

PROJECT UPDATE

VOLUME 17 OCTOBER 1994

McGILL QUILTS PROJECT NEARLY FOLDS



Jerry waves good-bye to New York. Cordell Horsford, scheduled to remain behind, waves in solidarity.

Last winter after snowstorm number 13 in a moment reminiscent of the Vivian Leigh potato scene in *Gone With the Wind*, Jerry McGill, trusty Production Manager swore that he "Would never be cold again." True to his word, Jerry filed his resignation, sewed the drapes into a ball gown, bought new sunglasses and announced that he was going Hollywood. After two or three days of weeping, Michael Bernard made the motion that we give all the money back to the foundations and that we close up shop with dignity. Willie agreed that it was the only recourse but stipulated that anybody on staff who got an "individual" grant would get to keep it. Cooler heads prevailed. Carol flexed managerial muscles that one can only develop at an Ivy League school and she turned to Jenny and said "Get somebody." The long and arduous search began. Actually, over lunch that very day, Jenny told Project actress Lisa Benavides (BEN-UH-VEE-DEZ) about the job and she ended up taking it. Some called it an act of God others called it a personnel change but the irreplaceable Jerry McGill has been replaced. Jerry promises that he will return to write at least one Project play a year and that if he makes it big in Hollywood he will thank us during his acceptance speeches.

WR

Quote of the Quarter

"Is there no salami at all? It's unnatural not to have salami at this hour." Henry Krieger, 11:30 p.m. in Tyler Hill, PA.

"ALL OVER THE MAP" ALL OVER

Ahhhh Autumn. Summer has passed, and the leaves slowly turn and fall off the trees. We here at the Project like to take this time to reflect back on the summer of '94 as it slides into the recesses of our memory. Another summer filled with its highs, lows, and bingo's. This year's One-on-Ones could very well have been featured in the Travel section of the Times as we went "All Over The Map." Our home bases were Tyler Hill, Pennsylvania at the home of Project Perfecto's Eric Karpeles and Mike Sell, and an all new Block Island location at the home of Lenny Orlin and Sue Wise. But these noble homes served as merely a springboard for travel within the realms of 19 plays. In Pennsylvania Kevin Hartwick, John Steber and Robert Shaffron took us to the far reaches of space where no canine had gone before in "Destination: Steve." Susan Vitucci and Sahara Walsh showed us life in a CPU as "Electron Messengers in Cyberspace." Desmond Robertson showed us the inner-workings of an ego unchecked in "I'm Better Than You" (a place few of us would want to return to). A supposedly close to home subway ride for David Harold became a life-altering journey to Zasu Point conducted by John Guare. Jonsi Smith was a President who was told what for by a Jerk Chicken in "Rules and Reggae-lations," Lois Smith and Joseph Mohammed had so much fun they went "O.T.M." (Off the Map). Freddy Matos and Willie realized how remarkably similar everyone is in "A Parabolic Parable." Jennifer Socarras let her inner-gorilla dance in "Big

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Stephanie Berger catches the normally camera shy "All Over The Map" kids.



PU BITES

☞ This summer and fall the Project spent many a Night on the Town taking kids and volunteers to seek out some of the more theatrical goings on in New York City. In July, Dance Theater of Harlem offered 15 Project kids and volunteers an opportunity to see a dress rehearsal of (formerly) Prince in concert at the Palladium. Mr. Symbol (we really don't know what to call him) gave a free sound check/concert to a few hundred young people before performing in a benefit concert that night. When Mr. Symbol came out to dance with the crowd, 17 year-old Shirley Rumierk touched his hand. Shirley has changed her name to *@!!!~.

Several of us saw a performance of "Damn Yankees" thanks to Kenny Blumstein and Mitchell Maxwell. And while we're on the topic of the Yanks, Stephen J. Dubner of the New York Times took Jennifer Socarras and Jed Clarke to see the last game of the Jinxed Yankees. And Sony Pictures was so cool as to offer the Project a special screening of "It Could Happen To You" to all the kids and their families who appeared in the Yankee Stadium scene in the film. If any of you *PU* readers have access to tickets for cool events like these, give us a call.

☞ The *PU* is happy to announce the arrival of many babies into the lives of Project volunteers: West Bank Baby: Zeke Ras Foerster, born June 21, to Rand Foerster and Jana McClure. Project cuz 'n' actress Alexandra Gersten gave birth to Andonis Vassilaros (known to all as Tonio) on July 26. You can be sure that her husband, the Greek coffee magnate, Johnny Vassilaros (known to all as Johnny Coffeeshopolis) is planning a new line of coffee flavored baby formula. Simon DeWitt Hedges was born on August 8 to Project actress Susan Bruce and Project playwright Peter Hedges. The double mint gum-let's-get-this-diaper-thing-over-all-at-once award goes to Project couple Ginny and Ben Siegler, who announced the arrival of newborn Jesse Siegler in June, coupled with the birth of Dylan Joseph on August 11. And since we're on the subject of coupling, the *PU* would like to mention a couple Project couples who've recently coupled, officially that is. Newlywed and Newlstaffer, Lisa Benavides married Tim Nelson in June; Project brother Paul Reale married Project actress (and other Paul's sister) Barbara McCrane in September; and Project pals Lottchen Shivers and Donald Rothschild were married at Barbara Ettinger's house in September. And while we're on the subject of getting married, the *PU* would like to scoop the following engagements: Karin Barry and Thomas Schall; Jenine Ferrari and Barry Singer. The *PU* wishes everyone "Mazel Tov!"

☞ Not one but two Project actors are featured on the new television series, "Chicago Hope" on CBS. Check out Roma Maffia and Peter MacNicol in hospital-style action. Then, send letters to CBS about how you want to see their roles expanded and their characters eventually given their own spin-off series which would film in New York. Do the same for Paul McCrane in "Under Suspicion."

☞ Here's a *PU* Bite for all you party-goers out there: Even though it's many moons away, the Project is in search of a venue in which to hold next spring's benefit. It should be big digs (sit down dinner for 400 plus) and fabulous. Call the office if you come upon one.

PLAYBACK - FORGET ABOUT IT!

Well, we don't have to hold our collective breath anymore wondering if baseball is going to start up. We know who ran over Michael on "Melrose Place." David Caruso is off "NYPD Blue" officially. What else is left to ponder?

How about who forgot what? And where? And how they're going to get it back? These and other pressing dilemmas can be solved in early November when the Project presents "The Forgotten Plays" of the much anticipated Playback program. This is where we take six kids and a handful of adults away for a weekend, and together they write plays. First a kid writes a play for him or herself and an adult partner. Then the adult writes a play "back" to the kid. This year, each play will have something that's been forgotten, that's remembered in the second play. LB

The following summary of the Playback weekend away was written by Yolanda Maldonado and Bill Wrubel, kid and adult playwrights participating in this fall's program. Bill's version is in roman type, Yolanda's in italic.

I'm writing this *PU* article as Chris Ceraso is doing my dish duty, cleaning up dinner at the home of Peter and Helen Randolph in Wareham, MA. I would have been at the sink, but Willie and I were busy getting beaten at pool by Darthula Harvey and Yolanda Maldonado.

Darthula said about the trip, "It's okay," and she liked "Everything."

You might say that getting beaten in pool by two adolescent young women once is fluke, but in fact they beat us twice in a row. (For the record, Bill and Willie both scratched on the 8-Ball). Poor Chris Ceraso really doesn't deserve to do the dishes alone, especially after Andre Parks conned him into typing his play, and I probably kept him up at night with snoring. But Chris is certainly better off than insomniac Project intern Sabrina Rodriguez, who was kept up all night by a rowdy group of kids. Even her tearful entreaty of mercy at 4:00 in the morning was met by a total lack of compassion by the high-spirited group.

Sabrina started crying the first night because she couldn't sleep and all the kids kept her up. In the late evening hours, Willie was keeping a close eye on all the kids. He was heard to say, "Hey come here, I need to speak to you."

Chris [topher Randolph] and Gregor [Paslawsky] were excellent cooks.

...tantalizing fried chicken.

We played pool, tennis, Uno, went boat riding, wrote our plays and played mini golf, followed by ice cream (it was Carol's idea to eat ice cream). Jerry thought the trip was "fun." Danny thought "it was good" and had a great time raking the leaves, but was depressed by playing pool. Everybody worked hard on their plays and did a great job.

In spite of all this fun, we managed to come away with six brand new kid-written plays (which will be matched by six more adult-written playbacks). The whole kit and caboodle will be offered up for public consumption November 4, 5 and 6 at Ensemble Studio Theatre (call 642-5395 for reservations). If there's any fried chicken leftover, I'll try and bring some.

Editor's note: In an editorial life imitates art coup, the editor forgot who was assigned to the Playback story, hence the overwhelmingly comprehensive coverage.

REPLICATION UPDATE

There are many *PU* readers out there who have heard about the Project's publishing venture for well over the past three years. To refresh your memories, the Altman Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the Educational Foundation of America, and Threshold all made grants to help the Project publish collections of its scripts and a "how to" manual to enable people around the country to begin Project-like programs in their own communities. After literally thousands of hours of work by countless volunteers, the Project is pleased to inform you that the books have gone to press. The results are seven glorious books, splendidly designed by Project designer Iris A. Brown. You've got your manual, *52 Pick Up* written by Willie with a section by Daniel Judah Sklar on teaching Playmaking (including detailed lesson plans), a section by Kevin Roach on the Project's Instant Set, 59 photographs by Stephanie Berger and edited with skill and finesse by Susan J. Vitucci. Then you've got your six volumes of scripts from all your favorite Project series: *The Bedtime Zone*, *The Butler Did It!*, *Plays for Pairs (Not For Bananas)*, and *The Spring Thing*, as well as two musicals, *The Dinosaur Musical* and *Quark Victory*. They can be purchased separately or buy all seven volumes plus other goodies as a replication kit. Call Dramatists Play Service at 212 683-8960 and order your books today!

The Butler Did It — Again. The first regional production of Project Plays was done at the Dallas Theater Center with kids from The Rainbow Days Center, which serves at-risk children. The Butler Did It smashing with 12 plays with songs and two sold out houses. Congratulations, Patty Saraniero.

GET SET

If anyone, anywhere, needed anymore reasons as to why Kevin Joseph Roach is a genius they need look no further than The 52nd Street Project's ALL NEW Instant Set. The old Instant Set, which has given us some great years, held up colorforms with pride and dignity, withstood being dropped, kicked, and packed incorrectly more times than anyone can remember, has gone off to Brooklyn along with the old furniture to Tom Carey and the Bushwick Play Project. In its place we proudly present the New Set. It has a Dutch Door, a window, and a scrim in front of the screen. While the new set had its premiere performance in August, the avid Project theater goer will be pleased to know that the new furniture, which comes in new exciting new late 90's colors, will be seen for the first time in "The Forgotten Plays" in November (see attached flyer). Look for table tops with interlocking-cam twist legs, chairs with steel bottoms that will not drag and get dirty on the ground, and puffy, yet firm trapezoids — just how we like 'em. MB

TUBA TROIS

For those of you keeping a replication scorecard the Tuba City project is in the middle of the third inning and the home runs keep on coming. Michaela and I once again traveled to Tuba to join forces with Mary Frances Begaye of the Greyhills High School Academy to help her teach Playmaking to ten talented Tuba teen titans as well as visit with some past Playmaking graduates to do Replay. After two weeks of class the crew was joined by dramaturg/actors Reg E. Cathy Jr. and Sr., Peter Herdrich, Howard Korder, Roma Maffia, Tanya Rowe-Russell, Lois Taylor, Karen Trott and Pamala Tyson. We ended up with an exciting new crop of plays. Some of the highlights include the trials and tribulations of a freshman trying to make the basketball team, a romance between two local horses, and the zany antics of a sheep and a dog who hit the road looking for adventure. These plays will get full productions in January so we'll keep you posted on how that turns out. These and other highlights prove that Tuba City has a wealth of wonderful, talented playwrights. MB

PLAYMAKING IN THE MAKING

In December The 52nd Street Project will present our ever popular Playmaking program. Everyone is excited about this new group of writers, and Michael Bernard is in fine form ringing the magic bell. Adult class volunteer's include Sabrina Rodriguez (our rockin' new intern), Tim Nelson, John Steber, the newly-wedded Barbara McCrane, and new Project volunteer Alina Arenal. Hello and welcome to Kate Walsh at Hartley House (a neighborhood community center) and welcome back to Ken Terrell from Rheedlen Place (a local social-service center). Both Kate and Ken have helped to put this year's Playmaking class together by hooking us up with new young talent.

After eight weeks of classes the ten new writers will spend a fabulous weekend writing their final plays hosted by Project Santa Claus Stephen Graham and his wife Cathy at their home in Kent, CT. Performances will be at Playwrights Horizons Studio Theatre on December 9, 10 & 11. LB

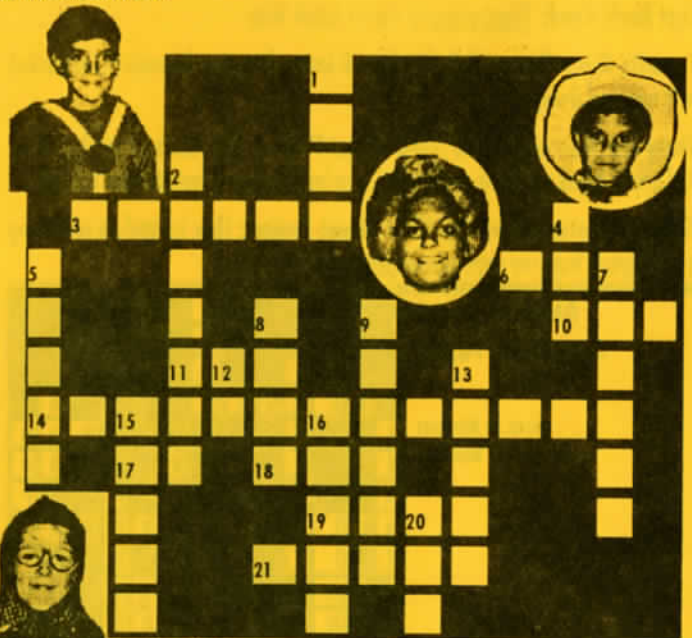
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- See 15 down
- This cowboy's name is the same a-comin' and a-goin'
- The island of Gooney Goo _____
- Where Lois and Joseph went _____
- Where we went this summer _____
- Addams cousin (this has nothing to do with the Project, sorry)
- If you work for the Project you must be a _____
- The type of Jet the stranded strangers took to Australia _____
- A newly retired staff member who will be dearly missed _____

Down

- I don't want to go _____
- The doctor in the piranha play (I have an omelette on my shoe)
- Captain Major was looking for his space _____ named Steve
- My hat is off to _____
- Big _____ Summer Surf Beach Ball Bikini Party
- The type of superhero Propeller Man wants to be, and what his teacher, The X-Meister, is _____
- Desmond is _____ than you (at least according to Lew)
- Plays are way cooler than this _____
- He'd rather paint people than eat them _____
- What Clair the doll lost _____
- What you should follow in Jamaica _____ and (1 across) _____-lations
- What the kids created _____



photos by Sheila Kehoe

Remember to come and see our production, "THE FORGOTTEN PLAYS" at the Ensemble Studio Theatre November 4 - 6. Check out the flyer inside.

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NEW GRANTS

The following government agencies have made grants to The 52nd Street Project recently:

Manhattan Borough President Ruth W. Messinger	\$5,000
DYS and Community Board 4	\$34,800

The Project is grateful for their support.



Flyer CANDY BAR PROFILE



Name: Lisa Marie Benavides
Occupation: The new Jerry
Place of Birth: San Antonio, Texas
Age: 29 (sure)
Why you do what you do: Because no one else will hire me.
Basic Philosophy: Ask Willie and if he doesn't know, ask Carol.
Favorite thing about children: They take up less room than adults.

Last Book Read: *Playmaking* by Daniel Judah Sklar

Favorite Flyer Flavor: Select Pecan -- it lasts a long time because it's so packed with nuts and chewy.

Thing she likes about The 52nd Street Project: Staff discount on Flyer Bars. And after I break out from eating one, I can borrow some Clearasil from the kids.

Thing she hates about The 52nd Street Project: They insisted on publishing a photograph from my days as a desperate, insane actress.

"All Over The Map" continued from p. 1... Boppin Summer Surf Beach Ball Bikini Party" and Jed Clarke was a "Perfectly Frank" super secret spy who infiltrated the Island of Gooney-Goo-Goo to save the world. In addition to writing and rehearsing we had the full swimming experience; we swam in a lake, river, and a pool! The Block Island foray found such marvelous map moments as the state of Texas and Rhode Island (Michaela Murphy and Deshana Hamid respectively) discovering that size isn't everything in "Texas is Crying in the Ladies Room." Zsuzsa Mysak was a doll who literally fell to pieces when she lost her arms and legs, Cordell Horsford and Jerry McGill were "Stranded Strangers." Chris Hansen was a painting piranha named Perry who teamed up with Dr. Eggfoot (see Flyer Profile) to become an artist. Janice Santiago saved the world, Elisa Mohammed was embroiled in "A Comedy of Manners," and Tessa Connor was Clarisa Sharpay (get out of her way). Ray Ocasio and Melissa Murray played a part in revisionist history in "The Adventures of Lewis and Clark," and Anthony Maldonado gave the Duke a run for his money as the peace-talkin, love-shootin Cowboy Bob, and Evan Handler and Ahmed Attia were the X-Meister and Propeller man who showed us the inner-machinations of what it takes to be an X-Man. We are still waiting for Evan to return his costume by the way (last Saturday and X-Man was spotted shaking his X-Booty at the Limelight. Hmmmmm). We had many beach days, took rides in Greg MacPherson's plane and had one wild evening of Bingo which saw many winners amongst Project Bingo-teers. I look at the moment I called out "Bingo!" and received my birdseed bell prize as a personal life highlight. Another highlight was the presence all summer long of Project intern Jessalyn Gilsig. Jessalyn, acted, sang and kid wrangled her way into the hearts of the Project staff, volunteers and kids. She particularly endeared herself to the Project staff with her ability to smuggle Cuban cigars across the Canadian border. All in all it was a summer that would make any travel agent proud! Those of you who made it to the end of this article can use the information you have gleaned to solve the Project's One-on-One crossword puzzle on page 2 (the answers are right next to this, for all you cheaters). MB

ANSWERS TO THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

EDITED BY MICHAEL BERNARD

