



photo by EMILY WEAVER

Left to right, Janey Ollis, Janet Sims, Linda Nichols, Erika Wood and Vivian Duncan act out a scene in the upcoming 'Steel Magnolias'.

**PLAY**  
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students and senior citizens. Reservations can be made by calling KMLT at 704-730-9408 or at [www.kmlt.org](http://www.kmlt.org)

"Steel Magnolias" is sponsored by Kings Mountain Hospital. The play is under the direction of Betsy Wells, retired head of the Drama department at Kings Mountain High School.

"Steel Magnolias" will star several local volunteer talents, including former hair-dresser-by-day Linda Nichols as "Truvy," minister of music and students at Oak View Baptist Church Janey Ollis as "Annelle," member of the KM Hospital Authority Vivian Duncan as "Clairee," co-founding actor of Columbia Children's Theatre in South Carolina, Erika Wood, as "Shelby"; returning KMLT actress Ginger Bullock as "M'Lynn"; and long-time community theater actress Janet Sims as "Ouiser" (pronounced Weezer). Just like in the movie, Sims is also the owner of "Rhet" the big dog, which will "suffer from a nervous condition" in the play.

Last Thursday night, players met to rehearse and read lines. Many of the ladies already had their lines memorized. Wells said that they held a casting call before Christmas and began rehearsing last month. The actresses have been meeting three times a week to prepare and their practice was evident in Thursday's run-through.

Even though the play is adapted for one stage scene - "Truvy's Place," all of the main events that were seen in the movie are incorporated into the performance.

You'll still hear all of the great one-liners and memorable quotes that you heard

in the movie, said Wells, a retired theater teacher of Kings Mountain schools.

This is her second year directing "Steel Magnolias" and she looks forward to Friday's performance with great pride and excitement. The audience can anticipate a good show and the theatre warmly welcomes the idea of a packed house.

On Friday morning, KMLT member Jim Champion said that they have received many calls for reservations and ticket information. "We've had a good response so far," he said.

Money raised from season performances benefit the restoration, preservation and operation of the Joy and keep Kings Mountain's "Broadway" alive. But the tears, jeers and laughter sure to be evoked by "Steel Magnolias" will keep the audience alive... and clapping.

The action centers around Truvy's (Nichols) beauty parlor and some of the women who regularly gather there. The drama begins on the morning of Shelby's (Wood) wedding to Jackson and covers events over the next three years, including Shelby's decision to have a child despite having Type I diabetes and the complications that result from the decision. There is also a glimpse of the unlikely friendship between Clairee (Duncan) and Ouiser (Sims) and Annelle's (Ollis) transformation from a shy, anxious newcomer in town, to a partying woman, then to a religious fundamentalist; and Truvy's relationships with the men in her family. Although the main story line involves Shelby; her mother, M'Lynn (Bullock), and Shelby's medical battles, the underlying group-friendship among all six women is prominent throughout the

drama.

"Nichols (Truvy) is a veteran actress who has appeared on the KMLT stage as 'Charlotte Hay' in 'Moon Over Buffalo,' 'Chris Gorman' in 'Rumors,' and 'Sister Robert Anne' in the 'Nunsense' productions. She has also appeared in the first KMLT production of 'Steel Magnolias' as 'M'Lynn,'" according to the playbook. She has also acted with the Greater Shelby Community Theater, the Lincoln Theatre Guild, Rutherford Community Theatre and Gardner-Webb University Theatre.

This will be Ollis' second performance on the KMLT stage. She first appeared in last season's "Aurelia, NC" as "Ashley McAllister." She also performed in various productions in high school and college and is the proprietor of Water World Pets in Kings Mountain.

"Duncan (Clairee) is known to KMLT audiences for her performances as 'Eleanor of Aquitaine' in 'The Lion in Winter' and the 'Fairy Godmother' in 'Cinderella.' She has also appeared in KMLT productions of 'The Boyfriend,' 'The Robe,' 'A Murder is Announced,' 'Blithe Spirit,' 'The Sound of Music,' and others, according to the playbook.

Wood will be making her debut on the Joy stage as "Shelby." But, as the holder of a BA degree in Theatre and Psychology from UNC-Greensboro, she has appeared on many stages in the company of GSCT, Columbia Children's Theatre, B Street Theatre in Sacramento, Cal., and UNC-G.

"Bullock (M'Lynn) is best known to KMLT audiences as 'Sister Amnesia' in the 'Nunsense' productions. She also appeared in KMLT's 'Dearly De-

parted,'" according to the theatre. She has also acted with GSCT and the Lincoln Theatre Guild.

"Sims (Ouiser) has over 30 years experience acting, directing and working tech in community theater. She was last seen by area audiences as 'Annie' in the GSCT production of 'Misery' and 'Henriette' in KMLT's 'Aurelia, NC.' She (recently) directed GSCT's 'Miss Nelson is Missing,'" according to the playbook.

"Steel Magnolia" understudies include: Kamie Champion (Truvy), Danah McKinney (Annelle), Karen Lattimore (Clairee), Leah Hall (Shelby), Camille Putnam (M'Lynn), and Regina Ruff (Ouiser). KMHS Theatre Director Dan Treharne will serve as DJ for each performance.

Behind-the-scene talents include: Regina Ruff as stage manager; Jill Lovell, Chrissy McKinney and Devan Ruff as technical crew; Sidney Gregory, Janey Ollis and Clenon Tackett as lighting/sound technicians; Susan Champion as producer; and helpful supporters - Arlene McMurtry of Scissor Smith & Company, Sheila Walker of Looking Glass Salon, Linda Holland of Sophisticut Salon, and Nancy Wiggins.

**MARGRACE**

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velopment has occurred northeast of the Village. The company-owned boarding house and the two adjoining apartment buildings were lost in the 1980s. Since then one story public housing units have been built on vacant lots fronting on Ark Street.

Hood said the 46 mill houses were covered with either side gable and had hip roofs. All were of frame construction with plain weatherboard siding and featured four-over-four window sash in plain board with the original roofing either wood or asphalt shingles and all are still covered today with asphalt shingles except for two houses with metal roofing. Today, 41 of the 46 houses are covered with asbestos, aluminum, composition, or vinyl siding which was applied directly on top of the weatherboard. When sold in 1956 they were all sheathed with weatherboards. Twelve of the 46 mill houses retain their original four-over-four wood sash. The replacement sidings and windows reflect changes to the mill houses, however, their impact on the appearance and integrity of the district is mitigated by the extraordinary survival of the village streetscape and the strong character of sameness and repetition that detailed its original appearance and which sets the Margrace village apart today. Since its construction the district has lost only three houses. The essential form and footprint of the mill housing have remained largely unaltered, Foard pointed out as he displayed photographs of the area and described the houses which convey a sense of the early appearance of the neighborhood.

During his research, Foard said he had talked to many residents in the Margrace Community and several with close ties to the community were present for the informational meeting. Draperies were made at Margrace Mill that hung in Radio City Music Hall in New York City and during the plant's heyday with the Neisler-owned family the mill provided jobs for many people in the Kings Mountain area. Trees from the Neisler farm, The Oakland Plantation, were planted in the Village and the tall trees border the streets in the Village. Sarah "Sis" Jones, who bought her home on Water Oak Street in 1956, is the only original owner who still lives in the Village. By the 1970s all the former Neisler manufacturing plants were sold.

Johnson said that tax credits for rehabilitation of the homes could be available with national register listing.

Next step in the process is the nomination papers to be approved by a national advisory committee in Raleigh and then to the National Park Service in Washington, DC which administers the program.

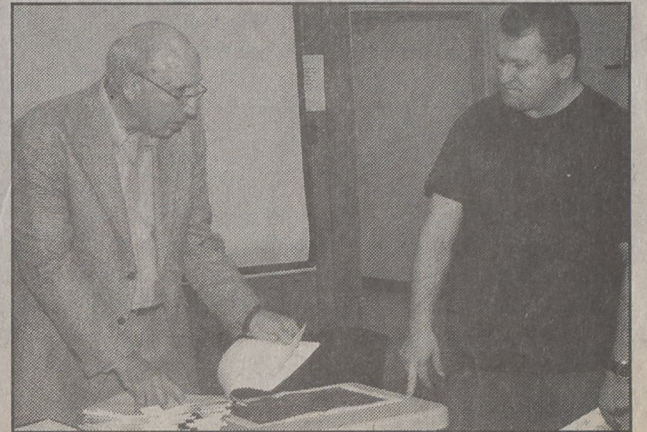


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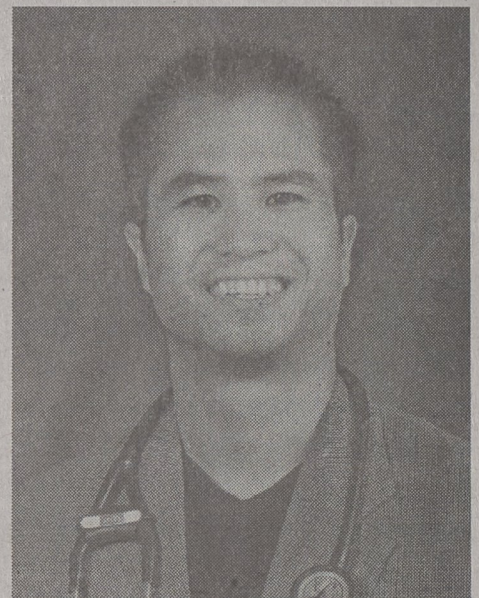
Architectural historian David Foard, left, talks to Margrace Mill Village resident John Biddy about some of the historic significance of the neighborhood he grew up in.

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