



Cast includes several alumni of WPCC drama program.

## 'Legends of the Bell Witch' presented by WPCC group

The Western Piedmont Community College Performing Arts Program will present "The Legends of the Bell Witch" on Friday at 11 a.m. in the Phifer Studio.

Admission is free and the public may attend.

"One of the functions of folk legends is to attempt to explain the unexplainable," said Cheryl Oxford, director. "Such an attempt forms the basis for the many stories surrounding the strange and still fascinating case of the Bell Witch. Folklore thrives on such unsolved mysteries."

"The Legends of the Bell Witch" recounts the misfortunes of the Bell family who moved from North Carolina to the midlands of Tennessee in the early 1800s.

Today, beside a highway in the Red River area of Robertson County, Tenn., the only historical marker in the United States memorializing a ghostly phenomenon reads:

*To the north was the farm of John Bell, an early, prominent settler from North Carolina. According to legend, his family was harried during the early 19th century by the famous Bell Witch.*

*She kept the household in turmoil, assaulted Bell and drove off Betsy Bell's suitor. Even Andrew Jackson, who came to investigate, retreated to Nashville after his coach wheels stopped mysteriously.*

*Many visitors to the house saw the furniture crash about them and heard her shriek, sing, and curse.*

Cast members for the play include Readers Theatre students. In addition, a number of WPCC theater alumni are featured in a return to the college stage.

Opening the production is Louise White, WPCC English instructor, who will offer a historical context for the legends surrounding "the hag of Red River."

Gina Revis will then tell the story of the Bell Witch as re-

corded in "God Bless the Devil!" a volume of folklore from the Tennessee Writer's Project, a WPA program of the 1930s.

In this version, the witch is the vengeful spirit of Kate Bates, a woman wronged by the Bell family, who returns from the beyond.

A group performance follows, based on a retelling of the legend collected in the "Journal of American Folklore" (1934).

In this version, John Bell is terrorized by the spirit of an overseer whom he has killed in a fight. This spirit finally torments John's daughter to her death.

Cast members include Beth Buckner, Michael Rogers, Cheryl Oxford, Cindy Patton, Annette Moore, Don Abernathy, Pat Harton and Ric Covalinski.

In addition to narrating the tale, Beth Buckner coordinates the costuming. A former Performing Arts major and "Most Valuable Player" at WPCC, Buckner transferred to Lenoir-Rhyne College where she graduated magna cum laude in theater arts and English education in 1991.

In addition to her stage appearances at WPCC, Buckner has

acted with the Freedom Playmakers, the Stagecrafters, Lenoir-Rhyne Playmakers, Foothills Performings Arts and the Old Colony Players.

She is a member of Alpha Psi Omega, the national honorary dramatic fraternity.

Ric Covalinski, in addition to supplying the voice of the Bell Witch, coordinates the show's technical elements. A former Performing Arts major and "Most Valuable Player" at WPCC, he graduated from Florida State University in theater arts in 1991.

He has appeared professionally in "Young Abe Lincoln" and "The Sword of Peace" and has done extensive film/video work. Currently, he is assistant to the director of "From This Day Forward."

Other WPCC drama alumni making special guest appearances include Gina Revis and Pat Harton.

"The Legends of the Bell Witch" is adapted and directed by Cheryl Oxford.

For more information, call Oxford at 438-6093.



An especially dramatic scene from drama.