

Performance of Aggie Players provides few flaws for patrons

By Richard Tijerina
Senior Staff Writer

The Aggie Players opening night production of Paul Zindel's "The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds" began its three day run at the Rudder Forum Thursday night, and it came within a hair's length of overcoming a few flaws and shining in its first performance.

The play, called "the best of its type since (Tennessee) Williams' 'Glass Menagerie,'" is an intense family drama that revolves around a mother's struggle against her life and the walls that confine her, and her relationship with her two daughters, Ruth and Tillie.

While the cast pulled off its opening night performance with little difficulty, an overly dramatic performance by one of its stars and a case of "opening night jitters" left me with a dull taste in my mouth by the play's finale.

In the show, Beatrice, the mother played by Emma Charlotte Reading, lashes out in a series of sarcastic explosions against her two daughters in scene after scene.

Lanell Pena, who played Tillie, the younger daughter, is entering a science fair with the project of exposing man-in-the-moon marigolds to a radioactive isotope called Cobalt 60 in order to record the flowers' reaction to radioactivity.

However, Beatrice could care less about her youngest daughter's academic exploits. Instead, she would rather blame her two daughters' existence for her present situation, which is having to live in a small congested vegetable market in a tiny Texas town.

"I'd rather be a dancer," the



Photo by Roy D. Parsons

Charlotte Reading plays Beatrice in the play, "The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds."

mother says to her daughters, "than to be sucked into this mudpool."

It is this type of attitude that rubbed me the wrong way. If Reading were to remain consistent, then

at least everyone could despise her and be happy about it. Her portrayal of Beatrice, however, is a helter skelter rollercoaster of a performance as if she is up for the Joan Crawford Mother of the Year

Award at one point and a sympathetic mother the next. Putting it simply, Reading overplays the part.

On the other hand, the two daughters play their parts with admirable maturity. Pena is wonderful as the scientific whiz-kid, Tillie, who, in her innocent and loving way, seems to keep the family together though the thread which holds it that way is very thin. Shelly Kaye Thompson is equally good as the spastic sister who jumps from couch to chair, chattering endlessly.

But the true bright spots in the production were the props, especially Tillie's small white rabbit, or her "angora manure machine" as her mother affectionately describes it one minute, while threatening to kill it with chloroform the next. Watching the rabbit's antics as it is being fed fresh lettuce or trying to crawl out of its wooden box are priceless.

Another noteworthy prop to mention is the skeleton of a cat that is another entry in the science fair. The cat's skin was boiled off by Tillie's main competition in the fair, Janice Vickery.

The audience reacted to a few scenes besides the usual laughter and gasps that are to be expected in a play of this type. At one point when Beatrice finally does chloroform the rabbit, the audience responded with an Aggie horse laugh as she was taking the animal upstairs.

Though the choppy timing of the scenes and the few flubbed lines that detracted from the play's overall effectiveness can be attributed to opening night jitters, the audience didn't seem to mind and viewed the show as well worth seeing.

Intervention aids chemically dependent patient

By James Johnson
Reporter

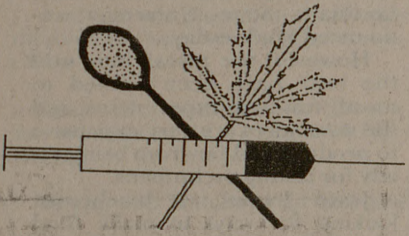
When concern arises for a loved one who has an alcohol or other chemical dependency, personal intervention can be a difficult but crucial process toward helping someone reach partial recovery.

Dr. Gary Newsom, medical director of the Alcohol and Drug Recovery Unit at Greenleaf Hospital, has studied and dealt with chemically dependent patients for the past twelve years. Through his practice, he has helped several people face the realities involved with being addicted to various drugs.

In the first of a twelve-part series called "Intervention," Newsom provided several warning signs of which people should be aware when dependency is suspected.

"Chemical dependency is a primary illness," Newsom said. "It usually builds into something much more serious if the problem is not stopped soon enough."

Patients must understand that a person who was ever an addict at one time is never "recovered", but is always "recovering", he said.



"An obvious sign of an addict is if a person says that he can control the problem on his own. If I had a penny for every time that a patient has told me that he could handle addiction individually, I'd be a wealthy man. 99.9 percent of the time, a chemically dependent person can't recover without some form of assistance."

Newsom said he has had patients directed to him through advice of friends, co-workers, spouses and employers.

"Perhaps the ones who motivate most powerfully are employers," he said. "Whenever the addict's behavior begins to affect co-workers, employers tell the addict to seek help or lose their job."

An important part of the intervention process is to list behavioral data associated with the actions of the dependent person. Family members or friends should contribute lists and proceed to show them to the addict.

Newsom recalled one of his patients being video-taped by a family member.

"When patients are exposed to their drunken behavior by watching a videotape, it usually has a overwhelmingly successful effect," he said. "Once the addict witnesses his actions, he realizes that there is proof of his denial, which is an early sign of addiction."

Evidence is another obvious sign of addiction. Empty bottles of liquor or pills should trigger suspicion, he said.

Other signs of chemical dependency are having to drink in order to socialize, being consistently tardy for work, having financial difficulty due to money spent on drugs or excessive alcohol and having received more than one DWI within recent months.

The ultimate goal of someone attending intervention is to elevate awareness of the dependent person, he added.

People who attempt to intervene should be very nurturing and politely tell the victim to seek professional counseling from organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

"If the individual does decide to become a member of AA, there is a possibility that he could recover on his own, but attendance would have to be on a routine basis," he said.

The health of victims that don't receive help declines rapidly.

Continuous alcohol abuse can lead to hepatitis or gastro-intestinal disease. He said that anyone who passes blood through regurgitation or digestion has reason to be concerned.

"It doesn't take a professional to convince loved ones of the harm they are doing to themselves," Newsom concluded. "In many cases, the only thing you can tell them is that if they don't seek help, they could die."

Video conference informs public about Alzheimer's

By Barbette Foley
Reporter

By year 2040, it is expected that there will be nine million victims of Alzheimer's, Jane Donaldson, an adviser to the Alzheimer's Support Group, said.

The Brazos Valley Development Council Area Agency on Aging and the Texas A&M College of Medicine held a video conference on Alzheimer's disease. The two-day program was designed to inform the public about the neurological disorder that normally affects people 65 and older.

The program titled "Alzheimer's Disease: The Loss of Self" was live via satellite from the Medical Learning Center at St. Thomas Hospital in Nashville, Tenn. Its main goal was to

help family members and Alzheimer's patients cope with the patient's loss of identity, Donaldson said.

Alzheimer's actually is not a disease, but an illness that comes in many forms and affects more than two million people.

"We believe that having information on the disease is better than being in the dark, although it's an unpleasant topic," she said. "The public has a fear of the unknown."

Carl Eisdorfer, Ph.D., M.D., chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Miami, and Donna Cohen, M.D. at the University of Illinois in Chicago conducted the program. They authored "The Loss of Self," which discusses the

problems and preparations associated with the disease.

Eisdorfer said he started working on the disease in the '60's when most people thought Alzheimer's was a form of senility.

"A while back, doctors wouldn't diagnose people as having Alzheimer's," he said. "Alzheimer's disease was a metaphor for chronic aging disease. Now, it's so important even the president and Congress must address the problem."

Eisdorfer said failure to find the right words to say when talking is one of the first signs when trying to detect Alzheimer's.

"The disease should be caught early on," he said. "When familiarity is lost or when the problem affects the person's work, the family mem-

bers' suspicion should rise. The earlier the disease is diagnosed, the better because the diagnosis includes a series of exams."

Cohen said although more is known about the disease than 10 years ago, a cure still has not been found. However, a few drugs have been issued to slow down the process during the early stages.

Eisdorfer said, "There were two drugs in experimental form that were administered to patients, but liver problems were discovered in some patients, and the drug was discontinued. Now the drug is being issued again, but only in a few centers."

"Two new drugs are approaching the problem in a different way, but it's too early to know if they will work."

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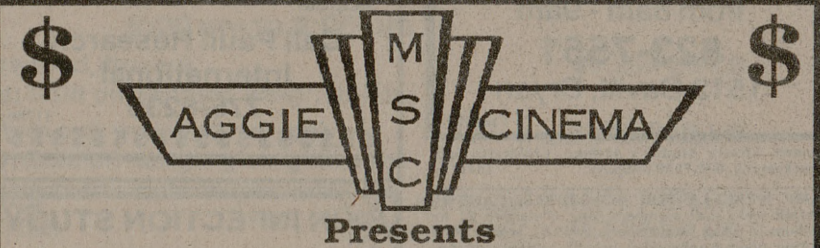
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