

'Woolgatherer' focuses on unusual love story

By MICHAEL SPIRTAS
Staff Writer

Manbites Dog Theater, a new local company which "works to challenge as well as entertain," will present its production of "The Woolgatherer" beginning this week. The play, "an eccentric love story" by William Mastrosimone, opens tonight at the company's Durham theater.

The play, set in working-class South Philadelphia, is centered around the chance meeting between Cliff, a cynical truck driver, and Rose, a clerk at a five and dime. Ed Hunt, managing director of Manbites Dog, explained that artistic director Jeff Storer chose to present this play because it is an excellent work that has yet to be performed in this area.

The theater has been rearranged since "Seventy Scenes of Halloween," which was Manbites Dog's first production. The stage has been repositioned within the theater building, and the audience will be seated around the stage rather than in front of it. Hunt explains that this will help draw the audience in to the characters as well as surprise those who attended the first production.

Hunt feels that this "tight character play" will be especially fitting during the Valentine season. The story unfolds as Rose invites Cliff, whose truck has broken down, up to her sparse apartment. Cliff, looking for a good time, brings a six-pack of beer and his cynical wit. Much to his (and the audience's) bewilderment, Rose fails to receive his advances. This frustrates Cliff and confuses the audience. Rose is definitely the mystery of the play.

Patricia Esperon, who portrays Rose, explains that there's very

little biographical detail about her (Rose's) life, which explains the confusion about the character. Even Esperon is not sure when Rose is lying, telling the truth, or just fooling herself. Esperon, a Duke graduate and veteran of New York's American Folk Theater, called this confusion the most difficult aspect of her role.

Less confusion is evident in the character of Cliff, portrayed by Jim Stowe. Stowe, who recently appeared in an English production of "A Christmas Carol," plays Cliff as a realist with a hidden sensitivity.

An interesting aspect about the production is the physical attributes of the characters. Stowe is a towering 6-foot-4, weighing 295 lbs., while the diminutive Esperon carries 108 lbs. on her 5-foot-2 frame. Despite his size the towering truck driver is held captive by Rose's bewildering innocence. Thus, the physical disparity emphasizes the irony evident in Rose's control over Cliff.

Esperon describes "The Woolgatherer" as "a play about redemption." During the course of the play the two characters discard their selfish motives to reach out to each other and eventually unite. Both characters, shouldering considerable working-class woes, find consolation in one another. This quest for consolation, as well as the complex nature of the characters, makes "The Woolgatherer" a ground-level look at two modern survivors.

"The Woolgatherer" will be performed Thursday through Saturday at 8:15 p.m.; Feb. 11-13; and Feb. 18-20 at Manbites Dog Theater in Durham. Call 286-2890 for ticket information.

Try memory jogs for easy studying

By LEIGH PRESSLEY
Staff Writer

French conjugations, calculus formulas and history revolutions... how can you possibly remember them all? Memorization and concentration are the keys to studying success, and experts say mnemonics, devices designed to assist memory skills, include a wide range of methods ranging from rhymes to simple association.

Beginning in 1986, UNC psychology professor Richard King, along with associate psychology professor Joseph Lowman, conducted a memory experiment with their Psychology 10 class. After videotaping 225 students' faces, names and majors, the two professors memorized this information. Three weeks later, a third professor randomly chose 15 people from the class for Lowman and King to identify.

"It was an experiment to get to know people, to call them by name," King said. "When someone walks in, I can put the name with the face and say hi. It just adds a personal touch."

King explained that the first step to memorization was to scan the whole set, because some students would stand out and could be recognized immediately. Then he broke up the list of students into small units of 10 and learned those fairly well before previewing the next 10.

"It's a serial kind of thing," he said. "It's rehearsal and maintenance — going back over things."

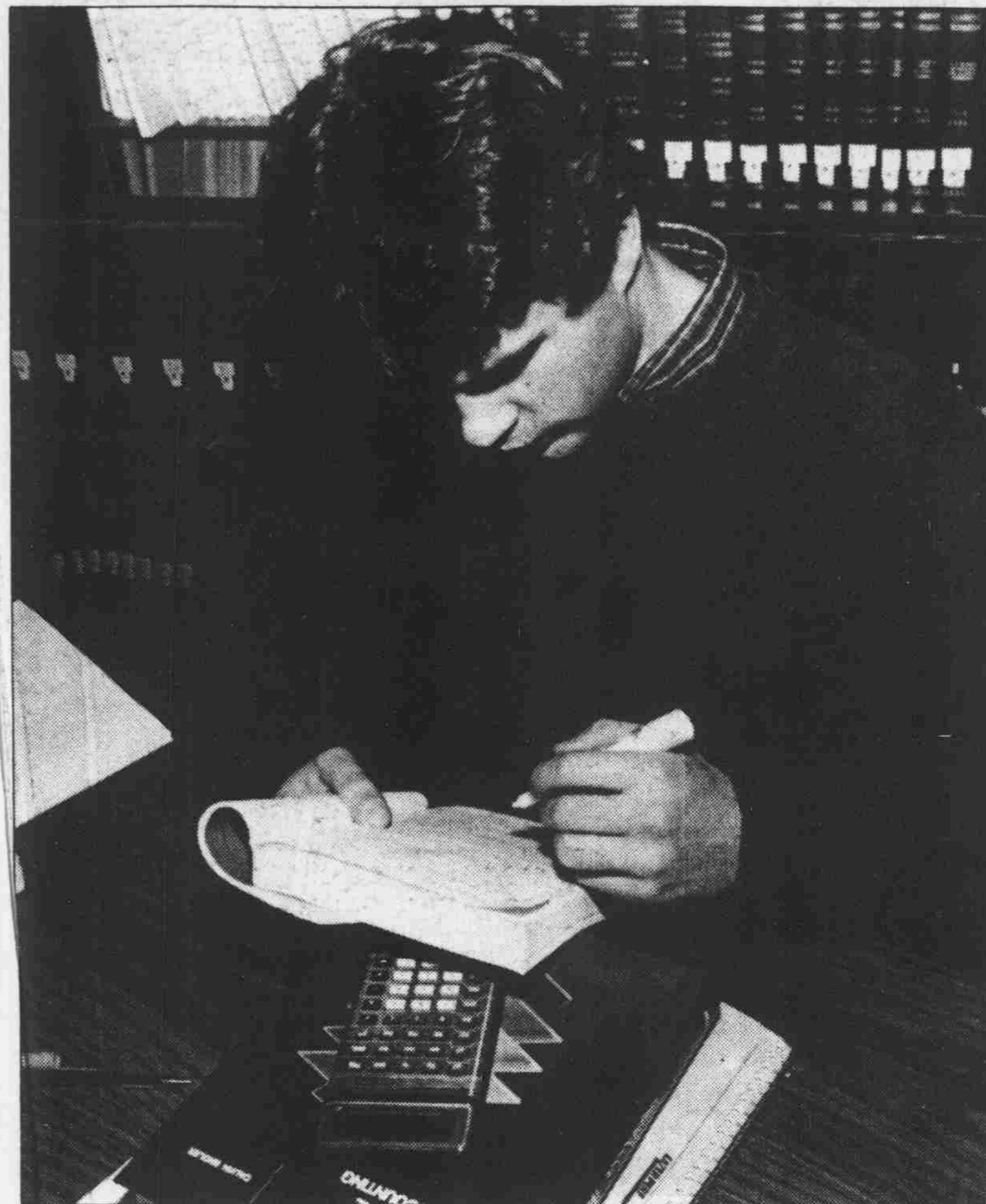
The same plan is suggested to students studying for an exam. Scan the chapter, learn a few sections, review the material and add other sections gradually.

Martha Keever, acting director of The Learning Center in Phillips Annex, agreed that grouping was the most effective way to memorize.

"It's in the nature of the way we learn and memorize that we must do it in clusters," she said.

Keever also added that there seems to be a break-off point at seven that allows us to handle the information. This, she explained, is why phone numbers and social security numbers are broken down into three and four digits.

Other methods, such as the peg system, require the student to have a well-known scene in mind. As the student mentally walks through the scene, points of a speech, for exam-



DTH/Janet Jarman

Students can use memory tricks to help them absorb large volumes of material

ple, can be matched with familiar objects King stressed that the objects or pegs, must be remembered very well so that part of the assignment is not left out.

Making up rhymes is also helpful when trying to remember lists. "Verbal pegs or rhymes are simple," King said. "One is for bun, two is for shoe and so on. Then you just match the information with the rhyme."

Many memory tricks such as incorporating vocabulary into a story or matching the first letters of a sentence to a list have been around for ages. But, according to King, even experts on memory skills must work at memorization.

"There's no magic in it at all. Organization is the important

thing," King said.

To put these memory skills to work, however, good study habits must be developed.

Maureen Windle-Hull, a counselor at The Student Development and Counseling Center, suggested studying in a quiet, well-lit room.

"Students shouldn't study in a completely relaxed atmosphere," she said. "If you're going to sit on the bed instead of at a desk, sit cross-legged. A temperature slightly higher than room temperature will help keep you alert too."

Keever said she suggested a flexible study plan to students who seek help at the Learning Center.

"Students shouldn't prepare for every test the same way," she said.

"There are more methods than one. Finding the one that works best is the answer."

Windle-Hull also noted the importance of an uncluttered study area. With pictures of friends and reminders of spring break, she said, distractions are likely to become a problem. The counselor also suggested that the student have all materials on hand before starting the study session so there would not be any interruptions.

King answered every student's prayers when he noted that study breaks are a necessity. "When the mind becomes overloaded after a long study session, the best thing to do is to take time out," he said. "Go get pizza, go to the movies or get a good night's sleep."

LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO EXERCISE?

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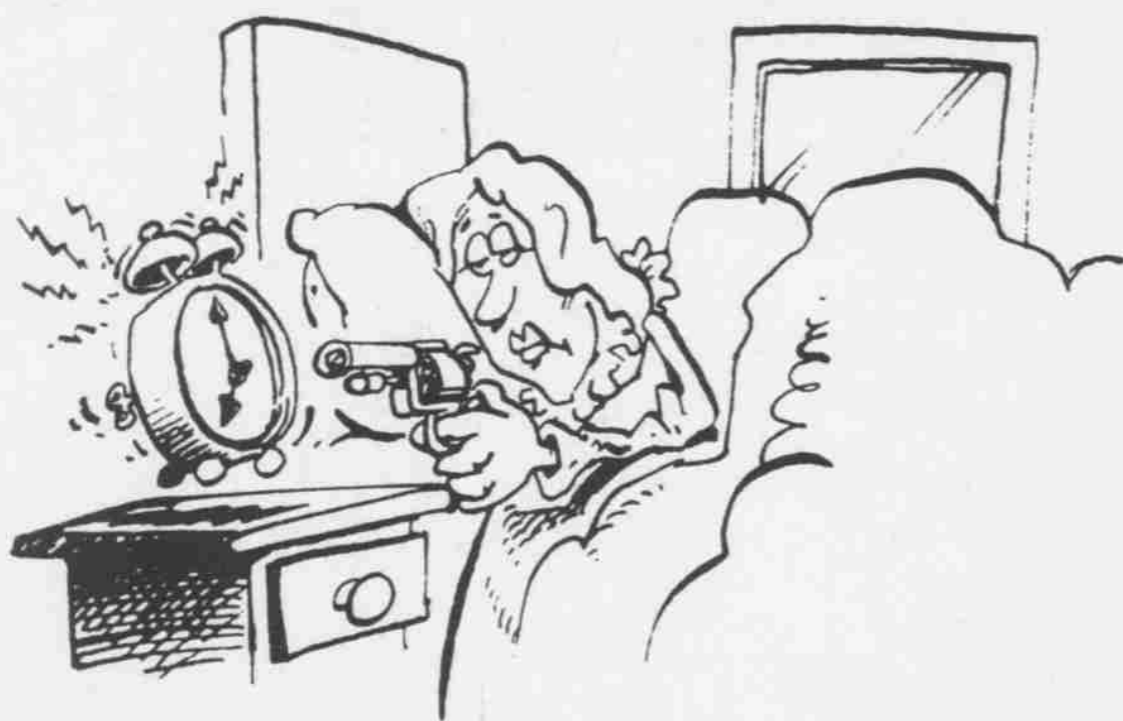
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