needed, and always offered his expertise and support wherever they were needed. He, too, became a *Founder's Award* honoree. He took many roles as "favors," when we needed more men to round out a cast, eventually coming to the realization that he was actually enjoying himself! He soon found himself a major contributor on stage (and of course always off) stealing audience's hearts as grumpy old Norman in *On Golden Pond* and the irascible Grandpa in the play series featuring his character written by member and friend Michal Jacot. A lover of all things musical, George entertained audiences with his mischievously delivered roles in *Little Shop of Horrors*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and of course as one of our dapper club singers in the *Big Band Revues*. He happily joined the budding TBP Singers, (eventually bringing us his little brother Mike), and like his friend Deb, maintained his devotion to this group, even attending practices for this year's *Christmas Songs and Stories* just weeks before his death.

Like many others this past year, we're still feeling the pangs of grief and loss, but in tribute to our two family members, we're determined to honor their memories and contributions by re-dedicating ourselves to the mission statement and dream they helped create: "*The purpose of the Tawas Bay Players is to promote and encourage theatre in our community by providing quality educational and/or entertaining productions, utilizing talents within the local area...*" We are forever indebted to George Robson and Debra Lee DeBois for their lifetime dedication to TBP, but more importantly for the friendships and love they shared with us all.

Play Presentation Meeting - February 21, 2017 by Keith Frank

Every year, in addition to plays submitted by the AAC and the Play Reading Committee, members are given an opportunity to present play ideas to the Board for consideration. So, if you are an aspiring director and have a play that you would like to present for consideration or, if you are merely a member who has ideas for shows that you think the group should perform, now is your opportunity. The Play Presentation Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. in the refreshment room of the theater. When presenting a play to the Board, please try to have the following information with you: type of play (musical, drama, comedy, etc.), cast size (# male/# female/# youth, ages needed, etc.), show requirements (lots of set changes, easy set, lots of costumes, props, etc.), rating (all audiences, some language, adult scenes/language, etc.), approximate cost (Royalties - these can be found at the website of the company that holds the rights to the show. If you can't find this information, don't worry about it). If not you, is someone willing to direct/produce this show? (Not a deal breaker but good to know.) Also, there is a Director Profile form available that should be filled out and submitted. The form contains most of the above information. Even though it's called a Director Profile form, it doesn't mean that you are committing to directing the show you present. It's just a way for the Board to keep track and have a record of the recommended shows. You can request a form from Keith or Pat and they will email or get a copy to you by other means.

***The Spitfire Grill* by Pam Frank**

Don't miss *The Spitfire Grill* this weekend. Performances are Thursday, February 16, Friday February 17, Saturday February 18 and Sunday, February 19. Dress rehearsal was very well received with the largest audience I have seen in a long time. Cast members Barb Hunter as Hannah, Sheila Monroe as Effy, Mendy Schmina as Shelby, Jeff Chadwick as Caleb, Brendan Dehner as Joe and Savanna Utter and Kaitlyn McClellan sharing the role of Percy should be very proud of their production. Congratulations to Carol Kushion, director, Sharon Langley, Assistant Director and Diane Meyer-MacDonald, Stage Orchestral Director for a great show.

***Murder at Roswell Delivers Out-of-This-World Evening of Fun* by Michal Jacot**

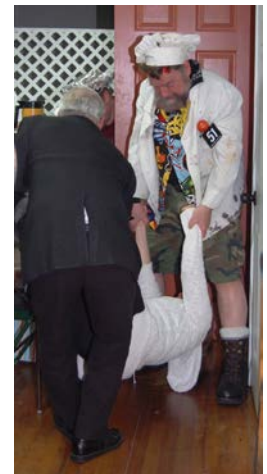
Our third annual Murder Mystery Dinner Theater went over very well! *Murder At Roswell* centered around the deadly doings at the Area 51 Diner, a cheesy tourist trap diner in Roswell, New Mexico, site of the supposed flying saucer crash from decades ago. We started the show out with a really awesome flying saucer landing in the parking lot. Flashing lights, eerie sounds, the whole bit. Really, we did. The special effect was put together by Mary Ann Michalski, and got everyone in the mood for some space doings. Especially when they found out that, while they were distracted watching the "UFO", a murder occurred behind them. (Which is exactly as we planned. Not a single person saw our murder victim die!)

From then on, it was up to police detective Scott Reasoner (Michal Jacot) to sort out what happened in a tongue-in-cheek investigation. And there was an assortment of suspects to choose from, just the kind of weird characters you'd expect in a town geared around alien visitations. First, there was our hotshot reporter, Denise Parker (Tina Dalton), out to uncover the secrets of Roswell but instead digging up some juicy tidbits about some of its residents. Denise was killed in a ... well, frankly, kind of a ridiculous way.

Then there were the suspects. Bart Fox (Keith Frank), a mysterious government agent in a black suit and sunglasses who spent the evening whispering things into his watch and taking photos with his pen. There was Howard Gorman (Alan Dalton), a tinfoil-hat-wearing dork who came to Roswell to hitch a ride to the planet Vexaluna IV. There was Artie McFadden (Chris Mundy), the ill-tempered diner owner who became the place's owner when his partner fell on a steak knife Artie was holding - several times. There was Athelia Bozworth (Janie Mundy, in a costume you had to see to believe), the local crazy cat lady who claimed to have lunch with the aliens every Thursday. And then there was Sugar Shackelford (Beth Borowski) the sweet waitress with a shady past. There was Melvin Ackerman (John Manning) a nut-job conspiracy theorist. And I can't even try to explain Jennifer Aniston (Michael Denney), a seriously weird guy (yes, a guy) who was "not from around here" - whether he meant Roswell or Earth, we weren't sure.

We hosted a nearly-full house the first night and a full house the second night, and everyone enjoyed the shenanigans as well as the great dinner. We tried something new this year: we presented the murder mystery as a Perchville event the following weekend. Since we had never done that before, we had no idea what to expect. I just knew I wanted to do an event that people could bring their kids to (a nice, wholesome, family-friendly murder, you know.) Producer Sue Duncan had it all worked out. We'd open the doors at 4:30. It would be first come, first served, walk-ins only, and we could seat 100 people. After that, it was "sorry you missed the mother ship," and the first 50 people turned away would get a McDonald's card as a consolation gift. Imagine my surprise when I pulled into the K of C parking lot at 4:10 and saw about 40 people lined up outside the door waiting to get in. Sue opened the doors shortly afterwards, and we hit our ceiling of 100 guests by 4:35! That group was made up about half-and-half of locals and tourists, and everyone had fun. Many of the visitors said they'll plan on coming back to Tawas for next year's show (so I guess we'd better have one).

Many thanks go out to my cast. A lot of people were surprised to hear that they didn't have any memorized lines ... they simply improvised all night. They are a talented group of people, and they always surprise me with their off-the-cuff remarks and quick responses to audience questions. And thanks to our crew, who did everything from serving food to orchestrating our special effects. Now that it's all over, Sue and I will put our heads together and figure out what went right, what we can improve for next time, and generally yak about the show. But considering its overwhelming success, it looks like the Tawas Bay Players may be a welcome entry in the Perchville schedule.



Politics and Non-Profits Don't Mix by Keith Frank

When an organization is bestowed with 501(c)(3) non-profit tax exempt status, it receives many benefits. It is also required to follow certain rules. In return for its favored tax exempt status, a charitable non-profit promises the federal government that it will not engage in "political campaign activity" and if it does, IRS regulations mandate that the charitable non-profit will lose its tax-exempt status (Schedule A, IRS Form 990). Charitable non-profits and foundations may not "participate in, or intervene in (including publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for political office." 26 U.S.C. Section 501(c)(3). This prohibition applies to any and all candidates for federal, state and even local elections.

In the case of the Tawas Bay Players, engaging in any form of political activity not only violates the above referenced law, it is also a violation of our by-laws and it's a violation of our building lease agreement with the City of East Tawas. So, as a member of the Tawas Bay Players, if you are involved in a TBP production or any other activity going on at the theater and you see something that you suspect may be considered politically oriented, please bring it to the attention of one of our Board members. As your elected representatives, it is our duty to see that this type of activity does not take place at the theater.

Now you might think that because we are a small Community Theater, no one will notice or say anything. Let me share my very first theater experience here in Tawas. My ex-wife was teaching a Community Education class at Tawas Area Schools. The culmination of the class was the production of the play *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Although I wasn't in the class, I got roped in to playing *Schroeder* because there weren't enough people in the class to fill all the roles. Anyway, the play was to be performed in the old East Tawas Elementary School Gym which is now the building where the Huron Community Bank mortgage department is located. At the time, students had painted *Peanuts* characters on the gym walls for the elementary school children. We all thought this would be cute, given the play we were doing. Well, about two weeks before opening night, the school received a letter from Tams-Witmark informing them that they had been made aware of the *Peanuts* characters on the walls and that they were painted without permission and was thus considered a violation of the trademark law. They said that they would not allow the play to be performed in that building unless all of the characters were covered up. (Apparently, since it was an elementary school, they decided to take no action against the school for having painted them.) We had to cover all of the characters with black tarps in order to perform the show. So, just because we are a small community in northeast Michigan, don't think that "Big Brother" doesn't have his eyes on us. Tawas Bay Players have come a long way in the past 38 years. Let's not do something to jeopardize all of that effort.

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A Note from the Editor by Pam Frank

Maybe you are wondering how I determine what articles are included in the TBP Newsletters. It is quite simple; I put in what is sent to me. I often request specific articles about things that I know are happening but I don't always receive the information. So if you are involved in a show or attend a workshop or just have some great personal news, send me an email. Or call and fill me in or write it out longhand and mail it to me. You can even leave articles at the theater for me, just please let me know you left one. I want to include all the TBP events but I need your help. Thank you to everyone who regularly contributes.

How Many Theater People Does It Take To Change A Light Bulb . . .?

How many actors does it take to change a light bulb?

- All of them. One to do it, and the rest to talk about how much better they could have done it.
- None. Just complain to the director at notes.
- None. Doesn't the stage manager do that?

How many stage managers does it take to screw in a ...

- Done.

How many stage managers does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

- It's on my list... IT'S ON MY LIST...

How many assistant directors does it take to change a light bulb?

- One. But he/she has to check with the director first to make sure he/she wants the bulb there.

How many directors does it take to screw in a light bulb?

- Well...um...what do you think?

How many lighting techs does it take to screw in a light bulb?

- Nothing happens on that @\$%ing side of the stage anyway!

How many props masters does it take to change a light bulb?

- Light bulb?! When did they even get a lamp?

How many audience members does it take to change a light bulb?

- Three. One to do it, one child to cry, and one to say loudly, "ROSE, HE'S CHANGING THE LIGHT BULB."



Happy Birthday



February

- 6 Mike Robson
- 7 Pam Dibert
- 7 Dennis Szatkowski
- 7 Bill Grusecki
- 12 Dorothy Smith
- 17 Tim Haskin
- 22 Tina Dalton
- 26 Mason Brewer
- 28 Ron Luckett

March

- 4 Bob O'Meara
- 6 Chaison Shuart
- 16 John Henry
- 19 Frank Brewer
- 22 Maripat O'Malley
- 24 Ethan Buchanan
- 26 Judy Merluzzi
- 27 Jessica Smith
- 29 Geri Koepke
- 30 Brianna Dalton

April

- 5 Jane Ruster
- 26 June Groff
- 27 Laura Zacharias
- 28 Barb Hunter



Spitfire Grill Photos

