

Tribute to humanity is 'Boys Next Door'

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to fall, but his persistence in the losing battle lends courage to his pathetic efforts. And when he plays with water in the kitchen sink, we marvel at his absolute joy in the discovery of soap bubbles.

Eric Tavares plays Arnold as the motor-mouth complainer, a petty, funny man whose "deck doesn't have any face cards." Tavares, who has played many Meadow Brook roles including Cyrano, shows his versatility as an actor in this role. He makes Arnold not just funny for his illusive logic and hypocritical hangups but lovable as well.

Eric Hissom plays Barry, the schizophrenic who uses golf as armor against a dangerous world. The only catastrophe in this otherwise gentle play comes at the hands of Barry's visiting father (Bradford Wallace), a supposedly normal man with a mean, selfish streak unequalled by anyone else in the play.

Fourth in this group of apartment mates is Norman (Perry B. Stewart), a roly-poly glutton with a passion for doughnuts. Norman meets Sheila (Mary Lee Richey) at a dance for mentally impaired people and the two carry on a coy, gee-whiz courtship, sticky as honey.

Thanks to Mary Lee Richey's bubbly eagerness and Perry Stewart's boyish innocence, their scenes together cut through the sweetness in the play. The two characters' clumsiness falls away at the dance. Fat Norman and giggly Sheila are transformed into the people they should have been, and they wait with unrivaled grace.

AUTHOR TOM GRIFFIN does out bangs to all the characters, both impaired and not. Jack, the good-hearted man who supervises the "boys," lets the frustrations of his job burn him out, hurries to a laoter across the floor when he loses his temper, and chafes whenever he sees his former wife looking good in her BMW.

Michael James Laird as Jack refuses to be a goody-goody social-worker type. Instead he makes Jack a regular guy with a talent for ironic humor. Paul Hopper and Kathryn Nash play multiple supporting roles to round out the exemplary cast in this little-known play that deserves wider exposure.

Cathie Breidenbach of West Bloomfield teaches college writing classes and works as a free lance writer.

clarification

Roger Weisberg's name was incorrectly spelled as Weisburg in the feature story on the documentary film-

maker that ran in the Entertainment pages on Nov. 2.

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It's a comical, cock-eyed view of modern life

Continued from Page 7

BECAUSE SHE has also screwed up, Mel unleashes a tirade about Edna inviting all the junkies in the city to steal their stuff. This ricocheting movement, Mel and Edna taking turns being nuts, echoes through the play.

Mel stays nuts the longest, and Edna takes us through the journey of extended unemployment, psychanalysis, sedation and anger. Finally we experience the return of Mel's sense of humor, his happiness when Edna loses her job when the bank folds (it makes sense, the end of analysis ("the guy just sits there") and the return of the balance.

Edna, beautifully played by lively, intelligent Doris Harmon, rises to the occasion. She gets a job at a bank, even comes home to make lunch and keep Mel company while he reads wand.

Edna is a good scout until the day she loses her job and comes home to no water. Having coped with late hours, garbage strikes, hospital strikes, bus strikes and Mel's relatives, not being able to take a bath is the turning point for Edna. It acts on her the way the burglary acts on Mel, and Mel, who is growing healthier, soothes Edna.

A GREAT snowstorm falls, sweeping everything clean at the end. But of course, the snow is falling heaviest on 88th St. and Second Avenue, where Mel, holding an oversized shovel, sits with Edna... both of them waiting to drop a ton of snow on the neighbors who've been so lavish with water.

Jerry Brader, as Harry, the older brother, looks every inch the solid, lonely man who had no time to be a boy. Brader is touching when he turns up with a \$25,000 check to help Mel buy a summer camp, and shakes his head when Mel, having regained his playfulness, offers to kiss him and returns the check.

table talk

Banquet night

The West End (WE), a Vietnamese Southeast Asian restaurant in Pontiac, will offer a 12-course traditional Vietnamese banquet Sunday, Nov. 12, with seatings at 3:30 and 6:30 p.m. The special prix-fixe meal, at \$25 per person, is offered in celebration of the restaurant's second year of operation in its larger, refurbished quarters. For reservations, call 334-5980.

Champion Grill

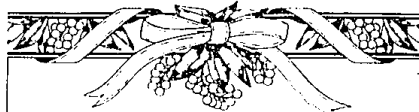
The Champion Grill has opened at Laurel Park Place adjacent to Jacobson's in Livonia. Champion is the first full-service restaurant to make its debut at the new shopping

facility. It offers a menu ranging from a starter section to the restaurant's specialty — fresh seafood and fish daily, plus Champion-style pizza, fresh pasta, chicken marsala and homemade desserts.

The menu also sports mixed grills, beef and BBQ ribs. The chef offers weekly specials to introduce new dishes and feature some of his personal favorites. Helen Rosenau, a Livonia resident, has been named general manager.

Champion Grill is owned and operated by Ann Arbor-based Mainstreet Ventures, Inc. This is Mainstreet's 12th full-service restaurant and seventh Michigan venture. Mainstreet owns and operates other area favorites including D. Dennison's in Farmington Hills.

Selma Cohen, as Jessie, the sister from Lakewood who can't stop crying while she waits to go shopping in New York, is funny. So is Jo Ewald as sister Pearl, who keeps insisting Mel had a breakdown before. Big sister Pauline, played by Carol Davis, has a head for facts; Pauline testily sets her sisters right by telling them that Mel has never had a breakdown before, and asking Harry, "How much is this X amount we're supposed to chip in?"



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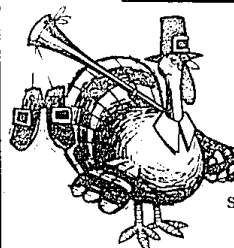
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