

The University of North Carolina
at Greensboro

JACKSON LIBRARY



CQ

no. 1324

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

SPAUGH, DAN EDWARD. A Production of Jason Miller's That Championship Season.

(1974)

Directed by: Kathryn England. Pp. 138.

The purpose of this thesis is to study the background surrounding the playwright and the play itself in preparation for a production of the play, and then present a critical evaluation of the production.

Chapter One deals with the following: (1) research of the playwright's background, (2) research of the play's background, (3) character description and analysis, (4) analysis of the set, (5) the director's justification of script, and (6) the director's interpretation of that script.

Chapter Two consists of the prompt book for the production, performed December 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, 1974, in Taylor Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Notations include: (1) movement, composition, and picturization, (2) details of characterization and stage business, (3) rhythm and tempo, and (4) lighting and sound cues. Production photographs are also included.

The Third Chapter consists of critical evaluations in four areas. They are: (1) achievement of interpretation, (2) actor-director relationships, (3) audience reaction, and (4) personal observations and comments.

Kathryn England
1974

W

A PRODUCTION OF JASON MILLER'S
" "
THAT CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON

by

Dan Edward Spaugh
"

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1974

Approved by

Kathryn England
Thesis Advisor

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following
committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The
University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Advisor Kathryn England

Oral Examination
Committee Members Hermon McMillan
David R. Batchelder

December 9 1974
Date of Examination

DEDICATION

To my wife, Trisha. I express his appreciation to

the author. Without her love, understanding, and hard work, my dream of going to graduate school would still be a dream. The director especially is grateful to all the

people who. To my mother and father who struggled to give me the education they never had. at Championship Season, with

special thanks to the "Guns."

TABLE OF CONTENTS
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The director wishes to express his appreciation to the members of his thesis committee with special appreciation to Miss Kathryn England, his thesis advisor.

The director especially is grateful to all the people who gave their talent, time, energy, and great enthusiasm to the success of That Championship Season, with special thanks to the "team."

	Coach	14
	Justification of Script	15
	Set Analysis	16
II	PROSEPT WORK	19
	Act One	19
	Act Two	27
III	CRITICAL EVALUATION	115
	Achievement of Interpretation	116
	Actor-Director Relationships	119
	Audience Response	129
	Personal Comments	133
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	137

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. ANALYSIS OF THAT CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON . .	1
Background of Playwright	1
Background of Play	1
Critical Reviews	3
Style	5
Interpretation of Script	7
Character Analysis	12
George	12
James	13
Phil	14
Tom	14
Coach	15
Justification of Script	16
Set Analysis	18
II. PROMPT BOOK	19
Act One	19
Act Two	97
III. CRITICAL EVALUATION	115
Achievement of Interpretation	115
Actor-Director Relationships	119
Audience Response	129
Personal Comments	133
BIBLIOGRAPHY	137

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
I.	20
II.	33
III.	61
IV.	98
V.	112

CHAPTER I

ANALYSIS OF THAT CHAMPIONSHIP SEASONBackground of Playwright

Jason Miller was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1932. Educated at the Jesuit run University of Scranton, Miller became involved in the drama club and won an award for a one-act play about a fighter called, The Winner. He did graduate work at Catholic University and has since pursued the dual career of actor and playwright. As an actor, Miller has worked at the Champlain Shakespeare Festival, the New York Shakespeare Festival, and a number of summer stock and dinner theatres. His other plays include Lou Gehrig Did Not Die Of Cancer and Nobody Hears A Broken Drum. Both of these plays were produced in New York Off-Broadway in 1970.¹ Mr. Miller has most recently appeared in the film, The Exorcist.

Background of Play

Jason Miller wrote That Championship Season while appearing in a Fort Worth, Texas' production of The Odd Couple. After a Broadway producer dropped the option for the script, Miller asked Joseph Papp to consider the

¹James Vinson, ed., Contemporary Dramatists (New York: St. Martin's Press), p. 545.

possibility of providing the play with an experimental production at the Public Theatre.² Papp later stated:

My feelings about the play, however, were mixed, which is not unusual for me when I am confronted by an unusual play. A good play for me is annoying. It defies any set views I have about what constitutes a good play and forces me to change my head around. That takes pain and a lot of effort. What intrigued me most about Jason's play was its momentum, its sheer energy.³

After several months of negotiations, casting, and the inevitable rewriting of the script, the play opened at the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theatre on May 2, 1972. A.J. Antoon directed the production, and Santo Loquasto designed the set. A first rate acting company consisted of Richard A. Dysart as the Coach, Paul Sorvino as Phil, Micheal McGuire as James, Charles Durning as George, and Walter McGinn as Tom.

While at the Public Theatre, That Championship Season was awarded the New York Drama Critic Circle's award for the best play of 1971-72. Because of the great popularity of the play, Joseph Papp decided to move the production to Broadway's Booth Theatre. Thus, the play received a second opening on September 14, 1972.

²Edith Oliver, "Talk Of The Town," New Yorker, May 1972, pp. 32-33.

³Jason Miller, That Championship Season (New York: Atheneum Press, 1972), pp. vii-viii.

Critical Reviews

When That Championship Season opened on Broadway, the major theatre critics were indeed impressed with the play. Clive Barnes, writing for the New York Times said:

Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival with all the laconic grace of a Wilt Chamberlain last night scored the first hit of the Broadway season....This is a play text in the very best way, was made for Shubert Alley, precisely the kind of play Broadway needs so much and gets so rarely.⁴

Douglas Watt of the New York Dailey News called the play a Broadway knockout and stated:

A winner and still the champ That Championship Season, which after a busy summer turning customers away downtown at the Public Theatre, opened a new Broadway season last night with a bang at the Booth. Perfect in all parts, Jason Miller's remarkable play remains the funny, wrenching and altogether engrossing piece of theatre it was when it burst into view last spring.⁵

Not only were the major newspaper critics praising the production, but also critics from the major magazines and television. Kevin Sanders of ABC-TV said:

Every two or three years, if we're lucky, a really great play comes along that captures and crystallizes so perfectly and so dramatically the whole sweep of contemporary life that all other contemporary plays are judged against it. That Championship Season is such a great play. It has everything....and it marks Jason Miller as one of the world's major new playwrights.⁶

⁴New York Times, 15 September 1972.

⁵New York Dailey News, 15 September 1972.

⁶WABC-TV, Kevin Sanders, 14 September 1972.

Tom Prideaux for life wrote:

...That Championship Season is the hottest dramatic ticket in New York City and another victory for Joseph Papp. That it will flourish is most likely, both because it has entertainment values congenial to Broadway and because it has a universality that should go anywhere.⁷

Perhaps Mr. Prideaux's statement that the play would travel anywhere was a bit premature. Alan Brien, writing for Plays and Players reviewed the London production of That Championship Season which opened at the Garrick Theatre on May 6, 1974 with Broderick Crawford as the Coach. Mr. Brien stated:

Mr. Miller's play nevertheless fails to engage its cogs, to hook its grappling lines, only partly because its obsessions are not ours, or at least not seen by us to be ours. It is a paradox of national identity that new societies are more concerned about relations between generations than old societies. That Championship Season is heady local wine which does not travel despite the golden seals of approval on the label.⁸

That Championship Season may have been too full of fundamental American ideologies for foreign audiences to appreciate. In the United States, as the reviews have shown, the play was a hit. In 1973 it was awarded the Tony and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.⁹

⁷Tom Prideaux, "Papp Basketballers Cop Stage Cup," Life, July 1972, p. 24.

⁸Alan Brien, "That Championship Season," Plays And Players, June 1974, pp. 32-33.

⁹Vinson, Contemporary Dramatists, p. 546.

STYLE

Realistic drama usually proceeds from the idea that common experience and ordinary sensory perceptions reveal objective reality, and that objective reality is ultimate reality. In realism, the projected appearance of life supposedly represents what is most true about life.¹⁰ In That Championship Season, Jason Miller has written about real people in an ordinary, believable situation. The characters interact and gradually reveal themselves in a logical realistic sequence. It is realism in a very special sense. The men of the championship team love, hate, cry, and laugh. In doing so they run the gamut of human emotions. The audience must love, hate, cry, and laugh with the team, or at least try to. But, as Marilyn Stasio wrote in Cue:

Laugh at these people? Can we? Not when we've lived with them, gone to school with them, to church with them, laughed and played sports with them, loved them. Not when we've had the same teachers, the same Coach they've had. And, not when we see strains of their dilemma reflected in ourselves.¹¹

¹⁰Sam Smiley, Playwriting, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1971), p. 213.

¹¹Marilyn Stasio, "That Championship Season - Everyman's Truth In Six Men's Anguish," Cue, May 27, 1972, p. 2.

The drama in a realistic play is communicated by the building of scenes purporting to show the inner intention of each character; what each character wants in a scene; why he wants it; why he says what he says; the inner psychological justification for his actions. This logical inner line is developed so that we see what each character wants and stands for throughout the play.¹²

The script itself is very realistic, with the appearance of life representing what the playwright considers most true about life. This director intends to stage That Championship Season as realistically and as truthfully as possible. The audience will actually become a part of the reunion so that they not only see and hear the play, but they will feel and relate it to a part of themselves. The audience must become empathetic participants in the ritual onstage.

To help maintain the illusion of reality onstage, this director does not intend to break the progression of action between Act One and Act Two. The actors will continue the sequence of the play until the end of Act Two, thus reinforcing the illusion of an evening at the Coach's home.

¹²John Gassner, Producing The Play, (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.), p. 295.

INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPT

One of the special folkways of America lies in the importance many small towns and cities assign to high school athletics. Each fall and winter, the best young athletes in thousands of cities and towns seek and win the adulation of their peers and elders on the football fields and basketball courts. But, when spring comes, the tumult and shouting has died and a senior class graduates, and athletes move on to college and jobs. For some, nothing will ever be so sweet again as their one brief fling at high school stardom, and their personal championship season.¹³

American playwrights have always been fond of the decayed athlete as symbolic figures. Clifford Odet's Ben Gordon, Arthur Miller's Biff Loman, and Tennessee Williams's Brick Pollit all have taught us that there is nothing sustaining in the early celebrity of a star athlete and the American success dream is as suspect as its products. Jason Miller's aging basketball players say all that against the Coach, quoting Teddy Roosevelt, insisting that they never take less than the success they deserved.¹⁴

The dramaturgical pattern that Jason Miller employs in the script has been successful for decades. A group of

¹³Wall Street Journal, 5 May 1972.

¹⁴Gerald Weales, "That Championship Season," Commonweal, October 20, 1972, p. 60.

people come together who are not usually together. They interact and reveal themselves. What they seem like at the beginning is not what they are revealed to be at the end.¹⁵

The play is not one of those moralistic exposes in which the characters are used as example of depravity. Rather, as the evening progresses and the men get drunker and drunker, everything is revealed about them: about the way they live and have lived and how they have been damaged, disappointed, and twisted.¹⁶

That Championship Season concerns the annual boozy reunion of a 1952 championship basketball team. Four of the team members come together at the home of their old Coach to celebrate their one moment of glory. Now, twenty years later we find George Sikowski, the team's guard, mayor of the town and up for re-election. James, another member of the team and George's campaign manager, is now a junior high school principal. Phil Romano is the rich man of the group now. George needs Phil's money to get re-elected. Phil considers George the village idiot, and is ready to back his Jewish opponent.

¹⁵Stanley Kaufman, "Stanley Kaufman On Theatre," New Republic, June 3, 1972, p. 33.

¹⁶Oliver, "Talk Of The Town." p. 33.

Complications arise and James informs George that Phil is having an affair with Marion, George's wife. The play is a series of betrayals and backstabbing set against the drunken witticism of Tom Daley, James' brother. Tom attempts to bring the truth into the open about the great championship game. The truth is, the team stole the trophy, winning the game with dirty tactics. The Coach throws Tom out of the house for bringing up the past. In the end, the Coach brings his men together again for another fight, to win another victory, and to make sure the team will again be champions.

The play is about the emptiness of the American success ethic, its demands causing inhumanity and hatred for the sake of winning something essentially worthless, symbolized by the championship cup into which the mayor ultimately vomits.¹⁷ Here is the American myth that life is a game and that society is a saloon after the match, that winning is the only thing that counts and can justify any ends. There is also the simplicity of small town strife, the love of what might have been, the cotton wool wads of nostalgia, and the poetry of retrospection. The men are shown to be a microcosm of America in decay.¹⁸

¹⁷Women's Wear Dailey, 4 May 1972.

¹⁸Jack Kroll, "Winner Take All," Newsweek, May 15, 1972, p. 92.

The characters in the play are the most important concerns of That Championship Season. The excitement of the play comes from the story behind the people. It is an actor's play. Jason Miller stated:

I always write for actors. I have them in mind. I move them around the stage in my mind all the time. The characters are what are important to me. They are people. I want to write about people.¹⁹

Jason Miller gave his personal interpretation of the play during an interview with Edith Oliver of the New Yorker. Miller said:

I'm writing in "Championship" about men going into their middle age with a sense of terror and defeat. They are desperately holding onto their youth. The only thing that holds them together is the memory of when they were together. The play is a rite of passage.

Everyman in my play is searching for his father. One never knew him when he died, at forty-three: another tended his father like a baby and wanted a show of respect: another lost his illusions when his father was wiped out in the Depression, threw his teeth across the living room, sat down in a chair, and never talked again. The best I could do with these people was to admit their mystery. The mystery of man. They are all trapped. They can't express themselves; they start out the door but they come back in again. They'll come back to live out their myths. Perhaps all we really do is live out our myths.²⁰

In the script, Miller takes the conventional route and shows the emptiness, loss, and the pain beneath the veneer of assurance and amiability. The old platitudes

¹⁹Oliver, "Talk Of The Town," p. 33.

²⁰Ibid.

take on a new and real form. The colloquialism of "It isn't how you play the game, it's whether you win or lose," is set forth as a pervading theme. The Coach, who demands that his boys love one another, at the end of the play insists that you have to hate to win. Success is a definition of we-versus-them in which the foulest act is justified in the name of victory for the good of the team.²¹

The social and political implications of this attitude are made explicit in the play. The team is the all-American platoon with some noticeable absences. Phil is Italian, George is Polish, Tom and James are Irish. They represent middle America in one of its less attractive guises. They are all Catholics although they have no faith left. They argue with one another on ethnic grounds, yet come together in their racism and anti-Semitism. They also come together in their need to hang onto their town, a need that dresses greed and weakness in the rhetoric of old fashioned American virtue. At the end, when the Coach finally, limpingly brings them back together in tears, they are less a championship team than five desperate men trying to stay afloat with only a leaky memory to hang onto.²²

²¹Weales, "That Championship Season," p. 61.

²²Ibid.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

There is one specific word that stands out in Miller's script. That word is "team." Phil, George, James, and Tom are now the only remnants of the "team." The greatest moment in the lives of all the men in the play was the night they won the Pennsylvania State High School Basketball Championship. That was twenty years ago, but still the men live the myth, avoiding truth and accepting only retouched memories.

George

George Sikowski is the mayor of the town. He is described as being too dumb to be corrupt. His campaign smile seems screwed on and his effort to display himself as a vibrant human being is mechanical and forced. He is in essence a nice slob. His clothes never seem to fit and physically he does not seem to adhere to the visual image one gets when one thinks of a mayor. George is very immature and completely dependent on others to make him look good. Because of his immaturity, he is subject to tantrums and crying fits. Yet, he can be very understanding and sympathetic at times. George is under constant pressure from those around him and from the demands of his job as mayor. He, more than any other member of the "team," loves and idolizes the Coach. This accounts for many of his problems, and causes him to be easily misled.

The men are bigots, racists, and burnt out moral wrecks. They all have observed the rules of the game laid down by their Coach. They carry out the rules with as much discipline as the Jesuit priests who taught them. But, they have been cheated and betrayed by every code of American ideology they have upheld. There was a promise made to them that they would be champions, instead they are losers.²³

James

James Daley is the principal of a junior high school. He is a sad and pathetic man. He is also a desperate man, wanting more than anything to be mayor of the town. James is also a jealous individual, especially of people who have power and money. The drabness of his personal life is seen in the fact that at thrity-nine, he has false teeth, a ten year old car, and not only has to support himself but his brother as well. James is a quiet man who prides himself on having a spotless reputation in the community. He has no idea people are laughing behind his back. He is a man who has never had the respect he wants and needs. His wife shuns him, and his young son calls him "a man of low excellence" refusing to have anything to do with his father. This need for respect gives James' ambition impetus, making his desperation more acute.

²³Stasio, "That Championship Season," p. 2.

Phil

Phil Romano is the Hollywood stereotype of tall, dark, and handsome. Rich because his father was rich, Phil is the one person on the "team" who outwardly seems to be a champion in life. He wears expensive clothes, is meticulously groomed, and has a quality of quiet sophistication. Despite his advantages in life, Phil is bored with every thing and everyone around him. His only thrill now is replaying the ancient championship game in his head and driving his customized sports car very fast when he is very drunk. He is a tired man. He uses sex like a drug to help him recapture that essence in life that made living worth while.

Tom

Brother to James, Tom Daley has led the life of a championship loser. He is a hopeless alcoholic and drifter. He has been very sick recently and we get this impression when we see him. He is underweight and pale, a ghost of a man. Tom's cutting remarks about the action taking place around him are both humorous and acidic. Tom has a certain strength about him, a spiritual strength. He knows and accepts the truth about the circumstances surrounding the sacred championship game. But, Tom is a man who needs to lose in life. He walks out the door to leave. He returns. He returns to relive his own myths.

Coach

The Coach of the "team" is a vibrant, powerful individual. He is in his early sixties. Despite the fact that he has just undergone surgery for what is referred to as an ulcerated stomach, he maintains his forceful and dynamic nature. When he speaks, it is with the confidence of a hell and brimstone minister. His attitudes about life are given with the factual literacy that befits a teacher and coach. He moves and acts like a young boy sometimes. The only thing that betrays his age is when, in his quiet moments, we see an old and tired man. His only joy in life is being with his boys, his champions again. When they are together, the bitterness and hatred that fills his waking hours is put aside until he needs a manipulatory force behind his discussions with the "team".

The men of the "team" are wasted human resources. The old "team" had joy early in life. They had magnificent energy and teamwork. The "team" had in it enough virtue to save the world, and enough evil to destroy it.²⁴

²⁴Prideaux, "Papp Basketballers Cop Stage Cup,"
p. 24.

JUSTIFICATION OF SCRIPT

That Championship Season is good theatre. This is probably the best and most significant reason why this director is doing the play as a thesis production. The script is a challenging one, offering many obstacles that must be dealt with effectively in order for the play to work as a piece of art. The production will not only stimulate the talent and creativity from the members of the cast, but will also demand creativity from the technical staff. This aspect of challenge is an important factor in itself.

The term "thesis production" has definite connotations. For the director, designer, and in this case an actor, this thesis production represents the culmination of the educational process and the opportunity to prove a professional capability. A thesis production is a learning continuum for everyone concerned with the play. This play especially has the potential as an important educational learning experience because it is such a fine work. It is also a fresh new work by a brilliant new playwright.

This director spent two weeks in negotiations with Dramatists Play Service before finally securing the rights to do the play. In obtaining these rights for That Championship Season, our UNC-G Theatre has the privilege of being one of the very first non-professional theatre's

to produce the play. With such a fresh piece of theatre secured, especially one that has received such critical and popular acclaim, and has garnished such awards as Jason Miller's play has been able to do, it is obvious why That Championship Season has been selected as a thesis play.

The play is exciting. It is entertaining. At the same time, its story of men decayed by traditional American values and its cry of "win at all costs" brings home a timely message. It will hopefully give an audience something to ponder, particularly now that the nation suffers in the attempts and aftermath of Watergate and continuing political investigations. In the words of Joseph Papp:

That Championship Season has the smell of the theatre about it. Good actors slip into their roles and Jason Miller's sense of theatre saturates the play. The work evokes a feeling of tradition, but in the real sense, the play is a modern work with its basic roots in America. It's simplicity is deceptive but it is this simplicity translated into recognizable human form that gives the work its extraordinary power.

Unlike the middle-class suburban fare reflecting the economic status of its customers that is served up on Broadway, That Championship Season is essentially a workingman's play, a rarity in today's theatre.

Long before Jason Miller's play got to me, I had been looking for plays that would appeal to broader audiences, plays that would be of interest and concern to all classes. That Championship Season is such a play. It is a play for the people of America.²⁵

²⁵Miller, That Championship Season. Pp. xii-xiii.

THE SET

The set for That Championship Season must be a complete and total environment. It must establish a locale and at the same time convey the personality of the Coach, and different aspects inherent to the script. Basically, the set must show the expansive living room of the Coach's home. Because the Coach's father was once a very wealthy man, the room must give the illusion of elegance fallen into decay. The furniture must seem to be antiques. Costly rugs and luxurious draperies, now faded and worn, accent the decor.

The set must also show that the Coach is a teacher and a Catholic. Bookcases filled with books and religious objects d'art should have prominence in the room. Also, large paintings of such men as Teddy Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Joseph McCarthy must adorn the walls in order to give another aspect of the Coach's personality as reflected in the setting.

Above all, the room must also be a shrine to the athletic profession. Trophies, placques, and pictures of the championship trophy must be displayed throughout the room. The trophy itself should have a special place of importance in the room.

In essence, the room should look dark and old, a suitable atmosphere for the dramatic ritual that will take place within the setting.

CHAPTER II

THE PROMPT BOOK

ACT ONE

HOUSE LIGHTS DIM ON SEVEN COUNT WITH STAGE LIGHTS OUT ON FOUR COUNT. MUSIC STARTS (TWO MINUTES). AS MUSIC BEGINS, LIGHTS COME UP ON SET. (FIGURE I) TOM ENTERS AND CROSSES TO COUCH. HE IS NERVOUS. HE THEN MOVES TO TROPHY TABLE, LOOKS AT TROPHY THEN MOVES TO THE BOOKCASE. HE PICKS UP ANOTHER TROPHY AND DUSTS IT OFF. HE MOVES UPSTAGE TO VIEW CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM PICTURES. HE SEES THE GUN RACK AND CROSSES TO IT. HE TAKES A GUN AND CROSSES UP THE STEPS OF THE STAIRCASE AND AIMS GUN AT KENNEDY PORTRAIT ON THE DOWNSTAGE WALL. THEN HE PULLS GUN BACK AND LOOKS AT BARREL. AS MUSIC SOFTENS HE AIMS THE GUN AT THE TEDDY ROOSEVELT PICTURE.

GEORGE

(ENTERING FROM THE KITCHEN) Hey Tom, Scotch and water on the rocks?

TOM

NO ICE! (LAUGHS AND AIMS GUN AT BUFFET).

GEORGE

Scotch and water coming up. (EXITS INTO KITCHEN).

TOM

Bring in the bottle, no one's going to steal it. (AS GEORGE ENTERS WITH GLASSES AND BOTTLE OF SCOTCH, TOM POINTS GUN AT HIM), Hey, George you know he keeps these guns loaded?

GEORGE

Yeah I know. (SEES TOM POINTING GUN AT HIM AND PANICS), Hey, put it down. (TRYING TO JOKE), I'm out of season! Those guns have hair triggers.

TOM

I got the safety on. (MOVES TO GUNRACK AND REPLACES THE GUN).

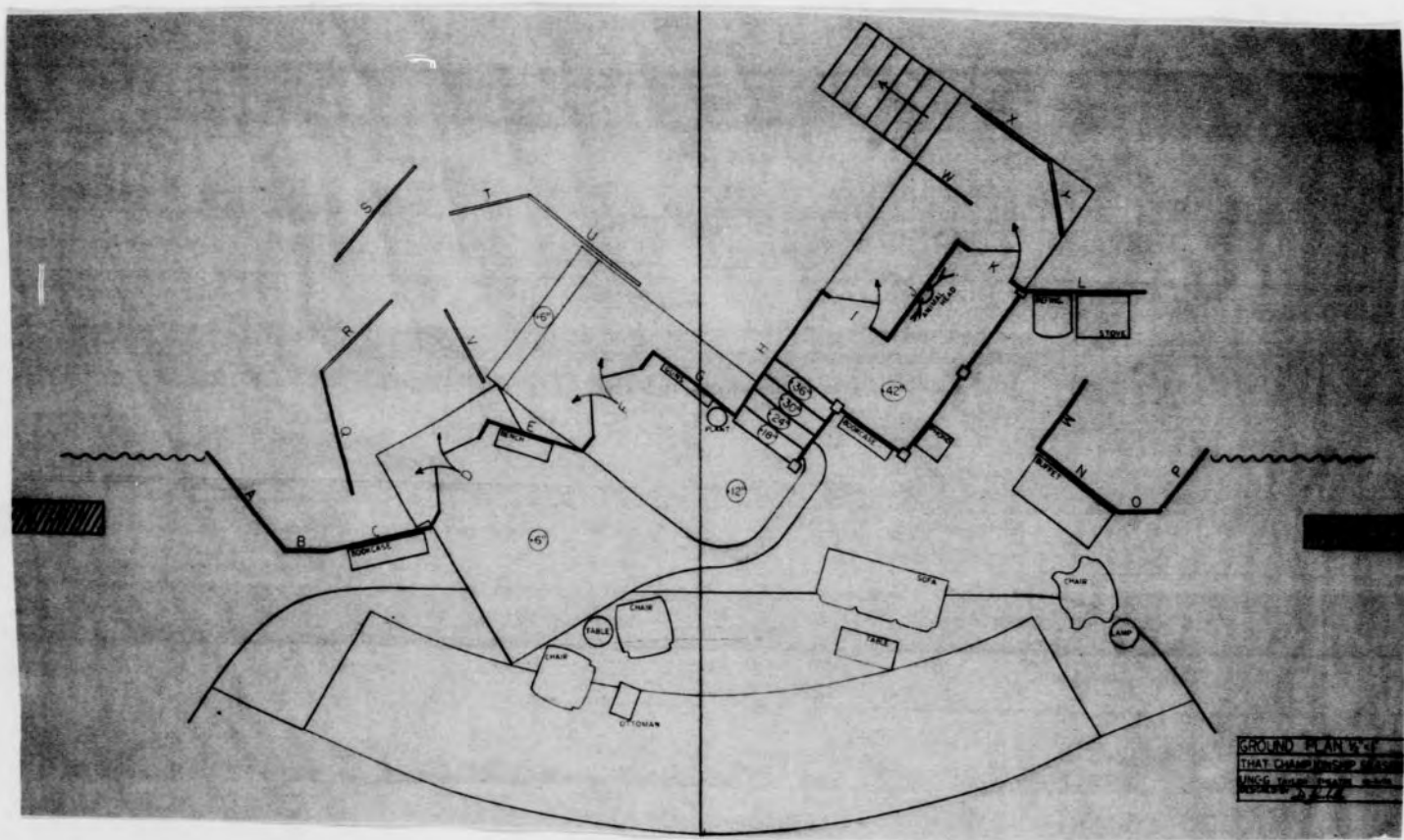


FIGURE I.

GEORGE

(MOVES TO TOM) Only my laundryman will know how scared I was just then. (HANDS TOM THE DRINK) You've been missed around here Tom.

TOM

(CROSSES AND SITS ON STAGE RIGHT END OF THE COUCH AS HE SPEAKS. HE IS AVOIDING GEORGE.) It's only been what, a couple of years?

GEORGE

(JOVIAL AS HE CROSSES TO TOM BEHIND COUCH) Three years Tom, you've missed three reunions. (PLAYS AREA BEHIND COUCH) Remember the time you put the wintergreen in my jock? I thought my balls were on fire. (LAUGHS) Those were the days, the good old days. (MOVES TO TROPHY TABLE) I am sincerely more proud of winning that championship than I am being mayor of this town. (SERIOUSLY) Do you believe that?

TOM

(SARCASTICALLY) No!

GEORGE

(CROSSES TO STAGE RIGHT END OF COUCH AND SITS) Dirty Bastard! I'll never forget you, you were a great guard. Brilliant playmaker.

TOM

(VAGUELY) You were a great guard too George.

GEORGE

(EXCITEDLY) I mean it. Bottom of my heart. This is me talking, no politician. Tremendous ball handler. (STANDS AND STARTS CROSS TO DOOR, HE IS NERVOUS BEING WITH TOM) I wonder what's keeping them? (TAKES OUT FEENAMINT).

TOM

They'll be here. (CROSSES TO BAR TO GET ANOTHER DRINK. HE NOTICES GEORGE TAKING A TABLET),

GEORGE

(POPS A FEENAMINT INTO HIS MOUTH, EMBARRASSED) Feenamint. Pressure is murderous. Tense. Get a little constipated now and then, mostly now.

TOM

(POLITELY) When do you start your campaign?

GEORGE

I campaign every day of my life. The real grind begins in one week.

TOM

(TAKING BOTTLE AND STARTS TO POUR DRINK. SITS IN LAMPCHAIR) I never thought Sharmen would end up a politician.

GEORGE

(CROSSING TO CENTER AND PLAYING AREA IN FRONT OF COFFEE TABLE) Everybody ends up a politician. I'll beat his ass, (WITH GREAT CONVICTION) He can't touch me in this town. Sharmawitz was his real name. That was his family's name. The Coach and me did some research on Mr. Sharmen. The only thing a Jew changes more than his politics is his name. He wants this town. Yeah. He wants to take it away from me.

TOM

(RISE, CROSSES TO GEORGE TO POUR HIM A DRINK) Ready for another one your honor?

GEORGE

(UNEASY) James is going to be pissed at me if you're high when he gets here.

TOM

(CROSSING TO FRENCH DOORS LAUGHING) Brother James wouldn't dare get pissed at you.

GEORGE

(CROSSING UPSTAGE) After the election I'm going to endorse him for superintendent of schools. Too valuable a man to waste his time being a junior high school principal.

TOM

That's patronage George.

GEORGE

I know. Is there any other way? (LAUGHING LOUDLY)

TOM

(POINTS TO PICTURE OF THE COACH) What did they find when they opened him up?

GEORGE

(CROSS TO TOM) Who, the Coach? Nothing. (YOU CAN TELL HE IS LYING) An ulcerated stomach. That's all. He'll live forever. I love that man as we all do. I owe my whole life success to that man. He convinced me that I could become mayor of this town. He ran me. Do you know how goddam close that first election was? Any Idea?

TOM

(CROSS TO FRENCH DOORS, TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM GEORGE) I don't remember.

GEORGE

Thirty-two votes. (SITS ON BENCH) I beat Hannrin by thirty-two votes. I looked it up. Closet election in the history of Pennsylvania politics.

TOM

(TURNS TO GEORGE) The Coach sent me a mass card when I was in the hospital. Mass card. I thought I was dead when I saw it.

GEORGE

(LOOKING TOWARD DOOR) How the hell long does it take to pick up fried chicken?

TOM

(SLYLY) How's Marion?

GEORGE

Fine, She's my conscious. My severest critic. She knows the political scene. Almost as sharp as I am.

GEORGE

(CROSS BEHIND STAGERIGHT CHAIR) You know, after the baby she was very depressed, not quite herself. She's coming around now thank god.

TOM

That's good.

GEORGE

(VERY FAST) Hey, do you know what would make this reunion truly memorable?

TOM

(CATCHING IDEA, STARTS CROSS TO DOOR) Martin would come walking through that door.

GEORGE

(WITH GREAT RESPECT) Magic on the courts wasn't he.

TOM

(STOPS CROSS, TURNS TO GEORGE) Unbelievable.

GEORGE

Greatest high school basketball player I ever saw!

TOM

(CROSS TO TABLE AND POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER DRINK) Unbelievable.
(CROSSES SELF WITH BOTTLE) Bless me Father for I have sinned.

GEORGE

(CROSS CENTER, WORRIED) Make that the last huh?

TOM

(GETTING A LITTLE HIGH) It's only six o'clock George.

GEORGE

(LAUGHING) Six? It's nine! Where the hell have you been?

TOM

(SOFTLY) I drink on Pacific Coast Time. That way I'm three hours behind everybody else.

GEORGE

(PAUSE, CROSS BEHIND COUCH AND PUT HAND ON TOM'S SHOULDER)
Do you have a drinking problem Tom?

TOM

NO! No problem. (RISE AND CROSS TO BAR AND GET CIGARETTES)
I get all the booze I want. (LAUGHS)

GEORGE

(CROSS TO TOM) Look at you, you're underweight, restless, your memory's going, you forget people's names.

TOM

(CROSS TO COUCH AND SIT) Almost forty George.

GEORGE

Forty? Yeah, it's like half-time.

TOM

(STARTING TO LIVEN UP) Hey, I remember somebody. I saw her standing by the library yesterday. Mary... (CANNOT REMEMBER).....what's her name.

GEORGE

(CURIOUS) Who?

TOM

The epileptic, Mary...you know, the one we banged in your garage, we were freshmen or something.

GEORGE

(NOT WANTING TO TALK ABOUT HER) I don't remember.

TOM

(PUSHING IT) We humped her in your garage. She took fits or something.

GEORGE

(CROSS BEHIND STAGERIGHT CHAIR) Don't ever breathe a word. (LOOKS AROUND AS IF SOMEONE IS LISTENING, CROSSES TO TOM) She wasn't an epileptic. She was only retarded. Not a word. It could ruin me. She was raped here about two years ago, scandal. Remember Mike Pollard?

TOM

No.

GEORGE

The guy with the glass eye. Yeah, he raped her in the cemetery. The one and only serious crime I've had in four years the dumb bastard. (RISE AND CROSS TO DOOR) Where the hell is everybody? (JEALOUS) The Coach loves to drive Phil's Caddy. That's why they're not here. Phil's got three cars now. Got a German car that goes like a rocket. I cancel at least five speeding tickets for him a month. (GOSSIPY) He's going out with a seventeen year old, believe that? Up in Scranton, had to take her to Philadelphia for an abortion.

TOM

He gave me a big hug and kiss.

GEORGE

(CROSS BEHIND COUCH TO TOM) Oh, he hugs and kisses everybody. Italians are like that, can't keep their hands off ya. Hey, what's air pollution? (BEFORE TOM CAN ANSWER) Five hundred Italian paratroopers!

TOM

What has the I.Q. of a hundred?

GEORGE

(KNOWS THE JOKE) Poland. See. I'm Polish but I don't mind that, don't mind at all. But Phil, gets pissed, moody bastard. You can never tell what he's thinking. But right now I'm waiting for Phil to kick in thirty thousand for my campaign.

TOM

(UNIMPORTANTLY) Thirty Thousand. (CROSSES BACK TO BAR)

GEORGE

But, in return Phil gets to keep all the strip land he's leased from the city. Sharmen wants to break that lease. (CROSS TO TOM) Mr. Sharmen is an ecology nut, right. The fashionable issue, right? If he gets elected mayor you won't be able to piss in your own toilet. And I'm going to whip his ass all over this town. Not this town. Not here. This town is not going to change hands. I love this town Tom and I love the people. Sure we have problems, but if we pull together I can make this the greatest little town in the country. That's one of my campaign slogans. "Greatest Little Town In The Country."

TOM

(LOOKING AWAY) Original.

GEORGE

(AS IF HE IS CAMPAIGNING) Yeah, we have some information for Phil that's going to knock him on his ass. He's holding back. He knows we need him. See, Phil is on the dumb side really. James has often said that about Phil. Marion went up to see Phil last month about his contribution. He stalled and she said she doesn't trust him either.

(JAMES AND PHIL ENTER THE FRONT DOOR CARRYING THE CHICKEN AND BEER, SINGING THE OLD COLLEGE FIGHT SONG)

GEORGE

(CROSSING TO PHIL) Where's you guys go to get the beer? New Jersey?

JAMES

(SLIGHTLY MAD) Phil wanted Schlitz, we had to go to Old Forge.

PHIL

(LAUGHING) Cop stopped us on the way back but he...

JAMES

(CUTS INTO PHIL'S LINE) Speeding! It's a wonder he saw us at the speed we were going.

PHIL

He recognized the Coach and me and ripped up the ticket.

GEORGE

(LOOKING AROUND) Where's the Coach?

PHIL

He's parking the car.

GEORGE

(TAKES CHICKEN AND STARTS TOWARD KITCHEN) I'd better put this in the oven.

PHIL

(HUGS GEORGE AND THEY BOTH EXIT INTO KITCHEN) Who do you love George?

JAMES

(CROSS TO BAR, PUTS BEER DOWN, CROSSES TO TOM, HE IS VERY ANNOYED) How're you doing? Stay sober, I may need you tonight.

TOM

When the shit hits the fan I'll be right behind you.

JAMES

You can handle this stuff in moderation, you can handle anything in moderation. (GEORGE ENTERS, GOES TO JAMES) He didn't say a word, evaded the subject completely.

GEORGE

Didn't he even mention?

PHIL

(ENTERS UPSTAGE OF COUCH) Chicken's in the oven.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO PHIL) Hey, Phil, did you bring along your dirty movies? (TO TOM) He's got pornographic movies the dirty bastard. I love him. I should arrest him.

PHIL

Arrest me? I rent them from your brother-in-law, the chief of police. The Police Department is a library for stag films.

GEORGE

(SITS ON STAGE LEFT ARM OF COUCH) He sells what he's confiscated. Isn't free enterprise something else?

PHIL

(CROSS DOWN BELOW COUCH, TRYING TO BE FUNNY) How do you think I raised the money for the Little League Fund? I rented the VFW, charged five bucks a head and showed Olga's massage parlor and selected shorts.

GEORGE

Rin Tin Tin Gets In!

JAMES

(TURNING TO BAR EMBARRASSED) Incredible, I couldn't believe my eyes!

PHIL

Who are you kidding? You went out and bought a German Shepard the next day.

COACH

(ENTERS FROM FRONT DOOR YELLING AND LAUGHING. THE MEN LINE UP BESIDE THE COUCH) Alright, line it up. Shape it. Twenty laps around the room, too much fat on the ass around here. I want my boys lean and mean. (WALKS AROUND PATTING AND PUSHING AND PUNCHING HIS BOYS. GRABS BOTTLE AND POURS HIMSELF A DRINK) A voice from the past boys, the old gunner can still bray with the best. Hit those boards hard Romano, and you Sikowski, don't just stand there with your finger up your you know what, MOVE! And you Daley, have a drink, and you Big Dailey, hustle some of this whiskey into you. Imported. Boil your brains this stuff. (POURS JAMES A DRINK).

GEORGE

You haven't changed in twenty years.

COACH

I haven't changed in sixty years! I can take the four of you around the court till you drop, run you into the ground. (PATS STOMACH) Even one eighty-five. Weighed that in 1940. (DOES TEN PUSHUPS ON FLOOR) And that's after having my belly cut open, twenty stitches. (OPENS SHIRT) Look at that S.O.B. Belly looks like a baseball. (LAUGHS).

JAMES

(CROSS BEHIND COUCH) What's the secret?

COACH

(TURNS TO JAMES) Walk softly and carry a big stick. Oh Christ boys, Christ it's so good, the joy in my heart to feel you around me again. Together again, can't find the words to say it. Magnificent. (A BEAT) A toast, to the 1952 Pennsylvania State High School Basketball Champions. (GEORGE CROSS BEHIND CHAIR STAGERIGHT, JAMES IN BACK OF STAGELEFT CHAIR, PHIL SITS ON STAGERIGHT ARM OF COUCH) You were a legend in your time boys, a legend. Never forget that never!

GEORGE

(ARM AROUND COACH) We owe it all to you Coach.

COACH

I used to tell people you boys were like a fine watch. My very expensive and fine watch that kept perfect time. You froze the ball against Tech for three minutes. Fantastic! (CROSS TO PHIL) Stay in shape. Lean and mean. You're in your thirties and that's the heart attack season boys. Most important muscle in your body the heart, keep it in shape, work it out.

GEORGE

(CROSS UP BEHIND TROPHY) Bought one of those exercise bikes Coach, keeps the stomach flat.

PHIL

But your ass is still down around your knees.

GEORGE

(SOMEWHAT OFFENDED) That's right start on me the old scape-goat.

TOM

You love it.

GEORGE

Yeah. (HALF-HEARTEDLY LAUGHS).

COACH

(GETS ANOTHER DRINK FROM BAR) Drink up boys, put it away,
nights young! Sit down! Relax!

(JAMES SITS IN STAGERIGHT CHAIR, PHIL SITS ON COUCH)

GEORGE

(SITS IN STAGELEFT CHAIR) Chicken is in the oven.

COACH

(MOVING TOWARD PHIL) You're looking a little pale Phil.

PHIL

(BORED) I'm an executive.

COACH

(CROSS TO JAMES) James, you're starting to sag a little
too, you look tired.

JAMES

I haven't been sleeping well Coach.

COACH

Why?

JAMES

(TURNING AWAY FROM COACH) My teeth.

COACH

(CONCERNED) What's the matter?

JAMES

(EMBARASSED) They're gone.

COACH

(SURPRISED) Gone?!

JAMES

(QUICKLY) They took them out last month.

COACH

(TRYING NOT TO LAUGH) You got plates?

JAMES

Yeah!

COACH

(SITS ON STOOL AND LOOKS INTO JAMES'S MOUTH) Let's see. Open your mouth. Uh-Uh, good job. They almost look real. (THE OTHER MEN LAUGH) Never had enough vitamin C in your diet.

JAMES

Try feeding five kids.

COACH

You didn't feed them your teeth did you? You need iron in your blood. I've got twenty seven originals. (SHOWS JAMES HIS TEETH AND THE OTHER MEN HOWL).

JAMES

(GETTING EVEN MORE EMBARRASSED) Actually, they've recently completed studies proving that nerves can cause severe damage to teeth.

COACH

Really! (RISES AND LAUGHS) Maybe you should have gotten your nerves out! Have another shot and relax James. (JAMES GOES TO BAR) Better put that chicken on low George. (GEORGE EXITS INTO THE KITCHEN) Tom...(CROSS TO TOM) I'm so goddam happy, grateful you're back with us again. Doesn't he look wonderful boys?

TOM

(UNEASY) NOTHING KEEPS THE OLD GUNNER DOWN either. (DRUNK).

COACH

(WALKING AROUND THE MEN, GEORGE ENTERS) You were a thing of rare beauty boys, life is a game and I'm proud to say I played it with the best. We were one flesh twenty years ago, never forget that so long as you live. (SITS ON COFFEE TABLE, FIGURE II) Ten seconds left on that clock, we were down by one point, remember?



FIGURE II.

(TRYING NOT)

Yeah!

(SITS ON
YOUR MOUTH
OTHER NEW)

Try feedi

You didn't
your pic
HIS TREAT

(GETTING
complete
damage to

Really?
your new
GOES TO
EXITS IN
happy,
wonder

(UNEASY)

(WALKING
tore h
it with
forgot
FIGURE
point,

GEORGE

(CROSS TO BEHIND COUCH) I passed inbounds to Tom.

TOM

I brought the ball up.

PHIL

(AS IF IN A TRANCE) Passed to me in the corner.

COACH

(EXCITED) Six seconds left!

JAMES

Across the court and I saw...

COACH

Three seconds left!

JAMES

Martin at the foul line!

GEORGE

Martin caught the ball and went up...he went up...

JAMES

UP!

COACH

One second!

GEORGE

Yes!

COACH

(JUMPING UP EXCITEDLY) State Champions! They said we couldn't do it boys. We beat a school three times our size. We beat them in Philadelphia. We performed the impossible boys, never forget that, never. Jesus, remember they had an eight foot nigger jumped like a kangaroo. (CROSS TO TROPHY AND PICKS IT UP) There's the trophy boys. (CROSS TO CENTER) Fast, Jesus, fast you were a flash of legs, gone like lightening.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO COACH) Martin was a pressure ball player.

COACH

He thrived on it, loved it.

JAMES

(CROSSING BEHIND COUCH) He had a great eye.

COACH

Priceless.

GEORGE

The perfect ball player.

COACH

(CROSS TO MARTIN'S PICTURE) Not a flaw. He made it all go, magnificent talent. (SADLY) Yeah, not a word in twenty years. (PUTS TROPHY BACK ON TABLE) Let's say a little prayer for him boys, a prayer that he's safe and happy and still a champion. (THEY ALL PRAY AND CROSS THEMSELVES) We never had a losing season boys, there's not many who can say that.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO COACH BRAGGING) Sharmen won't be able to say that after next month will he Coach?

COACH

(ARM AROUND GEORGE AND WALK HIM TO COUCH) He'll see politics played like he's never seen it played before. We'll run him into the ground, that little mockie is going to think...he's trying to ruin Phil. Put Phil out of business!

PHIL

(CROSS TO BAR AND GET DRINK) I strip-mine coal and the son-of-a-bitch makes me out to be a criminal.

COACH

Phil is one of the most respected businessmen in this town and this Sharmawitz is trying to ruin his good name. (SIT ON COUCH NEXT TO TOM) Cop ripped up that speeding ticket tonight when he recognized Phil.

PHIL

He knew you too Coach.

GEORGE

He attacked me!

TOM

Who, the cop?

GEORGE

Sharmen. I'm not prejudiced, live and let live. But that Jew attacked me in print, me, the mayor of the town.

TOM

He's running against you for Christsakes!

GEORGE

(TURNING TO TOM) There's still such a thing as respect for the office. He said I wasn't smart enough to be corrupt, in the papers. Do you believe that.

TOM

Yes.

COACH

Fashion politics, he's running on all the headlines.

PHIL

(SITS IN ARMCHAIR) The women love him, looks like Robert Goulet.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO CENTER STAGE) You can't beat experience. He said under my term this town took five giant steps in the past. Believe that? I gave this town four memorable years.

COACH

(CROSS TO GEORGE THEN TO BAR) And you'll give us four more! Like T.R. said, Teddy was fond of saying, "Never settle for less than success." And boys they carved that man's face in a mountain. They don't make Teddy's any more, a man among men, a giant. Took Panama from the spics boys, just walked in and took her. (LOOKS AT ROOSEVELT'S PICTURE).

TOM

(LIFTING GLASS) I'll drink to that feat.

COACH

(CROSSING BEHIND COUCH) And I'm proud to see all of you climbing to the top of your professions, politics, business, education, (PAUSE)...(TO TOM)...travel.

JAMES

(CROSS TO COACH) And there's only one man I know who's responsible for it and he's sitting right across from me.

(GEORGE SITS STAGE RIGHT CHAIR)

COACH

(SIT ON ARM OF CHAIR GEORGE IS IN) No, not me. You did it yourselves. Best advice I gave you, get yourself a name, remember? Listen up Phil, your Little League team lost its third in a row I hear.

PHIL

Lost my best pitcher and my center fielder.

COACH

Injured?

PHIL

They go to camp in June.

JAMES

(CROSS TO EDGE OF COUCH AND PLAY AREA) Use my James. He can play center field.

PHIL

He can't hit a curve.

JAMES

He's only twelve years old for God's sake.

PHIL

Work with him, he needs a lot of work.

JAMES

(IRRITATED) You're the Coach, not me. He learns fast.

PHIL

(BORED) I don't think he's interested if you want the truth.

JAMES

He's a gifted child.

COACH

Very smart.

JAMES

He has an I.Q. of 155.

PHIL

That's about two points higher than his batting average.

TOM

(DRUNK) Maybe you could trade him Phil?

JAMES

(TURNING ON TOM) It's not funny. (WHINING) The boy is first string material. His self esteem is being damaged not playing sitting on the bench.

COACH

George, get me a beer. (GEORGE EXITS INTO KITCHEN).

JAMES

(MOVING TOWARD COACH) He's just not your ordinary kid.

PHIL

He doesn't like the game.

JAMES

Not sitting on the bench.

TOM

James, he told me he didn't want to play ball.

JAMES

(CROSS TO CENTER STAGE) I want him to play.

TOM

He knows that but he doesn't share your enthusiasm.

JAMES

(CROSS TO BACK OF STAGE LEFT CHAIR) He's in that difficult age now. Avoids me. Keeps to himself. (GEORGE ENTERS WITH COACH'S BEER) I think he's masterbating.

TOM

(JUMPING UP) On the bench?!

JAMES

You're ridiculous!

COACH

Did you say anything?

JAMES

(JAMES SITS) What can I say? I certainly am not going to tell him those old horror stories. My father told us we'd go insane. Grow hair on the palms of our hands.

COACH

(PATS GEORGE ON THE REAR AND CROSSES TO JAMES) You kept it in your pants when you played for me.

JAMES

He'll do it, he will. I'll see to it. He's the cream of the crop that boy.

COACH

You keep him playing. You quit on the field you'll quit in life. It's on the playing fields the wars are won.

JAMES

He's good. He's a good boy, a respectful boy.

COACH

He couldn't be anything else being your son. You were the perfect son, you took care of your father.

JAMES

(LOOKING AT TOM) Someone had to do it.

COACH

(ON HIS SOAPBOX) There's no respect, no personal sacrifice, not today. There's not many who'd have made the sacrifices you did James.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO STAGE RIGHT END OF COUCH) There's a decline of respect, an absolute decline.

COACH

You see there's no discipline George.

GEORGE

The high school newspaper had a picture of a pig with Phil's name under it, believe that? Sharmen was behind that.

PHIL

(CROSS TO BAR TO GET DRINK) Number one threat to the environment. They called me that. The stupid bastards don't realize you can't kill a mountain. Mountains grow back.

GEORGE

I fixed it up Phil, don't forget that, don't worry about it.

PHIL

(CROSS TO STAGE RIGHT END OF COFFEE TABLE) What me worry? I could buy and sell those little bastards a hundred times. I got a shovel working for me now, looks like a dinosaur right?

GEORGE

(CROSS IN TO PHIL) I can still get you an apology in print.

PHIL

(SIT IN STAGE RIGHT CHAIR) I don't need it.

GEORGE

(FOLLOWS PHIL) I called the principal and gave him hell, chewed his ass out.

TOM

(JUMPS UP AND STARTS UP STAIRS) That's it! I've got it! That's your campaign poster George. A picture of you on your knees salivating. Caption, "I'll chew the ass out of unemployment." (EXITS UP THE STAIRS INTO BATHROOM)

GEORGE

(LAUGHING) I want him, hire that man. (OTHER MEN LAUGH)

TOM

(POPPING HEAD BACK IN) Where's the john?

COACH

Where it always was. (STANDS AND LOOKS AT TOM AS HE AGAIN EXITS).

JAMES

(VERY UNEASY ABOUT TOM) He was very sick. I think it's affected his memory. He's getting back into shape.

COACH

(CROSS UP TO STAIRCASE LANDING) Nothing's going to beat that boy. He's coming along, coming along. Let's put him to work on your campaign. Write press releases and speeches.

GEORGE

(LOOKING TO JAMES) My speech writer?

JAMES

I'd love it, but he's leaving. He bought his ticket he said.

COACH

Why?

JAMES

(COACH CROSSES TO JAMES) That's him, here today, gone tomorrow. Says he wants to leave by Sunday.

COACH

I'll talk to him. Give me an hour with him. Talk some sense into that boy's head.

GEORGE

We could use him.

PHIL

We need something, a miracle or something.

GEORGE

(CROSS DOWN STAGE) What does that mean Phil?

PHIL

It means we got problems.

GEORGE

(STANDING) Who?

PHIL

You. Us!

GEORGE

(CROSS INTO PHIL) I've got a great reputation, wonderful. This town loves me. Tell him how popular I am Coach.

COACH

(CROSS BEHIND COUCH) Let's hear Phil. Don't overestimate your strength George.

GEORGE

What?

COACH

(SIT ON STAGE LEFT SIDE OF COUCH) What I mean is never underestimate your opponent.

GEORGE

I'm putting this town back on it's feet again. (HE IS GETTING DESPERATE).

PHIL

(LAUGHING) Not with your taxes. A four percent increase in property tax? You were lucky you weren't hung.

GEORGE

(AGITATED) We were broke. The city was broke when I took over. We needed money, operating capital.

PHIL

(YELLING AT GEORGE) No work around, no money, taxes raised every year. People want change, look it's a small town forty maybe fifty...

JAMES

Fifty-four thousand is our total population. There is unemployment but it is below the national average.

GEORGE

(CROSSING UPSTAGE) You can't tell me that the working man isn't behind me.

PHIL

Working man! The ammunition plant closes in September.

GEORGE

Phil, I didn't end the war.

PHIL

(CROSSING TO FRENCH DOORS) Look, I'm only reciting past history. We had a garbage strike here lasted for five weeks. City smelled like a whorehouse.

JAMES

(TURNING TOWARD PHIL) George has given this city the finest playground facilities in the state. I mean the program is considered a model by other cities.

PHIL

(VERY FAST) And Sharmen has IBM ready to come in here tomorrow.

COACH

You bring those gigantic companies in here and in five years the briefcases will be running this town.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO PHIL) I'm popular. Extremely popular. Wasn't there five thousand people cheering in the rain when I opened the zoo?

PHIL

They were waiting to see the new elephant.

GEORGE

But (EXASPERATED) I bought the goddam thing!

PHIL

And it died in a month.

GEORGE

I'm the mayor, not a vet, how was I to know it was sick?

JAMES

I think what Phil is trying to say is that this...

GEORGE

(TURNING TO JAMES) I know...

PHIL

(CROSSING TO BAR) I know what I'm trying to say James. It took you a month to bury the goddam thing.

GEORGE

(CROSSING TO HIM) Ten days, not a month, ten days.

PHIL

(GETS DRINK) You could have burned the thing in a day.

GEORGE

(FRANTIC, CROSSES TO STAGE RIGHT END OF COUCH) You can't burn dead elephants, it's against the health laws. Don't you people know that?

COACH

The goddam thing drew more people dead than alive.

JAMES

(VERY MAD) Well, we got rid of it.

PHIL

(SARCASTICALLY) You advised him James!

GEORGE

(CROSS DOWNSTAGE) Yeah, I finally had to throw the damn thing down a mineshaft. Goddam city council made me look foolish.

PHIL

The newspapers weren't kind George. Had to rent a crane.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO STAGELEFT END OF TABLE) They came around after I called them up and chewed some ass.

PHIL

They called you Sabu for a month. It hurt your image.

GEORGE

(CROSS CLOSER TO PHIL) And I have a fantastic image in this town. If the city council was behind me I could get some action and you know it. How can I work with a divided council, the bastards.

COACH

(CROSS TO GEORGE AND PHIL) Trash it out boys, trash it out. Have another drink George. (GEORGE GETS HIMSELF A DRINK).

GEORGE

(CROSSING DOWNSTAGE TO CENTER) No riots in my streets, no niggers burning down my town.

PHIL

(SITS IN LAMPCHAIR) The last nigger here was Joe Louis and he was just passing through.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO STAGERIGHT CHAIR AND SITS) No radicals here, hippies, one rape in four years. One felony. My streets are safe any hour night or day.

JAMES

And we're not even sure she was raped!

COACH

Who?

GEORGE

(SHOUTING) The girl Mike Pollard raped. She had a glass eye, you remember.

JAMES

(CROSS TO BAR AND GET BEER) She claims he assaulted her. Forced ~~perverted~~ acts. Said he performed cunnilingus on her.

COACH

(GRABBING JAMES'S ARM) Cunny What?

JAMES

Oral sex. The male performing an oral act on the women.

COACH

(CROSS BEHIND COUCH AND JAMES CROSSES BACK TO HIS CHAIR AND SITS) Oh yes, (LAUGHS) oh yes, that's a fancy name for it.

PHIL

(TO HIMSELF) If that's a perversion I should be in a cage.

COACH

(CROSS CENTERSTAGE AND PLAYS AREA) Let's not get away from the subject boys, we are on a very serious subject here. I'm talking about dissension boys. I can sense dissension in this room. Dissension is destroying the country, tearing it apart. (TOM ENTERS AND COMES DOWN STAIRS AND AFTER BEING CONFRONTED BY THE COACH CROSSES TO BAR) You're George's speech writer. This country is hurting boys, hurting, so let's pull together here, TEAMWORK!

JAMES

Dangerous times all over.

COACH

(PREACHING) We are killing off the best, murdering off the best among us, gunning down the best we have, Kennedy, Killed by his own, such a waste!

JAMES

We don't take any care of our own. Bobby Kennedy too

GEORGE

(CROSS TO STAGELEFT END OF TABLE) They came around...

COACH

(CROSS TO McCARTHY PICTURE) They killed McCarthy boys, his own kind killed a great American. Looked under the rock and found the place infested with communists. Joe McCarthy. Turned his name into a dirty word. They kill the good ones boys, they kill them quick.

JAMES

It's been a tough decade.

COACH

It never changes. (STARTS CROSS TO TROPHY TABLE, SPEAKS WITH GREAT FERVOR) Father Coughlin, you're too young to remember, he told the truth about certain people. On the radio, international bankers, Jews, fellow travelers, and they muzzled him, a priest of God telling the truth and they put him away, exiled him. And that's a fact. We are the country boys, never forget that, never. Thousands of cities like ours, we fire the furnace, keep it going, (CROSS BEHIND GEORGE) Indispensable! But no dissension, none, stick together, we stick together and (GRABS GEORGE AND THEY SING AND DANCE TO CENTER STAGE) "They'll be a hot time in the old town come election night."

GEORGE

(SINGING AND DANCING WITH COACH) A hot time in the old town tonight. Come on you guys sing, sing, this is a reunion remember.

PHIL

You sing George.

GEORGE

(HOLDING ONTO THE COACH) Get the women Phil, I think he's getting horny.

COACH

I'll run them into the...(COACH HAS SEVERE PAIN IN HIS STOMACH, GEORGE, JAMES, HELP HIM TO SIT ON ARM OF STAGE LEFT CHAIR)...ground.

GEORGE

(HELPING COACH) What's the matter? Are you alright?

COACH

The chair. (HOLDING ONTO HIS STOMACH).

JAMES

Can you move? Take a drink. (HANDS COACH A DRINK).

PHIL

(STANDING) What is it?

COACH

My stomach.

PHIL

Do you have pills?

COACH

It comes and goes. I overdid it. Adhesions, that's all it is. The incision is healing.

GEORGE

What can we do?

COACH

(STARTING TO RISE) Give me a hand upstairs.

GEORGE

(TAKES COACH UPSTAIRS TO BEDROOM) I've got him.

COACH

(TURNING TO BOYS ON LANDING TRYING TO LAUGH) I'll put on that goddam girl girdle they gave me. It gives me a rash in this weather. It's nothing serious boys, it's only a healing pain, I'll be down in a few minutes.

PHIL

(FOLLOWING AFTER GEORGE AND COACH, STOPS) He didn't look good to me.

JAMES

All that dancing around. He gets like a boy. He overdid it.

PHIL

He looks yellow or something.

TOM

(CROSSING TO BAR TO GET A DRINK) He's sick!

JAMES

He overdid it!

GEORGE

(COMING OUT OF BEDROOM) He's alright. He's mixing something. Kelp? Says it's an organic painkiller. I'll stay with him. (EXITS INTO BEDROOM).

JAMES

Alright.

PHIL

(TO JAMES) Kelp?

JAMES

Yes, he doesn't believe in painkillers, no pills.

PHIL

(CROSS AND SIT ON COUCH) He is going to get ass-holed by Sharmen.

JAMES

(CROSS TO PHIL) Shhh. Why are you so down on him?

PHIL

(IRRITATED) Because he's a loser. Four years ago he beat that old alcoholic we had by thirty-two votes, remember, five recounts. You know it and I know it.

JAMES

(CROSSES BEHIND PHIL) Is that the only reason you're against him?

PHIL

Isn't that enough?

JAMES

(SLYLY) I thought it might be because you're having an affair with his wife.

TOM

(SITTING ON BAR STOOL) Christ James, not now!

JAMES

I'll handle this.

PHIL

(LOOKING UP AT JAMES) Who told you?

JAMES

(THREATENING) It could easily become common knowledge.

PHIL

(LIGHTING CIGARETTE) It's a rumor.

JAMES

(GRABBING PHIL'S SHOULDER) Don't deny it Phil.

PHIL

(CONFIDENT) She never got over me since high school.

TOM

(DRUNK) Old Marion, I hope she's improved with age.

JAMES

(TO TOM) You keep quite!

TOM

(DREAMILY) Humping Marion was part of the curriculum.

PHIL

Not when she went with me!

JAMES

(PHIL MOVES TO FRENCH DOOR AND JAMES FOLLOWS) Don't get involved with her Phil, she's sick, unstable.

PHIL

(TURNING TO JAMES) She was a great girl until she married that asshole.

JAMES

(POINTING TO BEDROOM WHERE GEORGE IS) That asshole stands between you and a complete business disaster.

PHIL

(TURNING AWAY) I know that, you think I don't know that.

JAMES

(CROSS BEHIND STAGELEFT CHAIR) You need him as much as he needs you.

PHIL

Sharmen needs contributions too.

JAMES

(CROSSING TO PHIL) Jesus, you'd do that, you'd jump to Sharmen.

PHIL

An investment. Politics is just another way of making money. Sharmen is no different than any other politician.

JAMES

(ANGRY) I don't care what you do with your private life, but when it endangers...

PHIL

You're in it for what you can get, a piece of the action, don't shit me!

JAMES

He's all we have right now.

PHIL

And he's not enough! (SILENCE) (PHIL SITS IN STAGERIGHT CHAIR AND LIGHTS A CIGARETTE).

JAMES

(CROSSES LEFT) There is another alternative. My career is politics Phil. I'm a political animal. I hoped to run as you know for school superintendent next year with George's endorsement. (MOVING CLOSER TO PHIL) I want you to realize that this is ahead of my time schedule and I only offer my candidacy because we seem to be faced with an insoluble crisis.

PHIL

(STUNNED) You're not serious.

JAMES

(SITS ON STOOL DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF PHIL) Run me Phil. I can carry this town.

PHIL

(STARTS TO RISE) Why don't you have a drink James.

JAMES

Somebody has to challenge Sharmen's charisma. (HOLDING PHIL DOWN).

PHIL

(TRYING NOT TO LAUGH) I'll have one with you.

JAMES

My reputation is spotless. I'm a respected public official. (DESPERATELY) Known all over town. George could be convinced.

PHIL

(STARTING TO LAUGH) I don't believe you're serious.

JAMES

I'm a seasoned politician!

PHIL

(LAUGHING) You, against Sharmen?

JAMES

(RISES AND SITS IN STAGELEFT CHAIR) I can be mayor of this town.

PHIL

(LEANING INTO JAMES) Half the time, more than half, it was your advice that turned George into the village idiot.

JAMES

Phil, I kept his head above water, he suggested stuffing the elephant and putting it into the museum.

PHIL

(WITH GREAT PITY) James, take a look at yourself. Take an honest look. Sharmen is popular, he's young, new, he's poised. You're a school principal, and you work for the mayor, a patronage job.

GEORGE

(ENTERS FROM BEDROOM CARRYING BASKETBALL) He's putting on his girdle. Recognize this, huh? (THROWS BALL TO PHIL WHO SHOOTS TO JAMES WHO THROWS TO TOM, TO GEORGE, AND AGAIN TO TOM).

TOM

Can't get the rhythm going without Martin.

GEORGE

(TAKING BALL) But it's still there. All we need is some practice. James tell them my campaign slogan.

JAMES

Not now George.

GEORGE

(COMING CENTER STAGE) "Four more years of serenity and progress." Don't you think it has a ring of security about it?

PHIL

If you have a choir of angels singing it.

GEORGE

(PLAYING AREA) It'll be expensive, we saturate the local stations with it, billboards etc. etc.

JAMES

Later George, this is not the time.

GEORGE

(CROSSING TO TOM) We have a whole new image for me. A grass roots guy. Show me moving among the people, no egghead, dynamic shots.

JAMES

(VERY AGITATED) George will you please-

GEORGE

I'm dynamite on television!

JAMES

(SHOUTING) George will you shut up a minute please!

GEORGE

(TO JAMES) What's the matter, has something gone wrong here.

JAMES

Phil has serious doubts about us.

GEORGE

What!?

JAMES

(LOOKING AT PHIL) He doesn't think we can beat Sharmen.

GEORGE

(MOVING TOWARD JAMES) Not after he hears the piece of very hot news me and the Coach picked up last week.

JAMES

(RISING) What are you talking about.

GEORGE

(THROWS BALL TO JAMES SO THAT HE FALLS BACK INTO THE CHAIR)
My ace in the whole James, me and the Coach kept it even from you. A little research goes a long way my friends.
(CROSSES TO PHIL) Sharmen's uncle was a communist, New York Times, June fifth, 1952. A blacklisted writer, Hollywood.

PHIL

Old News. No one even cares anymore. He's probably dead.

GEORGE

He is!

PHIL

(RISES AND CROSSES TO FRENCH DOORS) Can't hurt Sharmen.

GEORGE

In this town he's dead with a resume like that.

JAMES

(RISING AND CROSSING TO GEORGE) Are you sure George? Are you absolutely sure, not a shadow?

GEORGE

(CROSS TO BEHIND STAGELEFT CHAIR) Uncontestable. The Coach can give you more details. Well Phil, (CROSSES TO PHIL) how do you stand now? There was a communist in his family.

PHIL

(TURNING TO GEORGE) Times have changed. I can't depend on a hate vote. Nobody knows or cares about his dead communist uncle.

JAMES

(MOVING IN) It's a whole new ballgame Phil.

PHIL

(MOVING DOWN TO BOOKCASE) Ancient History!

JAMES

It's gotta hurt him.

PHIL

(TURNING TO JAMES) Wake up it's 1972 already.

JAMES

(JAMES CROSSES TO GEORGE) George has taken good care of you Phil.

PHIL

(STEPS IN ANGRY) I paid for it. My money got him elected last time.

JAMES

There's more to it than that and you know it.

PHIL

Is there?

JAMES

(CONFRONTING PHIL, VERY ANGRY) Yes there is. See this suit? One hundred dollars, yours is tailor made, three hundred huh?

PHIL

(TAKING GREAT PLEASURE IN SAYING THIS WORD) Four!

JAMES

I have a ten year old Ford and you get a new Cadillac every year. Five kids. One a genius maybe. I support my alcoholic brother.

TOM

(STANDING) Wait a minute!

JAMES

Shut up! You're an alcoholic, a marathon drunk. I am working my ass off for George's victory because I want a share of the spoils. I am a talented man being swallowed up by anonymity and I want my share.!

PHIL

(VERY ANGRY AND VERY FAST) You two guys fucked up, share that!

JAMES

What's the next step Phil, lunch with Sharmen?

PHIL

You sonofabitch!

GEORGE

(CROSS TO JAMES) James, calm down.

JAMES

Betrayal, it's nothing less than betrayal!

PHIL

Listen to me don't you talk about betrayal to me, not after...

JAMES

Don't you understand. (THIS WHOLE DIALOGUE OVERLAPS AND BUILDS IN SPEED AND INTENSITY).

PHIL

Don't talk to me about betrayal...

JAMES

Why are you so thick?!

PHIL

Can I help it if you're nobody?

JAMES

Pig headed!

PHIL

Go on welfare! (ALMOST HITTING JAMES)

JAMES

(GIVES LINE AND DASHES TO BAR) He's fucking your wife George, that's why he won't support you.

GEORGE

(TURNING TO JAMES) Fucking who? What?

JAMES

Your wife, Marion! (TURNS TO TOM, TOM LOOKS AWAY).

GEORGE

(DISBELIEVING) When? Why?

PHIL

(TO JAMES) That's not why I won't support him.

GEORGE

Wait a minute (GRABBING PHIL) You did what with Marion?

PHIL

(PULLING AWAY) George we had a thing, it just happened!

GEORGE

(STUNNED) Marion. Unfaithful. I'm the mayor for Christakes.

PHIL

This was the wrong thing to do.

GEORGE

(STUNNED, STARTS TO BAR) I need a drink. (SEES GUN AND GRABS IT FROM THE RACK, POINTS IT AT PHIL). You should be dead, wiped away like a dirty stain!

JAMES

(STARTING TOWARD GEORGE) George my intention was not...

GEORGE

I know your intention. (TO PHIL, VERY SERIOUS) You prey on people you fucking animal. Dead. You dirty dumb dago fucking animal bastard.

COACH

(ENTERS WITH RECORD) Boys here's the record, I hope I got a good needle. (SEES GEORGE WITH GUN, FIGURE III). Watch it, she's loaded.

(JAMES AND TOM START SLOWLY TOWARD GEORGE).

GEORGE

I'm going to put Phil out of his misery.

COACH

(SCARED) What's the matter, what's happened boys?

TOM

George, the safety is on.

SPECIAL NOTE: On Wednesday and Thursday night of performance the first and second act was run together. For the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday performances, the act break was taken at a point that will be noted later in this chapter. Technically, this is the end of act one according to the script.

GEORGE

Fucking animal!



FIGURE III.

COACH

That's a hair trigger, it's loaded. I keep them loaded.

GEORGE

Dumb dangerous animal!

JAMES

(MOVING CLOSER TO GEORGE) Why don't you put the gun down George.

TOM

Yeah! We give up. (TAKES A DRINK).

JAMES

You've got your career to think of. Killing Phil isn't worth it.

COACH

(STARTS A SLOW CROSS TO GEORGE) Don't lose your poise boy. Be a man and (TAKES GUN FROM GEORGE) Give me the gun. (AT THIS POINT GEORGE BREAKS DOWN AND CRY. THE COACH SITS HIM DOWN ON THE LANDING) It's alright, sit here, okay, easy boy. Get him some Scotch, whiskey. (TOM GETS GEORGE A DRINK) We'll work it out. Put our heads together.

GEORGE

I couldn't even shoot the fucking pig.

COACH

You've had too much to drink, can't hold it. (GIVES HIM A DRINK) You've got a load of tension in you boy. Tense. Take deep breaths. George, breathe deeply.

TOM

(CROSSES AND SITS ON STAGE LEFT END OF COUCH) Maybe he should do some pushups, run in place.

COACH

Now, can we talk George?

GEORGE

Yes.

COACH

(STANDING BESIDE GEORGE) Fine. Now let's get to the bottom of this. What happened between you and Phil?

GEORGE

(TURNS AWAY FROM COACH) It's a private thing.

COACH

(CROSSING TO PHIL) Private! Nothing's private. There hasn't been anything private between the people in this room for twenty years.

JAMES

Phil is...

PHIL

Look I...

GEORGE

(STANDING AND CROSSING TO COACH) It's my wife. I'll tell it. It's my story. Right Phil old pal, friend, great guy, prick!

COACH

George!

GEORGE

(BACKING AWAY FROM COACH) I'm all right. Calm. (TWO STEPS LEFT) Phil is having an affair with my wife, Marion.

COACH

Your Marion?

GEORGE

My Marion.

COACH

(COMES TO GEORGE) Continue George.

GEORGE

I saved the man's business, put my political future on the line...(STARTS TO PHIL) I trusted my friend. (LUNGES AT PHIL) You prick!

COACH

(COACH STOPS GEORGE AND THROWS HIM INTO JAMES'S ARMS) Get some air George. Take him out onto the porch James. (JAMES AND GEORGE EXIT ONTO PORCH) Is this true Phil?

PHIL

(SITS IN STAGERIGHT CHAIR) It's over Coach, you know it just happened.

COACH

No, I don't know because I've never laid my friend's wife. (ANGRY) What in Christ's name are you playing boy, huh?

GEORGE

(TRYING TO ENTER ROOM BUT JAMES HOLDS ONTO HIM) He's nothing but a whore!

COACH

(TRYING TO CALM GEORGE) Enough now.

GEORGE

An old diseased whore!

COACH

(CROSSING TO STEPS) I said enough! (BACK TO PHIL) You're pussy whipped boy, pussy whipped. Get some discipline. You think with your cock and it's going to ruin you boy, ruin you quicker than Sharmen. Understand me? (GRABBING PHIL'S ARM) Somebody is going to scatter you some day, all over the ground and goddamit there are people being hurt, people who have their whole lives invested in this game you're playing. (BACKS AWAY) I'm stunned, shocked, I'm damn glad I have a good heart because this...

GEORGE

(CRASHING INTO ROOM) Did she tell you you were the best Phil huh? Was she good? Tell your friends you dumb dago!

COACH

(CROSSING UPSTAGE) Get him in here. You'll announce it to the whole neighborhood.

GEORGE

Sex maniac! I want to know if my wife was a good lay!

COACH

(TO GEORGE) What's wrong with you, it's none of your business.

GEORGE

What! (JAMES SITS GEORGE DOWN ON BENCH UPSTAGE).

COACH

(COACH SIT IN STAGE LEFT CHAIR) What happened from beginning to end!

PHIL

She was in my office one day and...

COACH

When?

PHIL

Last month. She came to see me about campaign money.

GEORGE

(TO JAMES) She went to all the businessmen in town!

TOM

Wonder how much she raised!

JAMES

(POINTING TO TOM) I'm warning you!

PHIL

We talked, had some drinks, it just happened!

GEORGE

(RISING) Right there in the office for Chrissakes?

PHIL

It's a private office.

COACH

On the floor?

PHIL

(RISE AND CROSS TO TOM) I have a couch in there. I asked her if she wanted to uh...uh...

TOM

(START CROSS TO BAR) FUCK! The word is fuck!

PHIL

Shut up! And she said yes.

COACH

Just like that, like buying uh...butter. Christ Marion never struck me as being a whore.

GEORGE

(START CROSS DOWNSTAGE) Now wait a minute!

COACH

(RISE AND CROSS TO PHIL) Jesus, you're really something. You're some dago. Did you take her clothes off.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO FRONT OF STAGERIGHT CHAIR) Now wait a minute!

COACH

(TURN TO GEORGE) I'm trying to establish who made the first advance

PHIL

I don't remember Coach!

TOM

(SIT ON LAMPCHAIR) This is better than Rin Tin Tin Gets In.

PHIL

(SIT ON EDGE OF TABLE) We had a few drinks.

COACH

I see what you did. You doubled her drinks, got her high on booze and memories and humped her on the floor!

GEORGE

The couch goddammit!

COACH

Enough said! You turn on each other and you don't have a chance alone, not a solitary chance.

GEORGE

She's not a whore!

COACH

Nobody said she was. You need each other boys and...

GEORGE

(CROSS RIGHT) I don't need him!

COACH

I'm talking about survival. (CROSS TO GEORGE) I'm talking about survival in the twentieth century.

GEORGE

(NOT LISTENING) I'm done with him.

COACH

You can't make it alone, not anymore. Gone forever are those days, gone.

GEORGE

(TO COACH) You can't after what's happened expect me...

COACH

I didn't rot and die in the hospital...

GEORGE

Even to talk to...

COACH

Because I had you boys with me...

GEORGE

Phil has betrayed everything and...

COACH

(SCREAMING) I wasn't alone. I had you boys with me. They didn't experiment on me with their needles, no sir. I had you around me.

JAMES

George, the point he's trying to make...

GEORGE

I know the point I know it, but it doesn't apply to me, this situation.

COACH

(TURN TO GEORGE) I never could deal with ignorance George, it disgusts me.

GEORGE

(CROSS TO COACH) He took advantage (PAUSE) Of my wife!
(SIT IN STAGERIGHT CHAIR) She hasn't been the same since the baby. Never got over it. She resents me for putting it away and I wanted to adopt a child. I told her, adopt right away.

COACH

(COMFORTS GEORGE) You did the right thing. No man in this room faults you. (TURNS TO JAMES) Right?

JAMES

Speaking for myself I couldn't see any other way.

GEORGE

(CRYING) I had chances to be unfaithful. The widows when they cashed in their policies. I could have fucked fifty widows, it was there! They wanted somebody to keep them company.

COACH

(DURING THE COURSE OF THIS SPEECH, PLAY THE WHOLE ROOM AND RELATE TO EVERY MAN AT SOME POINT, ENDING UP AT THE BOOK-CASES NEAR JAMES) Booze and women! I tried to protect you from it. I got the Jesuits, got the Jesuits to give you scholarships, got the Jesuits to teach you boys. They all wanted me to become a Jesuit. My father said the Jesuits were the scholars of the Church.

But, I liked my women, my booze, and after a while I had my mother. I was all she had. Someday I said, someday I'll marry. But time does strange things. It's high tide before you know it, as my father said high tide!

Miss Morris? Remember her, the music teacher? We knew each other for years biblically. Used to visit her on Saturday afternoons. She'd make me honey biscuits. A very cultured woman, Protestant. Would never think of becoming a Catholic, my mother was alive then, couldn't bring her here. She read poetry and smoked cigarettes, and she could hump like a hundred dollar whore and she loved me on those Saturday afternoons. Fell dead in the streets seven years ago. (PAUSE) I never had the time. Teaching the game was not just a profession, it was a vocation, like a Priest, devoted my life to excellence, superiority. So don't come apart before my eyes boys. Not in front of me because you boys, you are my real trophies, never forget that, NEVER!

JAMES

(CROSS TO COACH) Every man in this room realizes that Coach.

COACH

Never settle for less than success!

JAMES

I still hear that in my sleep.

COACH

(CROSS TO TROPHY) That's a philosophy of life boys, not a slogan, a philosophy! We got a challenge coming up. We beat them by the rules. Pride. Loyalty. Teamwork. No other way.

TOM

BEAT THE JEW, BEAT THE JEW, BEAT THE JEW, GOOOO-GENTILES!

JAMES

(CROSS TO COACH, GIVES LINE TO TOM) You are ridiculous!

TOM

I'm absurd, are you kidding.

COACH

Why don't you take a walk Tom.

TOM

I took one remember?

COACH

But you came back.

PHIL

(CROSS TO BAR AND GET DRINK) I can't support George.

COACH

(FOLLOWS HIM) You will Phil after you hear some news...

GEORGE

I told him already about Sharmen.

COACH

Do you want to win this campaign George?

GEORGE

I don't need him

COACH

I didn't ask you that, I asked you if you wanted to win!

GEORGE

Yes I do but no...

COACH

Then you have to pay the price.

TOM

Who pays what? Huh? I mean what price, what is it?

COACH

(CROSS TO TOM) Pain! The price is pain. You endure pain to win, a law of life, no other way, none. The pain in my gut! It's been there all my life. It's good to hurt. The mind overcomes pain. You keep your marriage George, hold onto it. (PAUSE AND TURN TO PHIL) We're waiting for your answer Phil.

PHIL

I have to protect myself!

JAMES

You've already made your decision haven't you Phil.

COACH

(GRABS PHIL AND HUGS HIM) Not Phil, not my Phil, why ya big moose I had to keep a bed check on you in high school make sure you were in your own bed.

PHIL

(BREAKS FROM COACH AND CROSSES CENTER) Look I'm sorry but Sharmen's uncle could today be the head of the Red Army and he'd still beat George

COACH

He was a Commie!

PHIL

I don't even know if that's true.

COACH

(CROSS TO PHIL) When have I ever lied to you, or you, or anyone?

PHIL

No, what I mean is, so what?

COACH

(SITS ON COUCH) FBI Committee came through the school in the fifties. McCarthy was in his heyday then on television. They asked about the uncle, very casual. I knew what was up, I didn't know the man, never met him. They said good-bye and that was that. I forgot all about it until I was flat on my back in that hospital. We researched it and discovered the whole truth!

PHIL

Why didn't you say something about it back in the fifties?

COACH

Why hurt a young boy? He wasn't a communist!

TOM

Why hurt him now?

COACH

He's on the other side now!

JAMES

(MOVES BEHIND THE COUCH) He's opposition!

PHIL

(SITS ON COUCH BESIDE COACH) I'm telling you, public opinion wants George back in the insurance business.

JAMES

(CROSS CENTERSTAGE) Public opinion is changed every day.

TOM

He's right you know, an hour listening to this shit and I'm ready to campaign for Sharmen.

COACH

(TURN TO TOM) I don't like that kind of talk here you!

JAMES

(CROSS TO COACH) It's the liquor talking Coach. Go to sleep, you're drunk.

TOM

(STARTING TO RISE) I would but I think I pissed myself.

JAMES

(TURNING AWAY) Oh Christ!

TOM

I think I should go upstairs.

JAMES

Well go up for God's sake.

TOM

(STANDING) Is it still in the same place? No. False alarm, I spilled my drink.

COACH

(GOES TO TOM AND HOLDS HIM) Don't let the booze beat you boy. I'm behind you. Stand on your own two feet like the man you are!

GEORGE

(RISING AND STARTING UPSTAIRS) Do you mind if I go first? My stomach.

TOM

(SITS) After you, your honor.

GEORGE

(ON LANDING OF STAIRS) I expect that nothing will be settled without consulting me.

JAMES

(CROSS TO BEHIND STAGELEFT END OF COUCH) I want to say now, especially for Phil's benefit, that what I did tonight was done, not for personal reasons, but for the good of us all.

COACH

We all know that James. (POURS PHIL A DRINK) Here, have a drink Phil.

PHIL

Yeah.

JAMES

(CROSS TO RIGHT OF PHIL) Let me explain. I felt only the truth would bring us together again. I wouldn't hurt you intentionally for the world Phil.

PHIL

You don't have to convince me James.

COACH

He took the 5th amendment eleven times. A communist came through here 1930 maybe, bad times. Poverty like a plague. Joyces's across the street killed and ate their horse, gave some of it to my mother. He came to organize. We broke his legs, broke his legs with a two by four and sent him packing.

PHIL

Things have changed today.

COACH

Nothing has changed. Communists are at work today. Worse! Students burning down colleges. They're bringing home a defeated army, kill you in the womb today, in the womb, worse than in the 30's. Niggers shooting the police. Government gone bad, and there's no McCarthy to protect us.

JAMES

He's out to get you Phil. (SITS ON ARM OF COUCH).

COACH

(LEANING INTO PHIL) He wants to ruin you boy.

TOM

(PATHETICALLY) He's a Jew, that's good enough to beat him in this town.

COACH

He's a smart Jewboy!

TOM

Why smear him with this communist thing?

COACH

Who's smearing, we are telling the truth. We win within the rules.

JAMES

He's not smearing Phil?

COACH

(TOM CROSSES TO COACH) Exploiting a man's weakness is the name of the game. He can't move to the left you left him to death. Can't stop a hook you hook away at him. Find his weak spot and go after it. Punish him with it. I drilled that into you a thousand times.

JAMES

My brother is accusing us of guilt by association.

TOM

(CROSS TO JAMES) Wrong, guilt by accident. He can't choose his uncle.

COACH

You think that dirty kike wouldn't use Marion against us? Wave her at us like a dirty flag?

TOM

Maybe she wouldn't!

JAMES

(CROSS BEHIND COUCH TO TOM) Look, he took the fifth amentment eleven times.

TOM

I've lived my life taking the fifth. So have you James. Everybody along the line, one time or another.

JAMES

(CROSS TO BAR AND GET DRINK) There was a communist in his family and that is all we are interested in.

TOM

(SAYING THE LINE ON HIS WAY UP THE STAIRS) The Jesuits would be very pissed at you James. (ON THE LANDING) I expect that nothing will be settled without consulting me.

SPECIAL NOTE: For the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night performances, this line was used as the final line in the first act. The lights onstage dimmed on a five count and the actors exited offstage as the music came up. The lights came up in the house.

ACT TWO

(THE LIGHTS COME UP ONSTAGE ON A TEN COUNT, THE ACTORS ARE IN PLACE. THE ACTION IS CONTINOUS ONSTAGE.)

COACH

(CROSS TO BAR) Breaks my heart to see him come apart like that, a tragedy. (TURNING BACK TO PHIL) It's up to you Phil.

PHIL

I'm not convinced. I can't take a chance on him. Can't you realize that if I lose that business I'm nothing. It's too late, there's nowhere to start over.

JAMES

(CROSS TO PHONE AND PICK IT UP) Call him Phil, right now.

PHIL

Who?

JAMES

Sharmen, you're planning to do it anyway!

PHIL

You're full of shit.

JAMES

(HOLDS PHONE OUT TO PHIL) Do it in front of us. Offer him a contribution. Call 953-8220.

(GEORGE COMES OUT OF BEDROOM AND STANDS IN THE DOORWAY)

PHIL

How come you know his number?

JAMES

Don't you try to insinuate against my loyalty. I called him about a picture in a high school newspaper of a pig. (STARTS TO PUT PHONE BACK) Oh forget it. He probably wouldn't take a contribution from you anyway.

PHIL

(GRABS PHONE AND DIALS NUMBER) Hello Norman? This is the number one threat to the environment. That's right Phil Romano, the friendly pollutionist. It's all politics right? Listen I'll come right out and say I like your style. In fact I'd like to talk over your campaign with you. What? Oh, everybody needs a little help now and then. (LAUGHS) Money's tight don't forget. I've been known to make a few political contributions in my time. What? But, no, no. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, it's that simple. (LEANING FORWARD) Is that so? How's your uncle the communist huh? You won't be laughing so hard when you read about it in the newspapers. (GETTING MAD) You listen to me you kike bastard, listen! (SLAMMING PHONE DOWN AND TURNING TO JAMES) It was his cousin, NOT HIS UNCLE! (CROSS TO FRENCH DOORS) Christ Almighty.

COACH

It's still in the family, we can still use it.

PHIL

(PACING BACK AND FORTH) He laughed at me, fucking kike. You made me blow it James, you pushed me into blowing it!

JAMES

Phil listen, if I wasn't your friend...

PHIL

(CROSSING TO JAMES) Don't shit me, my money made my friends. Without my money you wouldn't piss on me if I was on fire. My old man's money, everybody got laid in the back seat of my car.

COACH

(CROSS TO PHIL) No goddam mockie is gonna beat us on our home court. The crowd loves you.

PHIL

Politics is not basketball!

COACH

Hell yes! You get the crowd behind you and you can't lose. Everybody votes for a winner boys, you know that.

PHIL

(CROSS IN FRONT OF TROPHY) We can't sit around here fingering the past. Nobody but us remembers that game and...

COACH

(GRABBING PHILS ARM) Cop stopped us tonight and ripped up that ticket, took one look at me. He remembered that we gave this town something to be proud of, a victory, we won the town that year boys.

PHIL

I'm no dummy and I know you can't fight progress.

COACH

(PULLING AWAY) Progress? Nothing changes but the date.

GEORGE

(COMING DOWN STAIRS) Put a Jew in my place and you'll get progress alright!

COACH

Jews ruin a country. Nobody says this out loud, but many think it. People never forget, they know.

JAMES

(CROSSING TO COACH) I think we should go easy on Sharmen being Jewish. It could be labeled anti-semitism.

COACH

(CROSS DOWNSTAGE OF JAMES AND PLAY AREA) Yea Isreal. I'm all for Isreal, give that one-eyed son-of-a-bitch the seventh day and he'd have blown those greasy Arabs off the face of the earth. Arabs are communists, wash their hair in camel piss. Let the Jews blow them the hell away. James, there are good and bad in every race. Nobody's anti anything. Some of the greatest athletes in the world were Jews. Sid Luckman, magnificent. Nobody could punch like Barney Roose pound for pound, Jesse Owens alone beat the goddam Germans, a splendid nigger, fast as the wind, but as a rule watch them, can't trust them, Jews the same.

TOM

(AT TOP OF STAIRS) My friends, I leave you with these words of wisdom. In the kingdom of the blind, (HE FALLS DOWN THE STAIRS AND HITS HIS HEAD. THE MEN RUSH TO GET HIM)

COACH

Don't move him, broken bones.

JAMES

Tom, are you alright?

GEORGE

Maybe he's knocked out!

JAMES

Can you hear me Tom?

COACH

Put him on the couch.

(GEORGE, JAMES, AND THE COACH CARRY TOM TO THE COUCH. HE LIES THERE WITH HIS HEAD ON THE STAGE LEFT END OF THE COUCH)

TOM

Somebody just fell down the stairs over there. James this drinking in moderation is murder.

COACH

Get him a drink. (JAMES GETS TOM A DRINK).

TOM

Get him a drink! The one-eyed man is king before I was so rudely interrupted.

COACH

None of you can hold your liquor. Drink like women. You'll be squatting to piss next.

PHIL

(CROSS TO COACH) I want to talk to you alone Coach.

COACH

Are you sober?

PHIL

Yes.

COACH

Come on out on the porch. (THEY EXIT).

GEORGE

(LOOKING AFTER THEM) I don't trust Phil. Something's up.

JAMES

Let's let the Coach handle it.

TOM

WHY NOT! He's handled everything else!

GEORGE

(LEAN INTO TOM) We have nothing more to say to one another, ever!

TOM

Fuck you and the horse you rode in on as my old grandmother used to say. (GRABBING GEORGE'S FACE) Love you George, how is the little woman huh?

JAMES

Shut up you insensitive son-of-a-bitch!

GEORGE

(GRABBING TOM'S THROAT) You think I don't feel things, you think the old clown doesn't have deep feelings huh? Phoney bullshit artist huh? None of you knows what goes on in my head, nobody knows. I can understand, understand what makes people, makes a man take a gun and go up in a tower and start blowing people apart. I know that feeling. All smiles huh? I have rage in me. I hate, hate like everybody else, hate things. I could have taken his head off.

TOM

Why didn't you?

GEORGE

(CROSS TO STAIRS) He wasn't worth it. I have a career to think about. (CROSS TO LAMPCHAIR AND SIT) In the hospital, looked like something that floats, in formaldehyde. Freakish blue eyes.

JAMES

This is not the time George.

GEORGE

(CRYING) We put it away, boy, never even named it. Institutionalized it. Coach advised me, us, to give it up. I pay four hundred a month.

JAMES

What else could you do George? (HOLDS GEORGE)

GEORGE

A child like that, mongoloid, doesn't help my career.

TOM

(RISE AND CROSS TO BAR) I need a drink.

GEORGE

It casts a reflection, unfavorable to my image. People get suspicious, advised me to put it away immediately.

TOM

(CROSS AND SIT ON STAGELEFT END OF COUCH) You lose the mongoloid vote hands down and...

JAMES

George, don't get drunk, we have to make some important decisions tonight.

GEORGE

I can't get drunk enough. I don't need that bitch either. We were going to renew our vows on our fifteenth wedding anniversary...on the altar.

TOM

Why don't we stone her?

JAMES

(TO TOM) Shut up!

TOM

That's an old Jewish George.

GEORGE

(LUNGES AT TOM KNOCKING DRINK OUT OF HIS HAND) Why are you doing this to me?

TOM

Stop leaking all over everybody. Stop the tragic act and take the money. Stop this, dishonesty.

GEORGE

(GRABBING TOM) You always thought I was a phoney didn't you.

JAMES

(HOLDING GEORGE AWAY) Don't pay any attention.

TOM

(FALLING BACK ON COUCH) Unfuckingbelievable!

JAMES

(HOLDING ONTO GEORGE) George, the Coach is out there trying to convince Phil to back us. Now I know he can do it. The question is, will you accept the money from Phil? Now I think we should consider...

TOM

Would you accept the money if it was Helen?

JAMES

Son-of-a-bitch I'm not...

GEORGE

(BESIDE JAMES) Yes, wait a minute, how about that question?

JAMES

I'm not in any such situation, it wouldn't apply.

GEORGE

(GRABBING JAMES) Be me James, imagine yourself me and a friend, boy you grew up with, champions, was fucking your wife, imagine that awhile.

JAMES

(PULLING AWAY) It wouldn't happen.

GEORGE

Pretend, just pretend you're me and answer me, would you take the money?

JAMES

(CROSSING BEHIND COUCH, VERY FRUSTRATED) Yes I'd take it, take it all!

TOM

The Jesuits would be very pissed at you James.

JAMES

You're nothing but a complete and total disgrace. All cheap cynicism and booze.

TOM

Don't lets do my biography tonight James.

JAMES

(LOSING CONTROL) I saved your life boy!

TOM

(POINTING TOWARD PORCH) You sound like him boy!

JAMES

Saved your life and now I'm trying to save what's left of mine so stay out of it.

GEORGE

(MAUDLIN) Stop it, don't fight, brothers should love, take care of one another.

JAMES

(TOM CROSSES TO BAR) I carried him all my life, carried everybody. I'm exhausted at 38.

TOM

(CROSSING TO JAMES) James never did anything out of love. James never loved anything. He's just obedient, an obedient man, push a button...

JAMES

(SITS IN STAGELEFT CHAIR) No one is listening!

TOM

And shoulders a responsibility. But he can't sleep at night and his teeth fall out.

GEORGE

(SITTING ON ARM OF COUCH) I'm 38 years old, used to be the most popular boy in school, used to have a 32 inch waist, used to have friends. Everything is in the past tense. I'm in the past tense.

JAMES

Your future is politics George!

GEORGE

I can't find myself. I lose myself behind all the smiles and handshakes and speeches. I don't think I'm the man I wanted to be. I seem to be somebody else. I always, can't stop looking at myself.

JAMES

(RISE AND CROSS TO GEORGE) It's all the way you look at things George, your angle of vision. Take Marion for example, she may have gone to Phil, did what she did, I'm not condoning it, but she may have, (PAUSE) with Phil, did it for the money.

GEORGE

Why?

JAMES

Support you. Help you. It's entirely possible, it's in the realm of possibility.

GEORGE

She was devoted to my career. (CROSS TO STAIR RAILING) I don't know, maybe I don't even care.

JAMES

It's been done before.

GEORGE

She always said he couldn't be trusted, use the slob!

JAMES

She probably recognized the problem before we did.

GEORGE

I wouldn't put it past her, you could be right, yes, you could.

TOM

(SIT IN LAMPCHAIR) I think she humped him out of plain old lust George.

GEORGE

I'll see you when I'm sober for that remark.

JAMES

(START TO CROSS TO TOM) See what he does to me, me who went to another city to find him. He called and I went to another city to find him, how many times? How many cities? You were nothing but filth and rags, I carried you, picked you up and carried you screaming into a hospital!

TOM

Nobody held a gun!

JAMES

I had no choice!

TOM

Only drunks like me have no choice James.

JAMES

(CROSS TO PHONOGRAPH) Do you know what the old man left me? He left me when he finally died, six thousand in medical bills and twelve hundred for the funeral, and me, old faithful ends up ten years behind everybody else and for what.

GEORGE

We all respect you for what you've sacrificed, well you know.

JAMES

Mediocrity, my son Jimmy, the bright one asked me what it meant. Definition of the word mediocrity. It means of low excellence. You know why he asked me, because that's what he thinks of me, how he sees me, how I'm beginning to see myself.

GEORGE

(LEANING ON JAMES) The school super job is all yours after the election.

JAMES

That's only the beginning. I found my talent late in life. I didn't get into politics until I was over thirty, but there's always Congress in the distance George, and I'm going to make my stand in the political arena.

PHIL

(ENTERS AND CROSSES TO BAR) He wants to talk to you George!

GEORGE

Me?

PHIL

Yeah.

GEORGE

NO! (STARTS UP THE STAIRS).

PHIL

He's waiting.

(GEORGE EXITS ONTO PORCH WITH THE COACH)

TOM

(AFTER A LONG PAUSE) The suspense is killing.

PHIL

Like before a game. Drink? (POURS TOM A DRINK).

TOM

Thank you.

JAMES

George will accept the money Phil.

PHIL

Good, (TO TOM) Ice?

TOM

NO!

JAMES

How are you disposed?

PHIL

You mean how do I feel about it? Iffy. It's all iffy.

JAMES

What does the Coach say?

PHIL

(CROSS SIT ON STAGE LEFT END OF COUCH) We got a town of dress factories right, car lots, bars and empty mines, and some Jew thinks he's gonna turn it into Miami Beach.

JAMES

(CROSSING DOWN) He's going to try, but if we can co-ordinate ourselves.

PHIL

Who cares! Do I really Care? I'm so bored half the time it's killing me. Watching the same old faces get old, same bull-shit, day in and day out, bored. Sometimes I get on the turnpike and just drive until I feel like getting off. I ended up in Binghamton last week. 100 miles on a Friday night by myself. Believe that? What's left? Hit a few bars, some music, drink, play old basketball games over in my head. Pick up some strange pussy every now and then, here and there. Always need something young and juicy sitting beside me. Mostly sit and replay the good games in my head, believe that?

JAMES

(BEHIND THE COUCH) We were good.

PHIL

Could call each others moves every time.

JAMES

We had some good times.

PHIL

Sometimes I think that's the only thing I still feel, you know, still feel in my gut, still feel that championship season, feel the crowds, my best memory to date, yeah, nothing matched it, nothing.

JAMES

We were good.

TOM

(DRUNK) Martin.

PHIL

Think about him all the time too. I loved that guy.

JAMES

The perfect ballplayer wasn't he?

PHIL

Yeah, (TO TOM) You know what I do for excitement now?

TOM

(LEANING FORWARD) We all have a pretty good idea.

PHIL

No, no everybody does that. I got a Porsche right, fuel injector right, water pump, James Dean right? Upped it to 120 coming back from Binghamton. Smashed. Everything a blur.

PHIL

(TAKES SADISTIC PLEASURE IN TELLING THIS STORY) Can't see the road but I'm laughing my ass off, laughing so hard I have to wipe my eyes and now I'm hitting 135 and only have one hand on the steering wheel, pissed out of my mind, radio blaring and suddenly, it's crazy, but I think I'm just speed and I know nothing can catch me, nothing alive can touch me and I open her up to 140. Shit-scared. And everything is a blur but I'm alughing because I know nothing on earth can catch me. (PAUSE) Some Friday night they'll be putting pieces of me in a rubber bag. Wonder what it's takes, what it's like to get it at 140 miles an hour!

TOM

Sssssssssssplat! (LAUGHS)

PHIL

Yeah, something like that.'

JAMES

Sound more dangerous than married women.

PHIL

James is offended by...

JAMES

No, no it was just a joke.

PHIL

Offended. Know why I like married women? Nobody gets involved. They don't yell, tell, swell, and they're grateful as hell. Marion took my cherry in school, nobody gets involved. I really cared for her. She's a bitch now, a bitch on wheels, he did a job on her. She's finished. I thought maybe we could go back to something, see if it was still there. It ain't like the movies, she's a bitch now.

JAMES

I don't understand women like that, never did, never wanted to.

PHIL

Better watch your Helen.

JAMES

My Helen, never happen. (LAUGHS) Helen does everything by the book. No. Helen is a champion of chastity, sex is children, children is sex. She'd be happy spending the rest of her life putting cocoa butter on her tits. (EMBARRASSED) Breasts. She's only happy when she's pregnant, clears up her skin.

PHIL

She still paint?

JAMES

Not really. (SITS ON COUCH).

PHIL

She won all the art prizes in school. She was the only one who didn't laugh at me that time. Remember? In art class. we had to identify paintings for the exam and I said mine was an El Gresso, and you laughed out loud, and everybody else started laughing behind me and soon the whole class was laughing, even me, but I remember she didn't laugh...well.

(THEY ALL HAVE A GOOD LAUGH AND AS IT DIES DOWN IT IS EVIDENT THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG IN THE ROOM, THEY START TO SNIFF AROUND AS IF SOMETHING IS BURNING).

JAMES

(TO PHIL) You smell something?

PHIL

What? (THEY BOTH REALIZE IT IS THE CHICKEN AND JAMES RUNS TO SEE ABOUT IT. The chicken! Burned bad?)

JAMES

(CHECKS ON CHICKEN IN STOVE AND POPS HEAD INTO LIVING ROOM) No, hot! I'll bring it out.

(TOM CROSSES TO BAR AND POURS ANOTHER DRINK. COMES TO SIT NEXT TO PHIL).

TOM

Did old Marion laugh?

PHIL

Don't worry about George, he'll get over it.

TOM

Think so huh?

PHIL

You could rub the two of them together and you wouldn't get a sound. All that shit about her being ripped up about the baby is bull.

TOM

She didn't want it?

PHIL

NO! She had to convince him. He wanted to keep it. Wouldn't give it up until the Coach damn near ordered him too. Hey, I'm not the first guy she laid, she's been running around the last few years.

TOM

Why doesn't she leave him?

PHIL

Where's she going at 38. (SEES HOW REALLY DRUNK TOM IS)
You're an alcoholic.

TOM

How perceptive of you.

PHIL

Jesus Christ what happened, you need money?

TOM

I'll let you know.

PHIL

Sharmen's got class, style. George is like Bugs Bunny on television. This is the mayor, what's up folks. We got Looney Tunes for a mayor. (SLOWLY AS IF DRUNK). George isn't a modern man, it's that simple. I am, maybe you too. You know Claire and me have an arrangement. It's civilized, nothing lasts forever. As long as she doesn't make it with anyone in town, any of my friends, fine, you know, it's a mutual arrangement. You have to change with the times, be modern. Don't say anything to the rest, between you and me.

TOM

I think I'm mideval. Yeah, somewhere in the Dark Ages.

PHIL

(NOT PAYING ANY ATTENTION) Yeah, she and her old lady fly all over. She's never home, on my money. The old lady knows she makes it with other men, isn't that something, they talk about it. I wonder if it's a crime in this state to fuck your mother-in-law.

TOM

Ask brother James, he's the keeper of perversions. HEY JAMES!

PHIL

I'm going to get a vasectomy.

TOM

Is that so?

PHIL

They tie up your tubes, you come but you don't come sperm. Sterilized. I fuck a lot you know and I can't afford any more abortions. And two kids is enough. I told Claire and we discussed it and she agrees, it's the intelligent thing to do. You're right, everybody around here lives in the Dark Ages. Pitch Black.

(JAMES ENTERS FROM KITCHEN CARRYING THE CHICKEN)

GEORGE

(ENTERS FROM PORCH AND CROSSES TO JAMES) He wants to talk to you James.

(JAMES EXITS ONTO PORCH AND GEORGE GOES TO BAR TO GET A BEER)

TOM

(CROSSING TO GEORGE WITH CHICKEN BEHIND HIS BACK) George!
Have some chicken.

JAMES

(RUSHING IN WITH COACH, HE IS VERY ANGRY) You want me to
step down as your campaign manager.

GEORGE

Phil has contacted these people in...

JAMES

(TURNS TO COACH) You dump me now and my politics are over.

GEORGE

Phil has contacted these people, advertising people in
Philadelphia.

JAMES

People will know I've been dumped. I won't be able to buy
a vote in this town.

GEORGE

(CROSSING TO COACH) After the election I can still endorse
your candidacy for school superintendent.

JAMES

(DESPERATELY) After dumping me from running your campaign!

COACH

(GOES TO JAMES) James, we need a very experienced man in that
position. We are just bringing in some professional help.
You'll still be involved in the campaign.

JAMES

(TO PHIL) You did this, you've turned them against me!

PHIL

(CROSS TO BAR) James, I can't put 25...30 thousand in the hands of an amateur!

JAMES

(CROSS TO BEHIND COUCH) I am not going to take this laying down. Spoiled ignorant lout is not going to...

PHIL

It's not what you think!

JAMES

You're an ignoramous!

PHIL

And you're a shabby man!

JAMES

(STARTS TO HIT PHIL) And you're a goddamn ignoramous! (PHIL HITS JAMES IN THE MOUTH AND HIS TEETH FALL OUT) My teeth, you've broken my teeth. I'll kill you, you ignorant. (JAMES GRABS PHIL).

(TOM GRABS JAMES AND PULLS HIM OFF PHIL THROWING HIM ON THE COUCH)

TOM

(PICKING UP TEETH) They're not broken, go on upstairs. (TO PHIL) If I had my wits, some anger, some guts, I'd take your head off Phil.

PHIL

I'm just money to you guys, I'm money to everybody, well I'm not giving it away, no more charity from the dumb dago!

JAMES

(ON STAIR LANDING) If you people do this to me, I will walk every street in this town and tell every single person about Phil and Marion.

PHIL

Shabby!

JAMES

I will not be abused like this. I will turn George into the village idiot!

GEORGE

(HOLDING ONTO COACH) You wouldn't do that James!

JAMES

I swear it by Christ and your brother-in-law, and the kick-backs in the city jobs.

GEORGE

You'd ruin us, you'd ruin me!

JAMES

What did you just do to me?

PHIL

(CROSS TO GUN RACK) An hour ago he suggested that we back him for mayor!

COACH

I don't believe that!

PHIL

(LAUGHING) Ask him.

JAMES

I proposed an alternative!

GEORGE

(GETS SICK AND MOVES TO STAIRS BUT DOESN'T QUITE MAKE IT, HE FINALLY THROWS UP IN TROPHY). I'm sick help me, my stomach is upset!

COACH

(HELPING HIM) Can you make it upstairs?

GEORGE

I think so. (LUNGES FOR TROPHY).

COACH

(SEE FIGURE IV) NOT IN THE TROPHY!

(LIGHTS OUT IMMEDIATELY ON LINE. HOUSE LIGHTS COME UP. THIS POINT IN THE SCRIPT IS THE END OF SECOND ACT. ON WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY THIS WAS USED AS THE END OF THE FIRST ACT AND THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND ACT.)

ACT III

(LIGHTS FADE IN HOUSE ON TEN COUNT AND COME UP ONSTAGE ON FIVE COUNT. THE ACTION IS CONTINUOUS ONSTAGE.)

TOM

Nice shot George!

COACH

(GRABBING GEORGE) I'll take him upstairs, clean him up!

GEORGE

I can't breathe.

COACH

Then stop talking, (STARTS UPSTAIRS) Wash out the trophy James, in cold water!

(JAMES TAKES TROPHY AND EXITS INTO KITCHEN)

TOM

Dull night, maybe I should go fall down the steps again.

PHIL

It gets more desperate, people get more desperate, why is everyone so fucking desperate? Everyone wants a piece of me right? Like Namath. I'm only money, nothing else. (MOVES TO FRENCH DOORS) This is a dentist's bill. \$4,000. My wife.



FIGURE IV.

PHIL

(MOVES TO TOM) For \$4,000 you could cap a shark's tooth. I'm expected to finance everyone's life. (TOM SITS ON BENCH UPSTAGE) Marion brought up the campaign money about the third time I laid her. She brought it up and then talked about it for three hours. I expected it. I knew it. She laid it in. Well, she worked for it!

TOM

You wanted George to find out?

PHIL

Yeah, maybe, I don't know. She worked for it. I took her up to the Holiday one afternoon and fucked her on the bed, floor, tub, toilet, everywhere but the ice machine. You know the only woman I ever loved was my mother, the only woman I ever knew, the rest are all cunts.

TOM

I don't care, you know. The truth is I don't care about the melodrama of your life.

JAMES

(ENTERS FROM KITCHEN AND PUTS TROPHY BACK ON TABLE) I have been betrayed by my friends. I carried that imbecile Polack for years, him and his nymphomaniac wife.

PHIL

Watch it!

JAMES

I know, I was his best man. The ushers were comparing notes on her. George got sick before the wedding too. Threw up with joy.

PHIL

We know her past history James, no lectures.

JAMES

(CROSS TO PHIL) You don't know anything. You fornicate and read the newspapers. That's what you know. But nobody is going to abuse me, use me, NOBODY!

TOM

Now we won't have James to kick around anymore.

JAMES

(CROSS TO COUCH AND SITS) Exactly, I'm a new man, and I come high. My success has been delayed by my responsibilities and now it is my turn, my youth was given over to my responsibilities, and now I am going to demand my right to success, demand, I had, Christ I'm ashamed to, to borrow the money from Phil to bury him.

PHIL

You don't owe me anything.

JAMES

I OWE, EVERYBODY. I don't own a goddamn thing.

PHIL

(TURNING TO JAMES) I won big on the Colts.

JAMES

And now you knife me in the back.

PHIL

James I like being rich okay. I need money, I want two of everything, cars, boats, women, etc. etc., around expensive things I get a hard on, turned on. I want them. My old man was like you James. (CROSS TO STAGERIGHT CHAIR). He built a business twenty four hours a day, didn't have time to learn the language, two words he knew, money and work, no three, the business. The business killed him at forty-fucking three and we buried a man nobody ever knew. I worked for my old man, slept with him, ate, and I have no memory of who he was, or what he was. The fucking business is mine now. It's all mine. (SITS IN STAGERIGHT CHAIR).

COACH

(ENTERS FROM UPSTAIRS AND COMES DOWN CENTER) He's cleaned up, going to call his wife. I'm bewildered, stunned, never, never did I think I would live to see you turn savagely, savagely turn on one another. Your not the same people who played for me.

TOM

We are a myth.

COACH

(TO TOM) What?

TOM

(DREAMILY) Myths.

COACH

(CROSS TO TROPHY) Is that trophy a myth. See the names engraved on it. Don't grow old on me boys, don't lose faith, don't get old on me. I carved your name into silver, lasts forever, forever, never forget that, never. Nothing changes but the date boys. (CROSS TO PHIL) You're all still immensely talented.

JAMES

(SADLY) I'm a junior high school principal who has to have the walls scrubbed everyday because some little bastard scribbles all over them, "Mr. Daley eats it, Daley is a shit head."

COACH

(COMING TO JAMES) Taking care of your father slowed you up.

JAMES

Slowed me up. I wiped the man's ass, like a baby, rubbed his body with oil, washed him. I had to feed him before he died and in all the years I never felt, love from him. He'd get drunk and abuse me.

COACH

In fever, bedridden, a man can say strange things.

JAMES

I just wanted, (CRYING AND TREMBLING) wanted...

COACH

(GRABBING JAMES'S ARM) What!

COACH

Whine, you're a 38 year old whine. Bitch and whine and blame your life on everybody else. (PLAYS AREA AROUND JAMES) You got the eyes of a beggar. Did they respect me? Thirty years a teacher, a coach, a teacher devoted to excellence. Did they respect me when they forced me to retire? Gave me a farewell dinner, a gold watch, and a pension. A pension is a ticket to death, a goddamn passport. Said I was old-fashioned, said I abused a student, the boy made an obscene gesture to my face and I hit him, what's so old fashioned about that?

JAMES

You broke his jaw. (PAUSE)

COACH

And the next morning I'm walking the streets at eight O'clock in the morning with nowhere to go, start listening to the radio, I watch more T.V. than any man alive. You make them respect you!

GEORGE

(COMES DOWNSTAGE TO COACH) I talked to Marion. (TO JAMES) You were right. Absolutely.

JAMES

Was I?

COACH

(CROSS TO GEORGE) What did she say?

GEORGE

She did it for me, for the money.

COACH

You heard that Phil.

PHIL

(SOFTLY) I know.

TOM

Next time the ice machine, right Phil?

GEORGE

(STARTS UPSTAGE AND GETS COAT) It's late. I better leave now.

TOM

She convince you to take the money George?

GEORGE

(TURNS TO TOM) That's none of your goddamn business.

TOM

After old James gets through with you, they're gonna give you a pair of horns on the steps of City Hall.

COACH

(COACH CROSS TO GEORGE) That is not going to happen!

JAMES

I meant what I said.

GEORGE

Marion said the whole...

COACH

(CROSSING TO GEORGE AND HITTING HIM) I don't care what that hot-pantsed bitch said. Go home and kick her ass all over the kitchen. All that slutting around.

GEORGE

She is not a slut!

COACH

She was punished for slutting wasn't she? She was punished and so were you.

GEORGE

That's a terrible thing to say!

COACH

Leave her the hell out of the campaign. She's trouble!

GEORGE

You know I have pride in...

COACH

You have no pride, none. You got a face for everybody. All slick smiles and empty eyes. You lost something boy, lost something. (CROSSING TO PHIL) Phil playing the lout, screwing his life away, lost something. (TO TOM) You stumbling and reeling through the streets like some broken thing, hearing people laugh at you breaks my heart, you were a gifted boy.

TOM

(CROSS TO BOOKCASE) Were! Past tense.

COACH

Gifted. Unbelievable talent. Not just basketball, all of you. I remember James, remember sitting in that auditorium watching James win, what contest was it?

JAMES

I speak for democracy.

COACH

I speak for democracy. You held that audience spellbound. When you stood up to speak the whole crowd hushed, no movement, still. They were spell bound. You overwhelmed them. I'll never forget it.

JAMES

I won a hundred dollar bond, and the old man cashed it in and drank it up.

TOM

Gave you a little gold cup.

COACH

Run to win, St. Paul said that, a saint, run always to win. I drilled that into you. Healthy minds, healthy bodies. (COACH TURNS TO TOM) Greeks said that boys and they started it all, great athletes, the Greeks, splendid!

TOM

The Greeks were pederasts.

COACH

(TURNING TO GROUP) What the hell is he talking about?

JAMES

He means the Greeks were homosexuals!

COACH

(ASTONISHED) The Greeks!? Homos? Not the Greeks! The Romans maybe but not the Greeks! Don't come around me with that liberal bullshit I won't listen. The Greeks made their men into gods. (CROSS TO FRENCH DOORS AND LOOKS OUT) The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. A man who knows the great enthusiasms and the great devotions. A man who spends himself in a worthy cause, who in the end knows the triumph of high achievement, and if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat!

(CROSS TO PHIL) That's a man's words. A man among men. Monday morning boys we start on Sharmawitz. We get into the arena and draw some blood.

JAMES

(RISE AND TURN TO COACH) Not James, not me, not till my participation is settled.

COACH

It's been settled.

JAMES

Not to my satisfaction.

COACH

(CROSS TO PHIL) Phil, as soon as possible, contact those people in Philadelphia.

PHIL

Okay.

JAMES

You will not change your minds?

COACH

Get them here by Monday!

JAMES

(CROSS TO BAR AND GET DRINK) No one is going to walk over me. I'm done. My back's against the wall. I will walk the streets of this town, I will. Do you hear me!

GEORGE

(STARTING TO JAMES) James!

JAMES

Who the hell are you? I don't know you. I'm going out there and open up, I will. (PAUSE) Low excellence.

TOM

(CROSSES IN TO COACH) Welcome to anonymity James. No bench and no depth. Playing with too many injuries.

COACH

You've been sneering at us all night, laughing in our faces!

TOM

Don't start on me, I'm not here. I'm in New Orleans. (START CROSS TO BAR).

COACH

(CROSS TO CENTER) You're finished, useless. And you had talent. You quit on everyone who needed you.

TOM

Stop lying to us! (TURNING ON COACH) Stop telling us how good we were!

COACH

(LOUD) We never had a losing season and we're not starting now!

TOM

That's not what Martin said! (A BEAT. COACH BACKS OFF)

COACH

(QUESTION) Martin?

TOM

(MOVING IN) Martin, remember him?

COACH

Yeah.

TOM

(DRUNK) But he's not here. You know why he left, why he never came back to a reunion?

COACH

Do I?

TOM

He told us the truth twenty years ago!

COACH

Did he? (SILENCE)

TOM

He wanted you to publicly refuse the trophy, remember? You told him in the third quarter to get that nigger center, the kangaroo remember? He did. He went out and broke the guy's ribs.

COACH

I told him to stop him. (LOUDER AND FASTER) That nigger was playing him off the court and (SIT IN STAGE LEFT CHAIR) I told him to get tough under the boards and stop him.

TOM

He came to you a week after the game.

COACH

That's right. He did. He came to me. He walked in here, he came babbling something about the truth. What truth I said, we won. That trophy is the only truth. I told him to get mean, punish some people, put some fear into them. You have to hate to win, it takes hate to win. I didn't tell him to break anybodies ribs. Don't you believe me boys?

GEORGE

(RISES) I believe you Coach.

TOM

(CROSS TO TROPHY AND PICK IT UP) We have gone through this phoney ritual, champions. Shit we stole it!

COACH

I told him there is no such thing as second place!

TOM

(FANATICAL) Never less than success. Pay the price, get yourself a name. I did. I really did. I fell on my ass in ten cities, that's a record. (GRABS BEER CAN) HERE'S MY TROPHY!

COACH

(STANDING AND TURNING TO TOM) I read the fine print on you!

TOM

(FEVERISHLY) Find the other man's weakness, exploit him, hook him to death. Watch out, they're out to get you, get that son of-a-bitch before he gets you, win, win, win, only sin is losing. Bless me father for I have...Christ I'm sick.

COACH

Need to lose!

TOM

(PUTS TROPHY IN COACH'S FACE) Look it in the eye old man, we stole that trophy, championship season is a lie!

COACH

(GRABBING TROPHY AND PUSHING INTO TOM'S CHEST) Deny that! You can feel it. It has weight. Deny it. Read the names in silver there.

TOM

I don't believe in trophies anymore! (THE COACH SLAPS TOM VIOLENTLY)...empty.

COACH

Get out! (TOM STARTS TO EXIT).

TOM

(TURNS TO COACH) And Martin?

COACH

OUT!

TOM

I got a ticket somewhere. (EXITS OUT FRONT DOOR).

GEORGE

(CROSSING TO COACH) Coach, Martin tried to tell me the same story.

PHIL

Martin was a real S.O.B.

JAMES

Martin didn't have a brain in his head!

COACH

(PASSIONATELY AS HE MOVES AROUND THE ROOM) We don't need them boys. It's history now. In the books. You were a rare and beautiful thing boys, a miracle to see people play beautifully together, like when I was a boy, long time past. The whole town would come together, we'd have hugh picnics, great feasts of picnis. (SITS ON BENCH UPSTAGE) My father ran the only bank in town. An elegant man. Bach was played in this house. He quoted Shakespeare. To be or or not to be, that is the question. Shoulders like a king. He carried me on his back in freezing, God yes, freezing waters of the

COACH

Lake. So clear you could see the white pebbles on the bottom. (A BEAT) Gone now, all gone, vanished. Lake, picnic grounds, gone now. Used car lots now. Phil's trucks came and took it away.

GEORGE

We can bring it back Coach, urban renewal, preserve the environment.

COACH

(CRYING) Jesus I can still see buckets of ice cream, great red slabs of beef, kites, yes the sky was full of blue and red kites, men playing horseshoes, big silver pails of beer, in the late afternoon the men would dive from the high rocks, so high it made you dizzy to look down. I watched my father dive and turn and glisten in the sun, falling like a bird falls and knife the water so clean as to leave only ripples. (PAUSE) The Depression killed him. The bank went under. His hair turned white, he threw his wedding ring across the room, threw his teeth across the room, stopped talking. He died a year later in his prime, (SADLY) Wouldn't let anyone in the room, not even my mother, died alone in the room. He lost faith in everything, in the country. He told me, that man who listened to Bach, elegant man, he told me, "Never forget Marx was a Jew, Jews will ruin a country." '29 killed him dead. (CROSSING TO COUCH) Not enough of them jumped out of the windows in '29. The whole race should have splattered on the sidewalks in '29. The man didn't know how to fight back. He lost his character! Lost his character.

(LOOKS AT PICTURES OF KENNEDY, ROOSEVELT, AND McCARTHY) I chose my country, God forgive me. I made the supreme sacrifice and went to work in the mines for my country. You got to fight back, fight forever. They killed McCarthy too. Kennedy, Patton even. There are no leaders boys, all the great ones in stone. Somebody has to lead the country back again. All we have is ourselves boys, and the race is to the quickest! This country is fighting for its life and we are the heart and everyone plays to win! You won't lose boys because I won't let you lose. I'll whip your ass into shape, drive you into the ground, your soul belongs to God but your ass belongs to me, remember that one, yes sir! We can do it! We are going to win because we can't lose, dare not lose, lose is not in our vocabulary! I shaped you boys. (LOSING CONTROL) never forget that. I ran you into perfection, ran you till the blisters busted, bloody socks and all, you had no character, you couldn't even put on your jocks, awkward, all legs, afraid, a mistake a minute. I made you winners. I MADE YOU WINNERS! (GOES TO RECORD PLAYER AND PUTS ON RECORD).

RECORD

Ten seconds left. Filmore High School has fought their way back from a disasterous first half. They are now behind by one point, 71-70. But they have the ball with ten seconds left on the clock. George Sikowski will throw the ball to either Tom Daley or Martin Roads. Ten seconds left. The Pennsylvania State Basketball Championship game comes down to one shot, one play. Here we go, time in, Sikowski passes to Daley, Daley to the back court. A pass to James Daley in the corner, Daley across the court to Romano. Five seconds! (TOM ENTERS AND CROSSES TO JAMES) Romano to Daley, Daley to Roads at the foul line, two seconds left, Roads up, shoots, yes, yes, Filmore High School Wins it! (FIGURE V).

ENTIRE CAST

(GEORGE STARTS SONG)

Another victory for Filmore,
As we swing into the fray,
For the loyal sons of Filmore,
Are out to win today.

With hope and courage never failing,
As we swing right down the field,
Our hearts will ere be faithful,
To the foe we'll never yield.

COACH

(CROSSING TO PHIL WHO IS CRYING) Don't punish yourselves boys, the world will do that. Protect, survive. Phil don't you have something to say to George?

PHIL

(CROSSING TO GEORGE) I'm sorry, sorry.

TOM

WHOO! WHOO! Us and the whooping cranes!

COACH

What's that?

TOM

On the way out, cranes whoop!

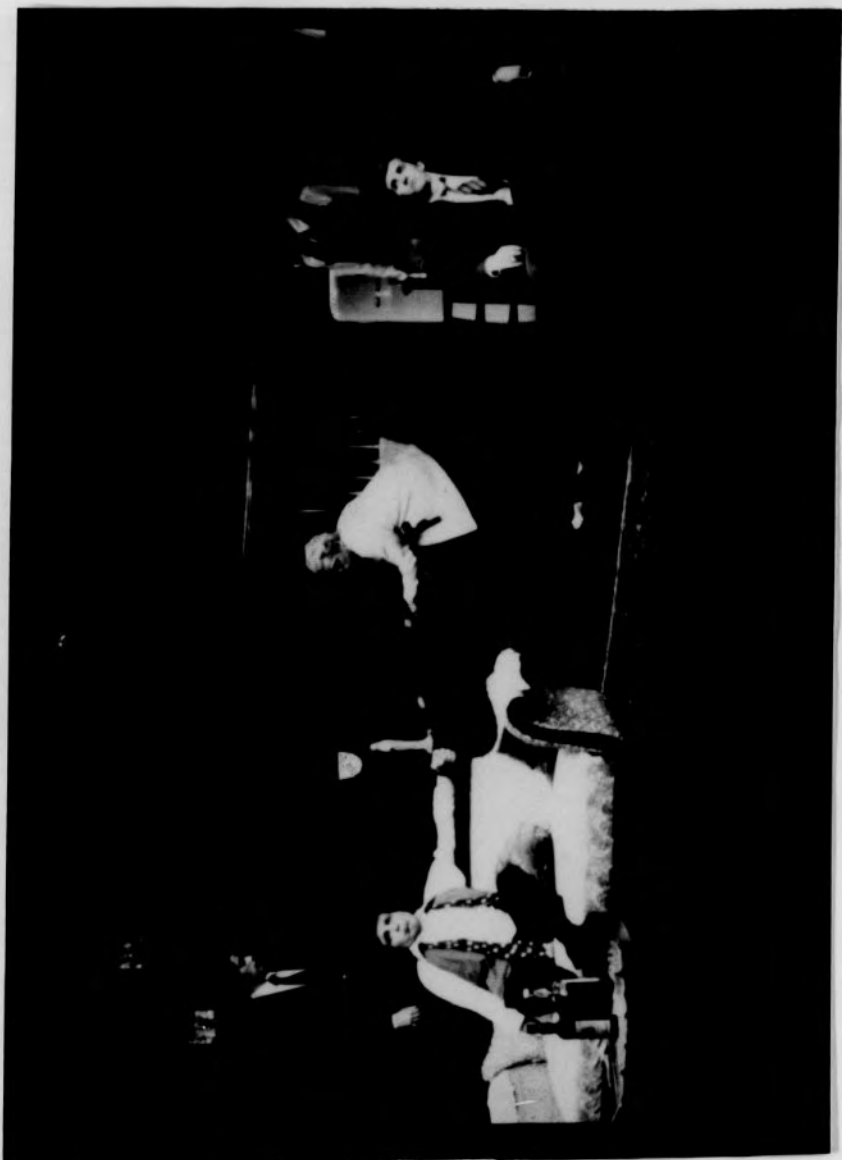


FIGURE V.

COACH

(CROSSING TO GEORGE AND PHIL) Love one another boys, no way a man can make it alone. Got to have, belong to something more than yourself.

JAMES

(CROSSING TO GEORGE) George, I'll do anything you like. I'm behind you all the way.

GEORGE

(EMBARASSING JAMES) You dirty bastard, I love you like a brother!

COACH

ALRIGHT! Album time. (CROSSES TO STAIRS AND GETS CAMERA).

GEORGE

(ALL THE MEN MOVE TOGETHER AND POSE WITH TROPHY) We'd better get together and start mapping it all out.

COACH

(COMING DOWNSTAGE CENTER) Monday at twelve, the mayor's office. You need a speech for the K of C next Thursday.

GEORGE

James?

JAMES

(HUGGING TOM) We'll have it to you by Monday.

COACH

(CROSSING IN FRONT OF MEN TO TAKE PICTURE) Smile James, lets see them new teeth!

JAMES

(GETTING CAMERA) Let's get one of you Coach.

COACH

No, not me, not me.

GEORGE

One for the album Coach. (HANDS COACH THE TROPHY).

PHIL

(TO COACH) Why don't you come over tomorrow and watch the playoffs in color?

COACH

No, the game's changed, the good little man is extinct. I hardly watch it anymore, they all shoot down at the basket now. I hardly watch. Not my game. It's no longer the white man's game.

GEORGE

C'mon smile Coach.

TOM

Say Cunnilingus!

JAMES

(SNAPPING PICTURE) I got you Coach.

COACH

Yeah.

(THE ACTORS FREEZE AND THE LIGHTS GRADUALLY LOWER TO A BLACKOUT. THE ACTORS FORM A LINE IN FRONT OF THE SET ON THE APRON AND TAKE THEIR CURTAIN CALL. THE LIGHTS BLACKOUT AGAIN AND THEY GO OFFSTAGE AS THE HOUSE LIGHTS COME UP AND THE OPENING MUSIC BEGINS TO PLAY AGAIN).

FINIS

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

The final chapter of this thesis will deal with four specific areas. They are: (1) achievement of interpretation, (2) actor-director relationship, (3) audience response, and (4) personal comments.

Achievement of Interpretation

The main objective of this director was simply to tell the story as written down by the playwright. In doing so, the drama of five men would live for the audience. The decayed lives of the former champions would become reality for the audience.

One method of achieving this was by the use of a realistic setting for the play. The Coach's house, as created by the designer, was an appropriate suggestion of faded finery. The expansive living room of the once elegant home was furnished with expensive furniture worn with time and use. The audience was confronted with a room filled with memorabilia. Tarnished trophies adorned the bookcases. The walls were hung with pictures of the championship team, athletic placques, and pictures of John Kennedy, Teddy Roosevelt, and Joseph McCarthy. Utilizing rich earth colors such as brown, gold, green, and red, a proper mood was established for the drama that unfolded in the environment.

The director and designer decided to break proscenium and move the set as close to the audience as possible. This was done to re-enforce the illusion of actually spending an evening in the Coach's home. This close confrontation was to strengthen the empathetic response of the audience and to allow the actors to deal with the subtleties of performance, subtleties in a realistic portrayal of their characters. Their objective was to effect the greatest degree of believability possible to them.

The director made a concentrated effort to design blocking that would appear naturalistic. For example, actors were blocked with their backs to the audience, they were blocked to move simultaneously, to make long crosses on short lines, and to withdraw on strong advance lines. To a great extent, this added to the realistic quality of the play, and to the characters being portrayed within the script.

Considerable movement in the play was done in angles. This was necessitated partly because of the furniture placement. It was also done to compliment the set which contained several architectural angles. The primary reason however was due to the qualities of tension inherent to the script. The script presented a constant element of tension. In an effort to visually embody this element within the movement patterns of the actors, and realizing that angular movement connotes tension, this director felt that such movement would aid in the basic interpretation of the script.

The reactions of the characters in the play, even though they are not participating directly in a given scene are often times just as important as the present action. Split focus and delayed focus were used in several scenes to accent crucial reactions from those characters whose overall characterization are embellished by such reactions.

Act One and Act Two of the play were intended to run without intermission. However, after the second night of performance, it was evident that audience comfort dictated an intermission. This intermission was added but not as indicated in the script. The purpose of running the two acts together was to strengthen the illusion for the audience of spending an evening at the Coach's home with the team. It was also done so that the gun sequence could be played in its completeness, without the hinderance of the act break in the middle of the scene. This scene was left intact, the act break coming in the second act of the script. On Tom's line "I expect that nothing will be settled without consulting me," the second intermission was added. This line comes after the gun sequence, therefore the scene played straight through. The action was unbroken by the textual intermission.

The gun sequence is very climactic as written. It comes after a crucial revelation between George, James, and Phil. In this production however, the gun sequence never achieved the desired electricity of tension to make it play. Perhaps forcing the tempo of the scene, or cutting some of the

repetitious dialogue would have alleviated this problem. Let it suffice to say that this scene was the director's only major disappointment of the play.

In retrospect, there was room for improvement within the production as is true with all productions of a play. Sometimes a director must sacrifice certain details in rehearsal so that the total artistic goal can be as fully achieved as possible within the given time period he is allotted. The graphic language of the script in such close proximity to the audience made certain people uncomfortable. Framing the play within the proscenium arch might have given the audience a more desirable aesthetic distance.

Nevertheless, this director firmly believes that this thesis production was powerful, effective, and artistically satisfying. It was stylistically consistent and the desired audience response and artistic interpretation was achieved. Minor discrepancies were willingly sacrificed in order for the play to fulfill its function within the time limits. That Championship Season was a great experiment for this director, and he feels it was a highly successful one.

Actor-Director Relationship

The Actor-Director relationship during rehearsals and the run of the play were very satisfying. From the beginning of the production preparations there was an overwhelming spirit of enthusiasm exhibited by the actors. The cast consisted of three undergraduates and two graduate students. The men brought fine talent and experience to the roles. They also exhibited intense dedication, not only to the play, but to their craft as actors. This sense of dedication showed in every aspect of rehearsal and performance. The cast was co-operative and professional in every possible way. It was a joy to work with performers of their capabilities.

The script is a challenge for any serious actor. There were three particular areas of concern as the play was studied. These concerns were: (1) characterization with special emphasis on the age factor, (2) playing the emotional intensities advocated by the director, and (3) maintaining the physical and mental energy and concentration demanded by the script.

An actor who is to portray a character that is older than himself immediately asks himself, "How can I do it believably?" The age factor was of special concern to each member of the cast, especially to the actor playing the Coach. The Coach in the play is in his middle sixties. The team members are in their late thirties, a somewhat

indeterminate age. By necessity, the Coach's character had to project age. The actor had to use make-up. Make-up used in a lesser degree would be necessary in aiding the other actors in producing the illusion of middle aged men. Also, the costuming was appropriate for this illusion. However, the director stressed the importance of securing the desired illusion of age through physicalization.

Adapting the physical improvisational techniques of Viola Spolin, the actors concentrated on every facet of their physical appearance. For example, in one rehearsal session, the point of concentration was with representing age through various vocal patterns. For other rehearsals, the emphasis was placed on posture, the use of props, and manner of walking and gesturing. These exercises introduced a point of reference to the actors as they began to build their characterizations. Certain actors were able to achieve a higher degree of believability than others. The actors whose success was less effective still progressed far beyond the limits they had previously achieved. The total illusion created by the cast was, from this director's point of view, quite effective and believable..

An actor cast in That Championship Season must be able to produce a wide range of emotional responses in keeping with this director's interpretation of the play. He must go from exuberance and hilarity, to the point of

self-pity and tears. Unseasoned actors are especially cautious to exhibit extremes of emotion such as crying onstage. Crying in a play is difficult to create spontaneously and convincingly. A male is particularly reticent in this aspect of performing. Again, improvisational techniques were employed to help the actors overcome their inhibitions in this area. Individual sessions were scheduled with the actors. The director worked to make the actors aware of the importance for the emotion and the motivational forces behind the emotion.

The Coach and George were required to cry more than the other characters. The actors in these roles understood the reasoning behind the direction, but were hesitant to let go and do it. By careful coaching, the men were eased into this requirement by degrees, their barriers began to crumble. The emotion became easier to feel and the act became easier to accomplish.

Considerable progress was made from the early rehearsal period to the final production. Certain actors were more effective than others during the run of the play and their crying was more believable. The desired effect was not as successful as had been hoped for. Perhaps the crying was pushed too far by this director. Different opinions have been expostulated. There were those people who were moved by the actors during this point in the play, and people

who thought it rather contrived. This director felt he was justified in his interpretation. The fact that some people found the crying effective and others did not is of course important to the play as a whole. Another important factor to consider is that the actors became entirely comfortable in expressing this intensity of emotion. This is an achievement for any actor in his development. An actor should grow in every production he participates in. In this production, certain actors were able to go one step beyond their previous experiences in many ways. Perhaps the next time they find themselves in a similar situation, where crying is vital to a total characterization, it will be easier for them.

The third major area of concern was the aspect of maintaining the physical and mental energies necessary for rehearsals and performance. During the initial blocking period, the cast seemed to have limitless energy. Later on in the rehearsal sessions, the energy levels decreased and naturally their levels of creativity diminished. The cast was trying to go too far too soon. As a result, they were physically exhausting themselves.

The actor is like an undernourished child. The director is constantly feeding them ideas, concepts, and comparisons to aid in the development of characterization. If

a director feeds his cast too much, they become frantic to digest everything given to them. They overwork themselves and their powers of imagination and artistry suffer. The director must then slow them down, taking the food away. He must exercise his cast and focus their attentions on certain specifics. The actors must taste the food they eat, coming away from the table with a sense of fullness and satisfaction.

In an effort to heighten the creative experience, exercise powers of concentration, and steel the actor's awareness, a series of very serious "games" were employed. The Relaxed Rehearsal, as practiced by Viola Spolin, was incorporated into the rehearsal schedule. Spolin states in her book, Improvisation For The Theatre:

The Relaxed Rehearsal, falling within the second rehearsal section, gives perspective to the actors. By this time, they should be off their lines. The actors lie on the floor, shut their eyes, and breathe slowly with strong accent on the exhale. The director walks around from time to time, lifting a foot or a hand to make sure muscular release is complete.

The actors then go through their lines of the play as they lie there with their eyes closed. They are to concentrate on visualizing the stage....They should try to see the stage in full dimension, color, and movement, to be hyper-conscious of everything that takes place.

If handled and prepared for properly, this time will be enjoyable to all. The actors will be able to extract bits and pieces of their former work and add them to their conceptions of their roles.²⁶

²⁶Viola Spolin, Improvisation For The Theatre. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), Pp. 336-337.

The exercise did indeed aid the cast in their awareness of the stage environment and nuances of certain aspects of characterization. The actors were very pleased with the stimulation this exercise gave them. The director decided to try other methods of improvisation to assist his cast in the achievement of total understanding of the play.

The above exercises were not used every night. When a specific problem developed, the director sought unique ways to solve the problem. This was coupled with constantly stressing the necessity of controlling the physical and mental energies demanded by the play. Rehearsal is hard work. Performance is even harder work. The aim of this director was to work the cast, demand from them, insist upon fully developed performances, work them even harder, and make them love every minute of it.

One experiment utilized certain commodities called for in the script, beer and scotch. Every member of the cast admitted that he had, at one time or another, been intoxicated. When an actor is to portray drunkenness it is helpful if he can recall a previous feeling of being drunk. This may add authenticity to his portrayal. Yet, their intoxication had not been within the context of this play. This director requested that for one rehearsal session, the cast consume specified amounts of alcohol. The effect of this exercise was enlightening.

Certain lines of the script took on new and powerful meanings. Character relationships were endowed with chilling new truths and realism. Realistic behavior patterns were established that had never emerged before. Hindering personal barriers were miraculously dissolved. The most satisfying aspect of this experiment came at its conclusion. The actors were not drunk, but they had developed a certain feeling never before experienced in our rehearsals. The discussion period that followed proved extremely fruitful. The recurring phrase stated by the actors was, "For the first time I realized that...." The performance during this rehearsal was incomparable to anything that had been achieved previously. The proof of this exercise was to be seen the next night. The performance rehearsal without the alcohol was equally as fine. The cast had experienced a certain feeling. That feeling now transformed into a workable acting tool.

As stated in the first chapter of this thesis, the script is like a roller-coaster ride which pulls you up to a dramatic peak, then immediately drops you with a remark or witticism from Tom or another member of the team. At certain points in the script, the play is funny. The present atmosphere onstage must lighten so that the next dramatic build can occur. This also demands a varied range of dynamics from the actors. To aid this problem, the director decided to present a musical version of That Championship

Season.

Fine music, like fine acting, is dependent upon timing, tempo, rhythm, crescendo, and decrescendo. When a particular scene lacked one or more of these qualities, the cast was directed to sing the dialogue. No specific tune was used, the actors improvised. They concentrated on vocal variety through singing the dialogue. Again, they were able to feel and transfer this quality of variety to the scene when it was played sans music. To heighten this experience, the cast was required to play certain scenes to the accompaniment of the director playing the piano. When the music became light and airy, they adjusted to it. They followed the mood, tempo, and volume set by the music. Here again they were able to transfer this feeling into their dialogue and the scenes were embodied with new dimensions.

Of course, there are many ways these problems could have been solved using more conventional techniques. This effort by the director was just an original method to test the power of concentration in his cast as we prepared for performance. The test was successful, and the exercises were fun for everyone. It was work in a pleasing disguise.

Another exercise game we played caused mixed reactions among the cast. During the latter part of the rehearsal period, the director asked the cast to engage in what was referred to as "Schtik Night". The cast was to go through the first act of the play and try to create any

gag or make anything they wanted to make, funny. The only stipulation was that they could not alter the dialogue in any way, or deviate from the basic blocking patterns. This rehearsal was a tremendous tension relieving experience for the cast. It was fun and created a nice atmosphere for improvisation. More importantly, it forced the actors to be aware and play off their fellow actors when they were thrown curves. They began to sense what was coming in this improvisation. If what they thought was going to happen didn't, they immediately attuned their reactions to cope with the scene as it was developing. This exercise was another effort to evaluate their powers of concentration and improvisational abilities. It was a type of insurance exercise in the advent of a performance mishap.

All the exercises that have been mentioned in this chapter were carefully selected to aid in the resolution of a general problem. The director always carefully explained the procedures and the intended goals. After every exercise and after every rehearsal, the director allotted time for discussion of the effort. This discussion was referred to by the cast as the "fireside chat."

This director seldom gave notes after the rehearsals. The reasoning behind this was two-fold. First, giving notes is a tedious affair. At the end of a hard

rehearsal session an actor is physically tired. Sitting there being told what he did wrong is not a happy anticipation. Secondly, it is more important to this director that an actor realizes himself what he did wrong. If the actor tells a director what was not right for him, it forces him to evaluate what he is doing onstage. If a movement is awkward, the actor states this fact and consciously analyzes the problem and finds a solution. This director never told an actor, "You must be standing by the bar for this line." The approach was more like, "What kept you from getting to the bar for this line?" "Is the movement uncomfortable or is the motivation unclear?" If the movement is uncomfortable, the director can adjust and work around it. If the motivation is foggy, the director and actor can jointly investigate the situation until an understanding is reached. The actor is forced to give himself notes, and come up with solutions. This director believes a good actor should be able to give himself notes and act upon self-criticism. It strengthens the ever important aspect of artistic discipline.

The actors were able to discipline their control of energy and concentration during the production. At no time during a performance did they become distracted or even miff a line. After the production closed, the Masqueraders Society held a critique of the play with a panel discussion on all areas of performance. During this Masquerader critique, the recurring opinion of the panel was that the cast was

able to achieve an excellent sense of ensemble. In the opinion of this director, the cast maintained a consistency in their performances unlike any group he has ever worked with. They took pride in their talents, they took pride in doing the play, and they took pride in their craft as actors. This director was proud to have them as a part of his "team".

Audience Response

Audience response to That Championship Season was mixed. The production was fortunate in having excellent houses for each of the five performances. The audiences were predominantly composed of UNC-Greensboro students, and area residents that have been drawn to the Taylor Theatre plays because of their reputation for quality drama and entertainment.

The Masquerader Society held an evaluation and critique session after the play had closed. The overwhelming response from this director's peer group was that the play was one of the most impressive productions ever done as a thesis. There was praise for every aspect of the production in acting, directing, design, and overall artistic success. This response, coming from people whom this director admires and respects as artists, was extremely gratifying.

There were those people who saw the play and were offended by its presentation. The main objection seemed to be a reaction against the realistic dialogue employed by

the playwright. Joe Knox, reviewing the play for the Greensboro Dailey News wrote:

Some members of the audience at the first night performance Wednesday perhaps thought it the language was strong to the point of being rank and offensive, because when the intermission came, they left....without question, That Championship Season deserves an "R" rating....all this is to say the play is super-saturated with sex, all verbal, vividly, convincingly, uninhibited in its delivery.²⁷

Several letters critical of the presentation of a play with such graphic language were sent to the UNC-G Department of Drama and Speech. An anonymous grandmother wrote the following letter of concern stating:

To whom it may concern:

I do not approve of anonymous statements but I write this one with the assurance that I could get many signatures. My statement is in the form of a question: Why? With the talents you have in your theatre group, with the vast material of drama from which to choose for training and entertainment, with your loyal sponsors, WHY would you present to the public an evening of pollution? That is the only single word I find to use to describe the performance of That Championship Season. My first reaction was that the setting was perfect, in every detail, and I think the acting was excellent. But, I would gladly have paid not to be there. I did not return after the intermission and I left with a feeling of escape.²⁸

²⁷Joe Knox, "Championship Salty But Good," Greensboro Dailey News, December 5, 1974, p. 16.

²⁸Letter sent to Head of UNC-G Department of Drama and Speech. December 6, 1974.

The letter continues:

I sincerely think you owe an apology to your sponsors and I dare you to write one in your program with a promise that you won't do it again.

I am a grandmother deeply concerned, pleading for the level of guidance and training our university is giving our young people in atmosphere, spirit, feeling, aims and objectives, and vocabulary.

A Grandmother²⁹

This adverse reaction to the language of the play seemed to be the major criticism of the production. This criticism came from the minority. The director was aware that certain people would be offended by the dialogue. Since this director decided to use the language written by the playwright, perhaps appropriate publicity concerning the nature of the language would have been advisable. If those people who left because of the language would have stayed and taken the play at its face value, possibly their reaction would not have been as critical.

The most gratifying reaction came from those people who were actually moved and affected by the production. These people were in the majority. From comments by audience members, fellow students, and friends in the field, this director believes he achieved the desired audience response. This belief also stems from the reviews of the play.

Doug Waller, writing for the Greensboro Record

²⁹Ibid,

said, "Under the excellent direction of Dan Spaugh, Miller's characters last night uncoiled all the failures and venom that have accumulated in their lives."³⁰

Joe Knox in his review said, "It was in my opinion a powerful, compelling drama, a comedy, a tragedy, a memorable experience....because this is a superior production. I would be straining to find fault with it."³¹

Ironically, the director's most meaningful response from an audience member came in the form of another anonymous letter. This letter was tacked to the bulletin board of Taylor Theatre's rehearsal hall. It read:

Dear Cast And Crew Of That Championship Season,

Last night a few of us sat down in Taylor Theatre amid adults, faculty, a busload of high school students, and God Bless 'Em Angels. We watched a drama unfold about winning and losing and the children of McCarthy.

Brilliantly directed, supremely acted, creatively designed, we laughed, took deep breathes, listened, and felt men's lives.

Come intermission I was drained and had to go outside to indulge in cancerous activity. As I stood there smoking I counted forty-two people walk away into the cold December night. They were in their cloth coats and their mink ones. I could not help but wonder what they were going home to. Cannon? Lucas Tanner? Get Christie Love? Probably. They were running from words.³²

³⁰Doug Waller, "UNC-G Production Shows Sports Other Side," Greensboro Record, December 6, 1974, p. 22.

³¹Joe Knox, "Championship Salty But Good," p. 16.

³²Letter Written To Cast And Crew. December 5, 1974.

The letter continues:

I was bothered by this, almost upset, then I remembered that my father would not read past page twelve of Catcher In The Rye. So, I went back to my seat and sat down. I didn't laugh as much, I took deeper breathes, listened harder, and I was impressed. Thank you gentlemen for making theatre and me alive and well in greater (1974?) Greensboro.

An Undergraduate³³

Personal Comments

The Theatre is a magnificent Art. An actor can walk onto the stage and become a king with untold wealth and power. In the twinkling of an eye, he can be transformed into an alcoholic, a pauper, a genius, or even a god. What an incredible feeling this is, especially if you make an audience believe you.

For the director of a play, the art of the stage is especially meaningful. He sees his ideas come to life. He sees his visions suggested to him by a script personified. He sees emotions and thoughts become reality. This is a thrilling experience. It is also a sad experience. It is sad because everything is illusion, a dream, and therefore only momentary in time.

The play starts as a dream for the director, something intangible he wants to project. After reading a script

³³Letter To Cast And Crew.

he has a mental image of the play. Then begins the work to make the dream come true. At last, finally, it is onstage before you. That Championship Season lived for this director. For five performances the dream had become a reality. Then, the final curtain is lowered. The furniture is struck, the make-up comes off, the walls of a room become flats again, the lights are taken down, platforms are carted off, and the stage is bare. The play is now a memory.

The beauty of the theatre is that it deals with both illusion and reality. It deals with thoughts and emotions. The reality of the theatre is the vivid reality of a dream. But this dream is no longer confined to the mind of the director. The dream is now in the minds of every person who saw the play and was in some way moved by the experience. Knowing that people will share your dreams makes the theatre worthy of the dedication it demands.

The experience of directing That Championship Season will always be filled with cherished memories. This director learned more about his craft, and was proud of what he accomplished. He is supremely proud of his cast. They were able to make an audience feel the despair and suffering of five men. Men who actually lived, yet who are as real as life itself.

It was a difficult thing to stand there and watch the crews tear down the set after the final performance. After the strike, this director went home and sat alone for

hours thinking about the play, thinking about the theatre. It was a very confusing time. Then the director remembered a quote from Joseph Chaiken that had made a great impression at the first reading. It was from Robert Pasolli's A Book On The Open Theatre. In it Chaiken said, "I would like to change my life and everyone else's. I don't know how to do it. If not the life, then the day, the evening, the hour, the minute."³⁴

Chaiken's wish is the wish for any director or actor. This aspiration is a goal for any art form. In the theatre, it is not confined to the art of acting or of directing a play. It carries over to life. It means respecting, so that you in turn will be respected. It means truth. Truth in art is the goal all artists reach for. This director tried to achieve truth in That Championship Season. If all the answers to all the questions weren't there, perhaps the questions we answered held enough truth in them to aid this director in the development of his talents as an artist. Maybe there will come a time when at last we will learn enough so that we can say, "I know how to change my life and everyone else's. I can change the life, the day, the evening, the hour, the minute. I can make you see where there is no

³⁴Robert Pasolli, A Book On The Open Theatre, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.), p. xi.

light, hear when there is no sound, taste when there is no food, feel when you have no feelings."

This director learned many things from his involvement with That Championship Season. He looks forward to learning even more.

Wright, Alan. "That Championship Season," Play and Playwright, June 1974, pp. 34-35.

Wright, Harold. "Theatre, That Championship Season," The Nation, June 3, 1974, p. 29.

Wright, John. Exploring the Play. San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston Inc., 1951.

Wright, Albert and Bertha. Directing Methods. Garden City, New Jersey: A.S. Barnes and Company Inc., 1970.

Yates, T. S. "The Day of Glory," Play, May 15, 1974, p. 28.

Yates, Stanley. "Theatre," Play, June 3, 1974, p. 33.

Yates, Sam. "Championship Day Not Good," Greenhouse, December 5, 1974.

Yates, Jack. "Winner Take All," Play, May 15, 1974, p. 21.

Yates, John. In Against the Fourth Wall. New York: Grove Press Inc., 1970.

Letter Written To Head Of UNCO's Department Of Drama And Speech, December 6, 1974.

Letter Written To Cast And Crew Of That Championship Season, December 7, 1974.

Yates, Charles. "Double Crisp," Play, September 25, 1974, p. 53.

Miller, Jason. That Championship Season. New York: Atheneum Press Inc., 1972.

Miller, Edith. "Talk Of The Town," The New Yorker, May 13, 1974, pp. 32-33.

Frederick, Robert. A Book Of The Open Theatre. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnes, Clive. "That Championship Season," New York Times, September 15, 1972.
- Brien, Alan. "That Championship Season," Plays And Players, June 1974, pp. 32-33.
- Clurman, Harold. "Theatre, That Championship Season," The Nation, June 3, 1972, p. 29.
- Gassner, John. Producing The Play. San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston Inc. 1953.
- Johnson, Albert and Bertha. Directing Methods. Carnbury, New Jersey: A.S. Barnes and Company Inc., 1970.
- Kalem, T.E. "The Dust Of Glory," Time, May 15, 1972, p. 22.
- Kaufman, Stanley. "Theatre," New Republic, June 3, 1972, p. 33.
- Knox, Joe. "Championship Salty But Good," Greensboro Dailey News, December 5, 1974.
- Kroll, Jack. "Winner Take All," Newsweek, May 15, 1972, p. 92.
- Lahr, John. Up Against The Fourth Wall. New York: Grove Press Inc., 1970.
- Letter Written To Head Of UNC-G Department of Drama And Speech. December 6, 1974.
- Letter Written To Cast And Crew Of That Championship Season. December 7, 1974.
- Michner, Charles. "Double Champ," Newsweek, September 25, 1972, p. 53.
- Miller, Jason. That Championship Season. New York: Atheneum Press Inc., 1972.
- Oliver, Edith. "Talk Of The Town," The New Yorker, May 13, 1972, pp. 32-33.
- Pasolli, Robert. A Book On The Open Theatre. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970

- Prideaux, Tom. "Papp Basketballers Cop Stage Cup," Life, July 14, 1972. p. 24.
- Riley, Carolyn and Harte, Barbara. Contemporary Literary Criticism. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company-Book Tower. 1974.
- Sanders, Kevin. "That Championship Season," WABC-TV, September 14, 1972.
- Schreck, Everett. Principles And Styles Of Acting. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1970.
- Smiley, Sam. Playwriting. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1971.
- Spolin, Viola. Improvisation For The Theatre. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963.
- Stasio, Marilyn. "That Championship Season-Everyman's Truth In Six Men's Anguish," Cue, May 27, 1972, p. 2.
- Vinson, James. ed., Contemporary Dramatists. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974.
- Wall Street Journal, May 5, 1972.
- Waller, Doug. "UNC-G Production Shows Sports Other Side," Greensboro Record, December 6, 1974, p. 22.
- Watt, Douglas. "That Championship Season," New York Dailey News, September 15, 1972.
- Weales, Gerald. "Theatre," Commonweal, October 20, 1972, p. 67.
- Women's Wear Dailey, May 4, 1972.