



WPCC Performing Arts Program
presents



*"I wish I was some little sparrow,
That I had wings, could fly so high;
I'd fly away to my false true lover,
And all he'd ask, I would deny."*

Susan Glaspell's

"A JURY of HER PEERS"

Special Thanks To:

- The Historic Burke Foundation for use of the old Burke County Courthouse.
- Steve Carpenter for explaining the lighting system.
- Jim and Mabel Oxford for donation of the furniture and props.
- John Carenen, Don Secreast, Paul Wardzinski, and Louise White for inviting their classes to attend these performances of "A Jury of Her Peers."

WPCC Readers Theatre Class
presents

Susan Glaspell's

"A Jury of Her Peers"

Adapted by
Cheryl Oxford

THE CAST

Narrator	Lu Davis Camilla Gallion
Mrs. Hale	Susan Jennings
Mr. Hale	Alan Green
Mr. Henderson	Alan Ellis
Mrs. Peters	Jana Powell
Sheriff Peters	Aaron Cook Andy Fairbanks
Minnie Foster Wright	Suzanne Averett Elizabeth Clark Rhonda Lowman
Harry Hale	James Hildebrand Jamie Jamison
Soprano	Sharon Stamey
Guitarist	Pat Harton

THE PRODUCTION CREW

Student Director	Debra Crisp
Technical Director	Pam Walker
Costumes and Make-Up	Sharon Stamey and the Cast
Lighting	Alan Ellis Andy Fairbanks Pam Walker
Readers Theatre Instructor	Cheryl Oxford

"A Jury of Her Peers" reviewed

After twenty years of suppression, a woman married to a cold and cruel man who shows no emotion or sensitivity and who allows none in her, retaliates by strangling her husband with a rope while he sleeps. Is this another news story like the one we all saw portrayed in this year's made-for-TV film, The Burning Bed? Not quite. This is a 1917, real life incident around which Susan Glaspell focused her short story, "A Jury of Her Peers." An excellent dramatization of this compelling story was presented May 11-17 in Morganton's Old Burke County Courthouse by WPCC's Performing Arts Program.

There are some very current issues ranging from justifiable homicide to spouse abuse raised by this drama. But the ultimate issue of the story has little to do with murder. In fact, the story doesn't depend on the murder plot at all, but rather upon the drama as created between two women as they piece together the story of the killing. In so doing, they realize the desperation of the accused woman and empathize with her. Consequently, in their minds, they find the woman not guilty of murder but of self defense. The characters, like the audience, play the role of learning about the situation and a female's perspective of it. Perhaps what is really on trial here is a society that perceives the female perspective as inconsequential or, at best, that of a second class citizen.

WPCC's drama begins as the neighbor, Mrs. Hale, a robust, farmer's wife, arrives at the house of Minnie Foster Wright, the woman accused of murdering her husband. She is accompanied by the frail and timid Mrs. Peters, the sheriff's wife. As the men -- the sheriff; the farmer, Mr. Hale; and the district attorney -- look for clues and especially a motive to explain the murder, the women are left to collect some clothes for Minnie Foster to use in prison while awaiting trial. As the efficient but insensitive men search for clues by examining windows, barns and ropes, the women in the kitchen discern the motive for Minnie Foster Wright's killing her husband. In the background, the men examine upstairs, then down, all the time wondering why Minnie Foster Wright

might want to kill her husband. As they search for a motive, they joke that the women wouldn't know a clue if they stumbled on it.

Ultimately, the success of the play in communicating this special understanding of an oppressed woman rests with the two female roles. Together, they do an amazing job of creating an unforgettable emotional bond between themselves and the audience. The audience is brought into their subtle and sensitive world of knowing and caring about this woman and her situation. Interestingly, the men in the play are excluded from their insights. Finally, as the women discover a bird cage with a broken and mangled door, and then in Minnie Foster's sewing basket, a dead canary with its neck broken, the motive for murder becomes clear. As the men return to the kitchen to collect the women, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters hide the bird. Minnie Foster Wright becomes, not a murderer, but a person who has had the life and song crushed out of her by a cold, hard, quiet and insensitive existence just as the tiny canary has.

Susan Glaspell's story "A Jury of Her Peers," and WPCC's dramatization of it, is not really about the crime of murder at all. Rather, the story is about how society, in this case represented ironically by two women, must learn to recognize and value a feminine perspective.

Paul Wardzinski

CORRECTION: In last month's article, "Woman wins wage discrimination suit," we said Mary Dean Taylor of Morganton had earned \$1,200 less per year than a man with the same job as hers. Taylor corrected us and said it was \$2,000 less per year.

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Thanks for this issue go to Dawn Harmon, Nancy Reis, Janet Rasnick, Carol Trivette, Gwen Veazey, Patty Moffatt, Anne Fischer, Deloris Johnson, Paul Wardzinski, and Dode Wood. Write to us at P.O. Box 2512, Morganton.







