

Parkway Playhouse Ends 28th Season In Yancey County

The Parkway Playhouse has been contributing to the cultural life of Yancey County visitors and residents for over twenty six years, and it has a history that makes it a unique summer theatre in this area.

Talk of a summer theatre for Burnsville began back in 1935, and it was Rush Wray, now manager of the three-generation family owned Nu Wray Inn, who

eventually talked the Parkway Playhouse into existence.

In 1936 Rush Wray put his enthusiasm, effort and money into organizing a little theatre group which lasted for three years.

Wray had spent some time at the Rice Theatre in Marthas Vineyard, and felt that a similar college sponsored theatre could succeed in Burnsville. When he

returned to Burnsville he was determined to start such a project even though most people doubted that a summer theatre could find support and audiences in a small town like Burnsville--and then there was the matter of a college to back to program.

It was a guest stying in Nu Wray Inn who liked Wray's idea and made the suggestion to W.

Raymond Taylor of the Women's College of the University of North Carolina that a summer session for the Greensboro College might be set up at Burnsville under provisions of the G.I. Education Bill.

In the summer of 1947 Taylor and the community of Burnsville founded a summer fine arts school. The gymnasium from the Yancey Collegiate

Institute was converted into a theatre, and a dormitory and apartment building owned by the Institute were made part of the Parkway facilities. To provide rehearsal space and a place to eat, the Yancey County Board of Education donated the off-season use of the public school and cafeteria.

Taylor arranged for the first year's schedule which called for

the presentation of 11 plays in six weeks. A program offering courses in drama and art and music was also planned. This was in 1947, and students who came to the playhouse received credits toward their degrees.

Ten years later, Gordon Bennett of the University of Miami took over management of the theatre. During that time many changes took place,

including expansion of the physical plant. In 1966 Dr. Herman Middleton, Head of the Department of Drama and Speech at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, brought control back under the auspices of UNC-G. Soon after, an appropriation from the state legislature was obtained and the Playhouse was again expanded. Today, after 28 years and

almost 160 productions, the Parkway Playhouse is one of the best equipped and most unique summer theatres in the country. The Playhouse program pro-



Gordon Bennett

vides both an educational experience for the student company and enjoyable family entertainment for residents and tourists.

Students from around the United States take up residency for seven weeks to produce six plays in seven weeks. The plays range from current Broadway comedies to dramas written by some of America's finest playwrights, to colorful musicals. The uniqueness of the Playhouse stems from the students having many and varied opportunities to test and expand their skills throughout the summer. These opportunities, unlike an apprentice company that watches professional actors work, range from being cast as an actor in one show to working one of the many crews needed to prepare and run the show. Because the Playhouse is comprised of a student company, all of the work except for the staff positions is done by the students. For this, the student receives a portion of the seven hours credit he may earn.

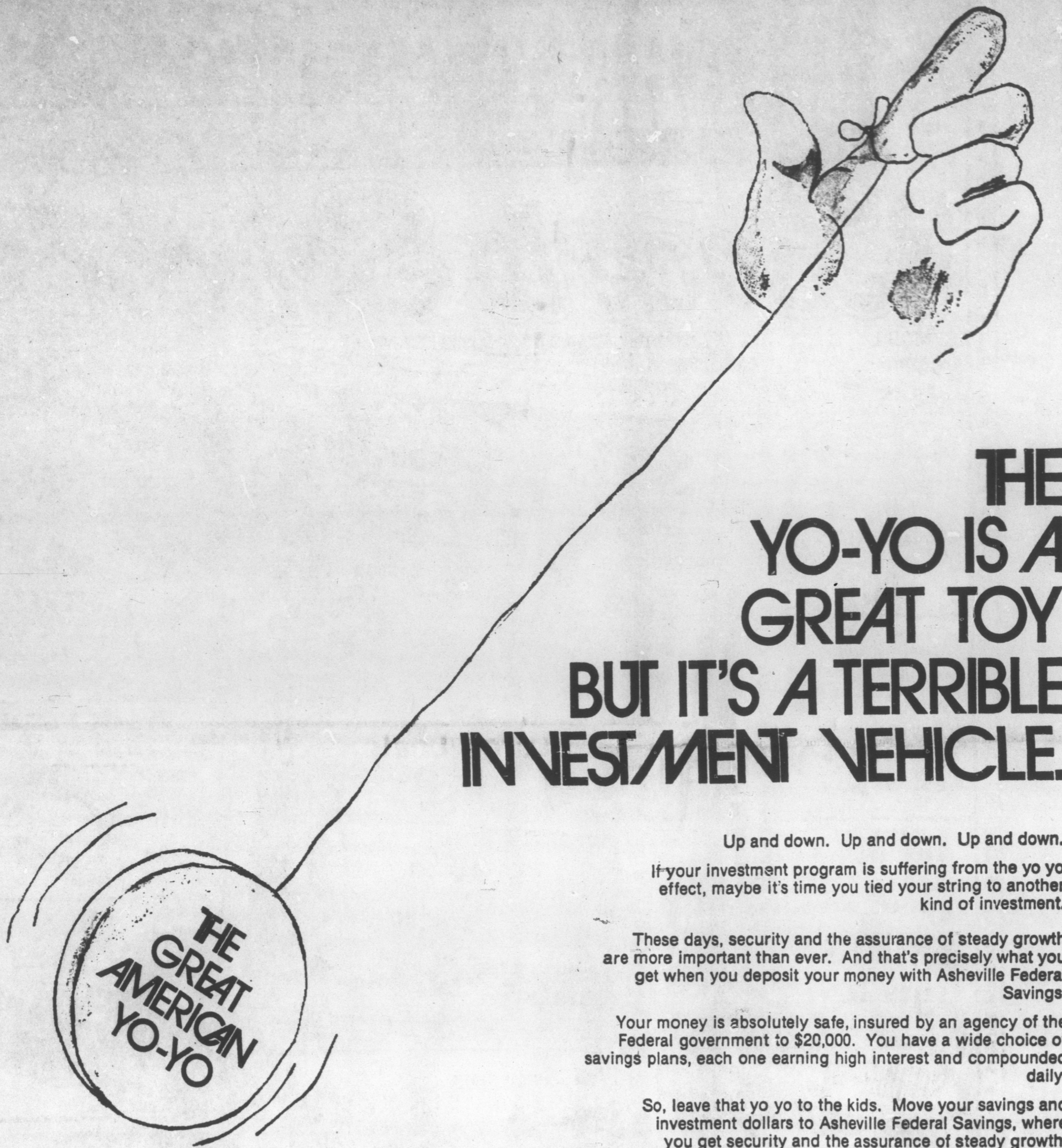
The production schedule at the Playhouse is very active and of high quality. The staff of the Playhouse refuses to accept a second-rate effort for the productions, safe-guarding the fine reputation the Playhouse has, not only with the students, but with the audiences which come from many miles around to enjoy an evening of entertainment.

Pensacola Compiles History

Pensacola and its residents are about to have their day in the sun through the efforts of the Winter Star Writer's Workshop. The group has begun compiling a history of that community, and is accepting chapter contributions for the book. Pensacolans will have an unprecedented opportunity to exhibit their pride in a unique heritage, which has never been mentioned as extensively as it deserves in other WNC historical accounts.

Residents and relatives, past and present, are invited to scan old letters, search their memories, talk to their neighbors, and check their family Bibles for material that will make this project complete. Personal recollections, handed-down family stories both humorous and serious, profiles of early residents, historical data, old songs, folklore and legends will form the backbone of the work. But unusual crafts, hobbies, recipes, remedies, and especially little-known facts and heretofore unpublished material will be welcomed for consideration by the editors, who hope for the enthusiastic participation of the community.

Contributors will be given a credit line on publication, and illustrative photos will be returned to the lenders. Written information or requests for interviews may be given to Jody Higgins at Yancey Graphics, 682-6818, and Barbara Talley, Cattail Creek, 682-6404. Membership in the group is open to active writers, aspiring or published, subject to quota and vote.



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