

All the World's A Stage

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The last play I directed at the Coaster Theatre Playhouse in Cannon Beach a number of years ago was called "Over the River and through the Woods," a witty and poignant play about a young man dealing with his two sets of overbearing grandparents. What I enjoyed most about the play was the circuitous route the old-timers took in trying to remember things such as who starred in "High Noon."

I'm reminded of that play every time people of my age group engage in similar conversations. On a recent trip to Ashland, four of my longtime women writer friends and I sat around a table at lunch and before long it started:

"Did you hear about the actress who died last week?"

"No, which one?"

"Oh, I can't think of her name. She had a squeaky voice and long hair."

"I know who you mean. I hated that squeaky voice."

"Wasn't Squeaky one of Charlie Manson's followers?"

"I think her first name was Julie."

"Squeaky's first name was Julie?"

"No, the Julie who died."

Julie Andrews died?"

"No, another Julie; she played a nun once in a movie about Christmas."

On and on it went with no resolution and lots of laughter. Later that night I awoke at two a.m. and remembered it was Julie Harris. I shared that information at breakfast over scrambled eggs, and we all agreed we could now rest easy.

The dead actress discussion was only the beginning. From there we went on to malapropisms, a term derived from Mrs. Malaprop in Richard Sheridan's play, *The Rivals* (1775). A malapropism is the use of an incorrect word in place of a word with a similar sound such as former Vice President Dan Quayle's statement, "Republicans understand the importance of bondage between a mother and child," or Yogi Berra's statement, "Texas has a lot of electrical votes."

Since we had with us Phyllis Courtney Sanderson, former resident of Wheeler and icon of the Ashland stage, her stance immortalized in a bronze statue in downtown Ashland, we knew we were in for a

treat. Phyllis was all too quick to remind us of Mrs. Malaprop's quotes from *The Rivals*.

"He is the very pine-apple of politeness."

"I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her."

"Oh! It gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree."

As all of us fell into deeper hysterics at the lunch table, one of our group summed it up nicely:

"I hope we never go vertical," she said; "I'm so used to going sideways."

"All the world's a stage," a quote taken from Shakespeare's play, *As You Like It*, compares the world to a stage and life to a play. Some of our friendship connections go back over twenty years, and we agree that sometimes there's been more drama in our lives than on the stage. We five women, in our autumn years, are still connected through words, laughter and tears. We know the power of our friendship and the strength of the safety net it has built for us, and we're grateful.

As to the three plays we saw, the first one we just didn't understand. The second we thought we did, but a younger acquaintance suggested a deeper meaning. We didn't get that either, which made us start to doubt our wisdom. The third, *The Taming of the Shrew*, done in contemporary times was spot-on and lifted our spirits. We all gave it a standing ovation.

When I got home, still basking in the warm hum of friendship, joyfully tethered as I am to my fellow women writer friends, I selected a few cards to send to them in remembrance of our time together. One has a picture of a Stellar Jay standing at the bottom of a staircase in a white sleeveless tee shirt hollering "Stella!!" Though we elected not to see *A Streetcar Named Desire*, we all got that one. The other card is covered in pink flowers, a blue butterfly and a brilliant blue bird on a branch of pink blossoms. The quote on it is from Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Scatter Joy." Life is too short to do anything else, don't you think?