Players endures, through good, bad years

Thursday, January 6, 1983 Ö&

staff writer

SUESS I'M JUST a hard heart, said Jo Ann Britton, trip to explain the lure of themasteur slage.

This is the 60th consecutivyear the Village Players of Birminghah has appealed to the hamin teacher/the Britton as well is enfineers, doors, artists and housewives.

The Players has endured from its beginnings is a private the claim club with an autience limited tolembers and guesty to its current situs as a private citol presenting pute enter-talmment. Even during the Ilpression, private citol presenting pute enter-talmment. Even during the Ilpression, but the property paying housed to support the club "People gave up many they. They paying house the support of the pression, and the Dwelley He and his wiif. Derethy (Dee), have been members to about 40 years.

"SOMETIMES I WONDE how we do it," he said of the grop's track

record
In away, Dwelley's famir personifics the group's longevity. He parents
were lounding members. Fe a while,
his so was a member, also.

were founding members. Fe a while, his of was a member, also. Debileys too young to has participated in the first seaso of he group, which was inspired by the suggestion of a firmingham high-chool student, Johl W. Gafill. But in his city teens, buffey climbed around in he rafters of the playhouse as it was being built in 192.

It's old enough to remember the majes of members whears jettured in the foundation of the playhouse of the corner in the majes of members whears jettured in the majes of the playhous of the task in one night, "mined with several bittles of booze, according to Dewley. In original pasteliarawings were placed several years identified the playhous. Comment of the playhous. The original pasteliarawing were placed several years identified the playhous. Comment of the playhous. Comment of the playhous and the playhous and

around him. Michiman was the archi-tect of The Community House in Bir-mingham, alte of the players first three seasons.

ACROSS THE room, players are pictured being made up for a performance. Edith Bishop admires her rouge while Dwelley's father, George, dressed in Father Time's long while beard and robe, stares out at the auditore.

beard and robe, stares out at the audience.
East of the entrance, a committee forever reviews a script. Marge Gaili, sister-in-law of the founder, sits on the table, knees curied under her chin and the remains of a cigarette dangling from her lipe.

Such teamwork was responsible for construction of the playhouse and the initial furnishings. Members paid for the building through donations. Player Howard Simpson provided he material for the playhouse at cost, he material for the playhouse at cost, the material for the playhouse at cost for material for the playhouse at cost, and the start of the player of

tumes.
Such teamwork keeps the company egalitarian. Last night's star is this afternoon's prop manager.

MEMBERS ARE generous with their professional expertise.
For a recent production of "All My Sons," Dick Wagner, an engineer, used strips of black tape to simulate aftermoon shadows on a clapboard house. "People in the audience were saying, "How'd they get that house on the stager" Britton said.
Louis IV furnishings are faked by interior decerators using old chairs, crumbled masking tape and apray paint.
"You've got to have some dedication," Britton said.
Members are required to attend re-

"You've got to have some dedica-tion," Britton said.

Members are required to attend re-hearsals, conducted three times a week and occasionally ending after midnight. The other four nights of the week might be spent in learning lines.! SINCE BRITTON can't always lind that amount of time to dedicate to on-

stage work, she directs her energies to behind-the-scenes activities. On the other hand, Dwelley's using his retirement to "indulge this vice" of

his retirement to "indulge this vice" of acting.

"I've been booked on the theater since junior high school. I've been act-ing ever since. I acted all through col-lege. A year after college, I joined the players. I've been at it ever since," he sald.

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AFTER THAT run, he plans to try out for the players' production of "The Crucible" later this year.

Although he swears most of the players' performances go smoothly, he enjoys telling about members' triumphs under duress.

under dures.

His role as Walter Burns, Hildy Johnson's editor in "Front Page," required him to be handcuffed to the reporter. The script calls for his release in time to give Johnson his watch as a wedding present.

present.
But the keys for the handcuffs were lost and the two actors continued the performance locked to each other.
I thought I was going on the honeymone with him, Dwelley remembers.
The differents almost ruited the ending of the abow in which the editor sends the police after his star reporter, claiming. The son-of-a-bitch stole my watch.

AT THE LAST minute, the keys were found, and the play's ending was left true to the authors' intent.

"I thought we would have to go to the



a Birmingham pediatrician who is now retired, will be 83 years old in February.

police station to have them sawed off,"
Dwelly said.
One ill-fated production of "Dial 'M'
for Murder" started off with the wellwined-and-dined audience laughing
during the scene in which a woman
kills an assalant in her home with a
pair of scissors.
As the victim died, the audience
howled with laughter.

In a later scene, the woman's lover was to smash a window and crawl into the apartment after her husband left. Poor timing had the lover making his appearance seconds after the husband left the stage.

As if that wasn't enough, the stage-hands didn't turn out the lights for a scene which should have taken place in the darkened apartment at night. Dwel-

ley, playing the police inspector, burst through the door of the apartment with his flashlight on, only to discover that night hadn't failen.

IN THE FINAL scene, a murderer is caught by possessing a key to the apartment. He's exposed when he goes

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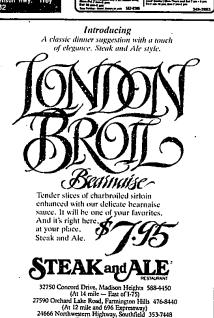
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