

Children fingerprinted for NFPC records

By BETH OWNLEY
Staff Writer

The Orange County Republican Party, in connection with the National Fingerprint Center for Missing Children, fingerprinted 87 children Sunday at the Festival Street Festival in Chapel Hill.

Cynthia Farris, a member of the Orange County Republican Party, said the group had hoped to fingerprint about 100 children. Farris said she believed the logistics would have been better if the group had a longer table to work on. Parents were extremely interested in the procedure and have become acutely aware of the problem, Farris said.

Most of the children fingerprinted were between two and 15 years old. Farris said the younger children who made palm prints "seemed to have fun with making pictures with their hands," while most of the older children agreed to be fingerprinted because their parents wanted them to have it done.

The fingerprinting service is an endeavor which the Republican Party has been doing in 33 states. Farris said she became interested in the service after she read that a Republican town council in Connecticut fingerprinted children. The Orange County Republican Party chose the NFPC because it was well organized and had the only computerized network for classifying fingerprints, Farris said.

The NFPC, a non-profit organ-

ization established in Kirksville, Mo., assists law enforcement agencies in identifying and recovering 100,000 abducted children in the United States each year. About 5,000 children and youths are abducted or run away each day. Many become victims of foul play and are never found or identified.

The center classifies fingerprints, analyzes palm prints for clarity and computerizes the information. Fingerprints and palm prints never change and can always be used as a positive form of identification. The files, which are destroyed when the child reaches 18, are not used for any criminal investigation.

The information filed in the computer includes the child's sex, race, blood type, hair and eye color, and a notation if the child has been reported missing. A separate file is kept for palm prints of children under five. Young children are hard to fingerprint and their prints are almost impossible to classify. The fee for the service is \$3.50.

Before the Orange County Republican Party fingerprinted children, they were given instructions by Lt. Arthur Summey of the Chapel Hill Police Department. Lt. Summey explained what is done to classify fingerprints and showed the group how to fingerprint. The police department allowed the group to use its fingerprinting equipment at Festival.

'Song of John Proffit' satisfies theater goers

Thompson's script, acting shine

The PlayMakers Repertory Company once again presents a winner in Tommy Thompson's play with music, *The Last Song of John Proffit*. Thompson's skillfully crafted script and songs and his own ingratiating characterization of John Proffit make this production an emotionally satisfying theatre experience.

Thompson, the only actor in the play, previously appeared in Chapel Hill as Horace Bixby in PRC's *Life on the Mississippi*, which he co-wrote.

The experience Thompson gained during his 12-year association with the Red Clay Ramblers makes his musical performance in *John Proffit* an exhibition of true talent. Thompson uses the guitar, banjo and gourd banjo with his own richly expressive voice to tell John Proffit's story.

Thompson's play follows Proffit from his youth in Ohio to North Carolina and up to West Virginia, where the play takes place on Proffit's Point Pleasant Farm.

The script is beautifully written, and Thompson performs it in an accent that embellishes it further.

The action, as Proffit tells it, becomes slow or hard to follow at times. Generally, however, Proffit's life as Thompson has written it offers an enlightening view of many elements of life in the post-Civil War South, such as courtship, free enterprise and racism.

As an actor, Thompson makes Proffit an endearing and often amusing character. Proffit appears as a backwoods philosopher, bestowing bits of wisdom on his audience rather like a Descartes of Dixie. He befriends the audience by expressing thoughts everyone has known in his own unique and witty fashion.

Thompson possesses good comic timing and uses it to draw out plenty of laughs. His enunciation, however, is a problem.

Particularly in the first act, Thompson is difficult to understand because of the speed at which he speaks and sings. At times, only the people seated

Virginia Smith

Review

in the front of the theatre are laughing; those in the back simply cannot hear what is being said on the stage. The acoustics in the old Playmakers Theatre may well contribute to this problem.

Thompson is not the only great talent involved in this production. Director David Rotenberg has an impressive list of credits for productions all over the U.S. and in Canada. The former PRC artistic director has collaborated with Thompson to make the acting in this production of true professional quality.

Linwood Taylor and Bobbi Owen's designs add significant detail to the production. The farmhouse set by Taylor, crowded with Proffit's wood-working marvels, is an imaginative representation of a West Virginia home. Owen's costumes for Proffit help develop the character as an aged adventurer.

Robert L. Orzolek's lighting design is appropriate for the play, with an especially interesting effect of 19th-century footlights for the performance of Proffit's blackface number in the second act.

PRC's production of *John Proffit* is a pleasure for the audience. The problems with Thompson's performance could easily be eliminated, and the script itself almost makes up for any inadequacies in the acting. As a prelude to another PRC season, *John Proffit* is an original, enjoyable play.

The Last Song of John Proffit will be performed by the PlayMakers Repertory Company at 8 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, at 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. Saturday and at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday through Oct. 21 in Playmakers Theatre. Call 962-1121 for ticket information.



Tommy Thompson wrote and stars in 'The Last Song of John Proffit'

J.F.K. High

'Teachers' stretches bounds of reality

A student sits quietly, bleeding from an ugly gash in his arm. The school psychologist becomes hysterical in the main office. The secretary reports a 10 percent absentee rate among the teachers. Another student gnaws open a teacher's hand.

Welcome to Monday morning at John F. Kennedy High School, the setting of Arthur Hiller's new comedy-drama *Teachers*.

Neither a farce like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* nor a melodrama like *To Sir, With Love*, *Teachers* dramatizes events that ring true but occasionally overstep the bounds of realism.

The plot has lawyer Lisa Hammond, played by Jobeth Williams, returning to her old school to investigate the case of a boy whose family is suing the school for graduating him without teaching him to read or write.

School system superintendent Donna Burke, memorably etched in bureaucratic acid by Lee Grant, enlists the aid of a school administrator, played by Judd Hirsch, to stonewall Hammond.

Social studies teacher Alex Jerrell, acted by Nick Nolte, is a renegade among the faculty who falls prey to Burke's manipulation. Jerrell's life is complicated because Hammond is one of his former students — and one he always lusted after from a distance.

As its title implies, *Teachers* avoids concentrating explicitly on the students at J.F.K. High. Only Eddie Pilikian, a street-wise but illiterate victim of a broken home, is explored at any length. Hiller and screenwriter W.R. McKinney use this as a means to the end of staging vignettes of school life.

Individually, these scenes vibrate with front-page accuracy, whether in comic episodes of a demented history teacher dressing up as various historical figures to bring his subject alive or in gut-wrenching sequences of violence in the halls. If these ideas seem vaguely familiar, it is because they probably were drawn from newspaper accounts.

When strung together, though, these scenes wrestle each other and, unfortunately, pin each other. However real they seem, it is ridiculous to imagine they could all happen at one school in one week.

This would not be a major failing but for the film's concentration on the idea of reality and realism. Characters, for

Jeff Grove

Review

instance, are always being urged to "face reality." A difficult feat at J.F.K., for where is it to be found?

The actors pull the film together, though.

Nolte is particularly effective, especially in his scenes with Eddie, played by the young, talented Ralph Macchio. Williams and Hirsch also deliver their parts expertly.

Allen Garfield has a difficult role as Rosenberg, a teacher hounded by his students' pranks. Garfield maintains control so that Rosenberg seems sympathetic, not foolish.

Production designer Richard MacDonald and cinematographer David M. Walsh create a bleak ambience that suits the film, which was made on location in Columbus, Ohio.

Sandy Gibson, credited as a "music supervisor," adds a note of gritty realism in his selection of original songs. Gibson puts Bob Seger's "Understanding" and Joe Cocker's "Edge of a Dream," among others, to excellent use.

Thematically, the film addresses the plight of teachers who are expected by "the system" (parents, administrators and the school board) to produce results when that very system emasculates innovation and originality in teaching. Hirsch's character illustrates this in one scene where he tells Jerrell, "Your job is to get them through this school and keep them out of trouble. That's it!"

The teachers, however, are not above shirking their responsibilities. One of them complains that she is required to teach students who cannot read. Asked why she doesn't remedy this herself, she replies, "I am a social studies teacher. It is not my job to teach reading."

The basic question at work here, then, is simple: How should schools function, and under what conditions? In defense of the students, Jerrell points out "They're not here for us; we're here for them."

If that isn't an answer, it is at least a direction, and an encouraging one.

Heart is extraordinary film about ordinary people

Ivy Hilliard

Review

Although Edna's plight is the focus of *Places in the Heart*, two other women, and the man who loves them both, create an interesting subplot.

Lindsay Crouse plays Edna's sister, a beautician whose husband, played by Ed Harris, is having an affair with her best friend, the town school teacher, played by Amy Madigan.

Crouse, always versatile in films like *Daniel and the Belshazzar Beast*, gives a subtle and memorable performance in a type of role she has seldom taken. Harris and Madigan, who married while making the film, are also top-notch in conveying the furtive quality of a small-town affair with refreshing style.

Two relative newcomers round out this superlative cast. John Malkovich, straight from a Broadway run of *Death of a Salesman*, plays Mr. Will, a blind boarder Edna takes on reluctantly to placate his banker brother. The transformation of this sullen outsider into one of the family is depicted with skill sure to win Malkovich an Oscar nod.

Another Broadway veteran, Danny Glover of *Master Harold* ... and the boys, plays Moses, the itinerant black

farmhand who teaches Edna all about growing cotton. Glover lends singular dignity and grace to what could be a very clichéd role.

Benton, who also wrote the screenplay, originally intended *Places in the Heart* to be a semi-autobiographical tale about his family and several murdered relatives. Although the jolting murders that start the movie are loosely based on his past, Benton instead concentrates the film on the series of constant revelations, agonies and triumphs that define family life.

With the help of cinematographer Nestor Almendros, Benton has created a gorgeous film full of small details, such as women who wear aprons all day,

stockings rolled down and sleeves rolled up, hovering in the kitchen ready to feed whoever comes along.

There are moments in *Places in the Heart* that knot the stomach, along with scenes that exhilarate the spirit and touch the heart. But although it verges on the sentimental, the film never becomes maudlin.

In the final, miraculous scene of *Places in the Heart*, which should be seen to be fully appreciated, Benton has offered a wondrous choice to each viewer — to decide for himself what is inside the heart.

Most of all, it becomes clear that Benton has offered an extraordinary film about ordinary people.

Student tickets are available for the Blue-White game which will be played Saturday, November 3rd after the Maryland football game as well as for the 2nd Blue-White game scheduled for Friday evening, November 17th at 7:30 PM. Present your student I.D. and athletic pass at Carmichael Ticket Office between 8:30 and 4:30 PM. Students may also purchase three tickets at \$7.00 each in addition to their complimentary student ticket.

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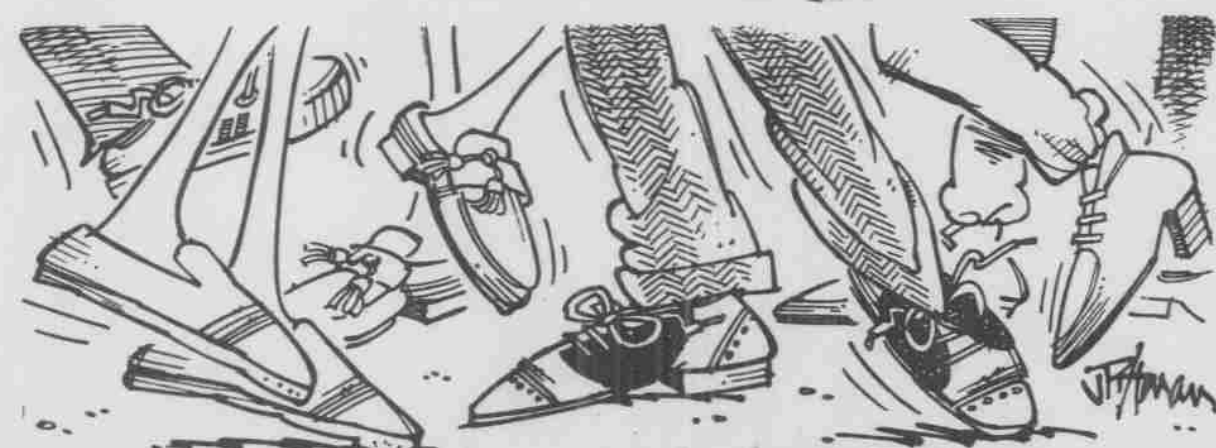
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