



# SPOTLIGHT

March 2015

## Spotlight on Carolyn Winchester

*Carolyn Winchester was a guest speaker at the Annual Meeting on March 13.*



“When I came to Brevard in 1949, it was nothing like the Brevard of today. I might as well have been wearing a sandwich board to announce my arrival; it was that evident that I was a newcomer. I was teaching at the high school, and my first extracurricular assignment was to direct the Senior Play the coming spring of 1950. My only theater experience was in high school and college productions, no directing, but I wasn’t given a choice. I was to direct the Senior Play. After the play I was invited to a gathering of locals who were interested in organizing a theater

group. The meeting was held at the present location of the Transylvania Times on Broad Street, which had just been vacated by the McCrary G.M. auto dealer. The floor was black and oily with the smell to go along with it. By the time the meeting ended the new organization was named the Brevard Little Theater, and I was the President. Robroy Farquar had agreed to be the director. At that time he was directing the Lake Summit Play House that later moved to Flat Rock and became the North Carolina State Theater.

“Robbie did not drive, so he rode the Ecusta bus with the 4 o’clock shift workers from Hendersonville to Brevard. A volunteer from BLT met the bus to pick up Robbie, fed him supper, delivered him to the rehearsal, and took him back to Ecusta to ride the 11 o’clock bus back to Hendersonville.

“We rehearsed in the McCrary building and performed in the American Legion, Brevard High School and Rosman High School--whatever was available. The Brevard High School stage was also the gymnasium--regulation court size and height, so you can imagine the difficulty we had in building sets and blocking action. That wasn’t our only problem; we had to beg people to be in plays, and more often than not Robbie had to take a role as well as direct. Desperate for a place to present a play, we even went to the court room in the County Court House for ***The Night of January 16th*** in spite of the very large cast. [Continued on next page.]

“Since I was teaching at Brevard High School, the principal allowed us rehearsal time, but told me in no uncertain terms that I was fully responsible for lights out, locking up, no smoking, etc. At one rehearsal someone accidentally pulled the curtain down. No ladders, no expertise in how to handle the heavy curtain at the height of a basketball court--and I was visualizing, come morning, no teaching job. However, a call to the fire department solved the problem. They came to the rescue with their tall ladders, put the curtain up, and kept quiet about what happened--and no charge except a comp ticket to the play. The play went on and I kept my job.

“I served as president two years and decided there was less stress having a baby than being president of BLT, so when my first child was born in 1952, I retired. I’m happy that BLT has continued so many years, including some very successful musicals, *The Mikado*, *The King and I* and *Oklahoma*. Now I like being a part of the audience and enjoying your wonderful talents, both on and off stage. Congratulations on your many successful productions, and keep BLT going for many years to come.”

**Editor’s note:** *The organizational meeting described by Ms. Winchester reestablished Brevard Little Theatre, which was first organized in 1935 (under that name) and then was on hiatus during WWII and the early postwar years.*

## Officers Elected at Annual Meeting



Jim Robinson

Julie Vorus

Dick Thompson

Sandra Whitmore

The BLT 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Volunteer Celebration/Annual Meeting was held on March 13<sup>th</sup> at the theatre. The potluck dinner was supplemented with a beautiful anniversary cake. Guest speakers were Carolyn Winchester and Erin Smith. Carolyn’s talk is published in this newsletter. Erin talked about how the Youth Troupe has changed her life by giving her more confidence.

At the official meeting, the following officers were elected: president: Jim Robinson; vice-president: Julie Vorus; treasurer: Dick Thompson; secretary: Sandra Whitmore. Rick Laws was appointed as a new Board member, and Patrice Robinson was chosen as artistic director. The returning Board members are Carla Hill, Annette Hobbs and Immediate Past President Nita Porter.

The President’s Award was given to Bonnie Whitmire and Carla Hill.

The prestigious Beulah Zachary Award went to Mark and Sandi Thompson for their many years of dedicated service in the areas of acting, directing, producing, stage-managing (30 youth productions for Sandi) and costumes. They also created, directed and produced all five *Broadway Cabaret* productions.

# Simpson & Henry Finally Break the Curse

*The following is an excerpt from The Transylvania Times:*



On Saturday, March 7, the director, cast and crew of Brevard Little Theatre's current production, the world premiere of *How Does Your Garden Grow?* hosted Aubrey Simpson, the playwright who created the play. The evening festivities were kicked off by the playwright, who asked to make a toast. It was an emotional toast that referenced Director Mark Henry and each of the cast members. Simpson used the opportunity to relate some of the history of *How Does Your Garden*

*Grow?*—a history that spanned more than 3 decades, during which the play was rewritten multiple times and had multiple readings by actors and directors who nearly produced it. Each time bad luck or circumstance prevented its production, leading Simpson to wonder if his play was cursed.

*How Does Your Garden Grow?* came closest to production in the eighties under the direction of John-Michael Tebelak, the playwright who created the musical *Godspell*, with Oscar-winning actress Geraldine Page as the matriarch. Producers were lined up and were trying to decide whether to bring the show to Broadway or off-Broadway, but they backed out when Tebelak and Page each died of heart attacks in the mid-eighties.

Over the years many others considered the play, including Ruth Warrick, an actress who debuted in *Citizen Kane* and had a long film career, but is best known as Phoebe Tyler Wallingford on *All My Children*. She loved the play, found it hilarious, but didn't feel it was for her. After many similar stories, Simpson resigned himself to the fact that he would never see his play on the stage.

When Mark Henry was asked to direct a play in BLT's 80th season this year, he asked if he could direct Simpson's play. He had never lost his love for the show and looked forward to finally bringing it to the stage. Some BLT actors and board members met to read the play and agreed that BLT should present it.

Even then the play seemed cursed. Two of the parts were very difficult to cast; winter weather repeatedly caused rehearsal cancellations; one of the actresses that was cast had to leave the show and be replaced; and the set designer and builder had to drop out to take a job designing a PBS TV series. Henry, a set designer himself by trade, reluctantly stepped in to design and build the set; the actress was replaced; the weather warmed; and the show was on.

*How Does Your Garden Grow?* is a Southern comedy that takes place during the Depression in the home of strong-willed matriarch Mary Hawthorne and her three adult daughters: one a

spinster who has devoted herself to taking care of her invalid mother; one a church-going Christian who is waiting for her husband to return from a 20 year business trip; and one a carnal pleasure-seeking woman with rather questionable values. It is a dark farce whose characters are very loosely based on Aubrey's grandmother, mother, and aunts.

## Standing Ovation for *How Does Your Garden Grow?*

The world premiere of *How Does Your Garden Grow?* took place on Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. There were constant laughs from the audience, and the cast and crew were thrilled to receive a standing ovation.

The cast of *How Does Your Garden Grow?* includes Patty Siebert as Mary Hawthorne, Sandra Whitmore as Violet Hawthorne, Nita Porter as Lillian Fitzgerald, Jackie Roberts as Gloria Hawthorne, Sally Burnett as Rosalie Clemens, Carol Hamann as Bessie Gardner, and Tate Albert as Colonel Bernard Cobb. Mark Henry is the director, Mark Thompson the producer, and Sandi Thompson the stage manager.



The show will run Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through April 4th, with no performance on Easter Sunday. Reservations can be made in advance at 884-BLTR [2587], but walk-ins are always welcome.

## BLT-To-Go

BLT-To-Go, an outreach program of Brevard Little Theatre, offers theatrical entertainment to civic organizations, community events, and senior residences in Brevard and surrounding areas. For information, or to schedule a program at your meetings, call BLT at 884-2587.



**The BLT-To-Go cast rehearses for a performance for Transylvania County VIPs, (Visually Impaired Persons), a low vision support group that meets at College Walk once a month. Actors (L to R): BLT-To-Go members Anne Munch, Al Edick, Annette Hobbs, and Carolyn Winchester. Absent: Bob Singdahlsen. Standing: Julie Vorus, BLT-To-Go Coordinator.**





## Artistic Director Seeks Input

Patrice Robinson, our new artistic director, is seeking ideas for plays for 2016. Have you seen or read a play that you think could be successful at BLT? Send ideas to Patrice at [PatriceRobinson29@gmail.com](mailto:PatriceRobinson29@gmail.com).

## Notes from Nita

We have some very loyal playbill advertisers. Please support these local businesses. They certainly support us. Thank you to the following businesses: Comporium, Dugan’s Pub, Transylvania Regional Hospital, Oskar Blues Brewery, Food Matters Market, The Phoenix, Southern Comfort Records, Brevard Animal Hospital, Arnold Mlay Insurance Agency, Moody-Connelly Funeral Home, Platt Architecture, TC Arts, and Quixote.



***Dancing With Our Stars*** was a huge success. The event netted \$3,600 in one night. Thanks a million to the dancers--Dottie Tinsley, Woody Snyder, Jessica Coye, Roni Doller, Marty Ingram, Heath Seymour, Allison Lang, Andy Thompson, Ann Sharpsteen, Michael Domokur, Crystal Gera, Ed Skrivanek, Amber Austin, and Hugo Seda. A big thanks to Ingles, Zaxby’s, and Oskar Blues for their donations.

We appreciate our 80th Anniversary Donors for their support of the lighting and chair fund. We have collected approximately \$2,000 at this time.

We appreciate our patrons and volunteers!

I would like to personally thank those who attended the 80th Anniversary Volunteer Celebration/Annual Meeting. It was a fun event with wonderful food and fellowship. Thanks to the Board for the beautiful roses and the generous gift card. Serving as President of the BLT Board has been a rewarding experience. I want to wish next year’s officers much success. I will continue to help any way I can to keep live theatre in Transylvania County for future generations.

Joy!

Nita Porter

## From the Editor



We have had a number of new volunteers come forward recently, and I am delighted. You will be meeting them in future editions of the ***Spotlight***. Also, as newsletter editor, I am always looking for articles and ideas. Please send them my way at [teegeemailbox-blt@yahoo.com](mailto:teegeemailbox-blt@yahoo.com)

Sandra Whitmore  
***Spotlight*** Editor & Volunteer Coordinator

**BLT Reservations and  
Information Line:  
828-884-BLTR [2587]**

**Brevard Little Theatre**  
is the  
**Official Community Theatre of  
Transylvania County & Brevard**

[www.brevardlittletheatre.com](http://www.brevardlittletheatre.com)  
[www.brevardlittletheatre.net](http://www.brevardlittletheatre.net)

P.O. Box 426  
55 E. Jordan St.  
Brevard NC 28712

[brevardlt@citcom.net](mailto:brevardlt@citcom.net)  
828-884-BLTR [2587]

**REMAINING PRODUCTIONS  
2015**

*How Does Your Garden Grow?*  
**March 20 - April 4**

*Moon Over Buffalo*  
**May 15 - 31**

*The 7th Broadway Cabaret*  
**June 25 - 28**

*The Miracle Worker*  
**August 7 - 23**

*Funny Little Thing Called Love*  
**September 25 - October 11**

*The Lion, the Witch and the  
Wardrobe*  
**December 3 - 6**

**EDITOR:** Sandra Whitmore: [teegeemailbox-blt@yahoo.com](mailto:teegeemailbox-blt@yahoo.com)

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Nita Porter, Julie Vorus, Mark Thompson, Carolyn  
Winchester

**REVIEWERS:** Marianne Plunkert, Joe Narsavage