

Campus News

Chowan Players Speak Out:



By Eric A. Surface

Dr. Rick Gay, Dr. Brenda Gordon and Dr. Joyce Elliot (the director): The three professors responsible for reviving the Chowan Players.

All the Chowan Players interviewed agreed on three things: 1) drama is a necessary part of campus life, 2) their fellow students who came to the show enjoyed the performance more than they thought they would and 3) drama has the potential to energize student involvement at Chowan. Just think about it, if three professors and seventeen students can put on a play that got an excellent review from *The Virginian Pilot* theater critic in one month, imagine what they could do with forty students, a full-time drama professor, a whole semester and more administrative support. The possibilities are limitless, but only if the students want them to be. Read what seven of the actors have to say about drama and acting.



"If Chowan had a drama major, that's what I'd love. I'd change my major to drama. Drama is what I really like."
-Anabela Adams



"I had so many of my friends come up to me and say, 'Frances, you weren't yourself.' That's good because that was what I was trying to do. I once played a man with a Swedish accent and some people didn't know it was me. Acting helps you come out of your shell."
-Frances Eason



"The most memorable aspect was the feeling you get when you step out for the first time on the stage. You can feel hundreds of eyes staring at you. That kind of rush you get is unforgettable. The most rewarding was to say that I had one last adventure here."
-Kevin Johnson



"They bring in things that are going to cost money and nobody shows up for them. So utilize what you have here. I'll tell you this. After the play was over, I had a lot of kids say they wished they had participated."
-Thornton Jordon



"Well sure, I think a drama program anywhere is worth vitalizing; I think if you don't support stuff like that you wind up with no group involvement. Even if 2% of the Chowan population shows up for a show, at least you have some people who are exposed to art."
-Rick Lee



"You get to know different people. The cast became like a family. People that I'd never even seen before the play are now good friends."
-Piper Moore



"It's like getting away from your own problems; I can get away from what Jonathan has to do. You get to see the world through someone's eyes. You get to feel what someone else feels. To me that's the best part of acting."
-Jonathan Rose

A Review

Play gives a sometimes-shocking, often-funny view of WASP life

This article first appeared in the The Virginia-Pilot and The Ledger-Star on Friday, April 2, 1993, and is reprinted here by their permission:

By Frank Roberts
Staff writer

In more than one sense of the phrase, Chowan College is liberal arts institution.

It's first play in several years, "Scenes From American Life," illustrates that liberality with some scenes and language you would not have seen at a Baptist institution a few years ago.

But none of it is purposeless. It is integral as playwright A. R. Gurney offers a weird, wild, funny look at WASP life.

The play, written in 1970, is a series of abbreviated escapades involving Buffalo's upper middle-class Protestant society, people with nickname like Muffy, Buffy and Squeaky.

They do get serious at times. In one scene, the civil-rights movement is discussed. In another, they talk about sacrifices made during World War II — maids only once or

twice a week, otherwise, make your bed.

"Scenes From American Life" moves up and down the decade scale, swiftly switching from the 1940s to the 1970s in no particular order.

The cast of 17 students and one instructor is seen in an on again-off again manner. With each new scene you become a little better acquainted with them — you get to know them, appreciate them.

Betty Batchelor, professor of English and Spanish, a stage veteran, brightens every scene; Anabela Adams' several appearances show a beautiful stage presence and a fine flair for comedy.

When it comes to showing that flair for comedy, Steven Wimbish is unequalled.

The performers portray the Anglo-Saxon Protestants whom Gurney sees as basically decent but up to their white ear lobes in little, sometimes funny, sometimes weird flaws. For instance, one scene involves a flighty mother and her flighty daughter, the mom emphasizing the importance

of a diaphragm and urging her teenager to learn the social graces of drinking and smoking.

There are, of course, sour parent-child relationships. One scene involves a young WASP who is gung-ho to save the world, arguing with his dad who is gung-ho to maintain the comfy status quo.

God is part of their lives. The WASPs go to church. It is the thing to do. One worshipful prayer scene features a theme you must see to believe. We can't print it here.

Most of the scenes are fascinating - the dancing - courtesy lessons, the singalongs among friends, watching the tennis match and, best of all, the few moments involved in some sort of experimental spiritualism with the participants moving about like zombies and humming loudly.

"Scenes From American Life" is quite different than anything you've seen or will see. It is witty, biting, fascinating and well done by the Chowan Players.