

AggieLife

3A
Thursday, April 25, 2002

THE BATTALION

Brighton Beach Memoirs

Cast discusses the preparation for their roles in the play

By Heather Campbell
THE BATTALION

For Keith Neagle, playing the role of Eugene in *Brighton Beach Memoirs* gave him a chance to be 15 years old again.

Neagle, a junior theater arts and English major, has acted since age 12 and has been with the Aggie Players since his freshman year.

Providing entertainment, along with snide remarks and a face filled with expression, Neagle dazzles the audience. Eugene never fails to find loads of trouble but always has an explanation for his mishaps. Eugene constantly asks his older brother for advice, and his curiosity mixed with a spunky attitude makes for some embarrassing scenes.

"To prepare for our parts, the dramaturge researched the entire play, including its historical significance, clothing, customs and culture," Neagle said. "A rabbi came and spoke about what a Jewish family was like in that era. I read books and tried to think how I was at 15. In the play, I have nothing else on my mind but baseball and girls."

Neil Simon, the play's writer, is identified through Eugene, who narrates and acts at the same time.

"I love being able to talk to the audience and get them to be on my side," Neagle said. "It is therapeutic as a character and for me, personally, to be able to vent."

Neagle said playing Eugene is unbelievable. The laughter erupting from the audience and the hushed whispers during serious lines let the cast know its viewers connect with the play.

"To have 200-plus people laugh at something you say is the best feeling," Neagle said. "It feels good to know the audience truly understands the play."

He said he connects with the character of Eugene because of similar experiences in his own life.

"In the play, Eugene's brother leaves for the military, and I have a brother who left for the military," Neagle said. "I can tap into that, and my emotions come out that way. At that point in the play, Eugene says, 'There comes a time in everyone's life when you say, this very moment is the end of my childhood.' This explains how I felt when my brother left for the military."

With two shows under her belt as an Aggie

Player, Sarah Bibeau, a freshman aerospace engineering major, said acting is a way to relieve stress. She plays the part of Laurie, a vulnerable 13-year-old girl who is unaware of the world's issues.

"Laurie is very close to her mother, as every young girl is, and she receives special treatment from everyone because of her heart condition," Bibeau said. "To tell you the truth, she is a spoiled brat."

Experiencing the teenage years again brings memories to life for Bibeau. Her role as Laurie enables her to enjoy the innocence that comes with being the young one.

"I get to be carefree and oblivious to what was going on in 1937. I am aware of the family union versus knowing the outside influences," Bibeau said.

When asked her favorite scene, Bibeau said the dinner scene strikes home with her because she has a very close family. In the play, everyone gathers at the table with news from the day, and each person worries about telling what happened.

"This scene rings true to me and my family and makes me connect on a higher level," Bibeau said. The unity displayed on the stage was not merely acting. Bibeau said the cast molded itself into its roles and became like a real family.

"The closeness has made the show go above and beyond what it could have been," Bibeau said. Kelly Stolte, a junior speech communications major, plays the part of Nora, a dramatic 16-year-old girl who fights for her independence and is determined to get her way.

"It is the first time for me to play a character who is immature and doesn't control her emotions," Stolte said. "I get to be frustrated, sad and excited and work out all of the acting muscles."

Compared to her previous acting roles, Stolte said this one deals more with family relationships, therefore, she works with fellow actors on a different level.

The cast members expressed their love for acting Neil Simon's writing.

Stolte summed it up when she said, "This is the best contemporary writer that I have gotten to work with."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS

The cast of *Brighton Beach Memoirs* on the set in full costume.

Read a review of *Brighton Beach Memoirs* on page 4A

A Night of Illusion

Friday, April 26, 9pm to 1am in the MSC

Featuring...

Hypnotist Rich Ames
performing in the flagroom @ 9pm & 11pm

A free showing of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in Rudder Theater @ 9:30pm



Plus...

Domino Tournament starting @ 10pm

Free Dance Dance Revolution all night

Free Pancake & Egg breakfast in 12th Man @ midnight

Free Bowling and Billiards in the basement all night

\$20 Gift Certificates Door Prizes

Arts & Crafts in the basement all night

\$250 Give-Away at Midnight

Must Show A&M ID at Check-in Across from the ATM in Main Foyer
For more information call 845-1515

