



Photo courtesy of Rick Trice

Raton's community theater mainstays take a break from rehearsals for this weekend's three performances of Neil Simon's female version of "The Odd Couple," directed by Rick Trice at the Shuler Theater. Brenda Ferri and Adrienne Coleman (front, left to right) are the odd couple, Olive and Florence. Their on-stage friends and neighbors are portrayed by, from left, Mark Jansen, Susan Ward, Sara Kowalski, Janese Little, Elizabeth Record and Clint Henson.

# Female version of Simon's 'The Odd Couple' at Shuler

By **Tim Keller**  
Correspondent  
The Chronicle-News

Raton is a goldmine of acting talent, partly the result of having the renowned Shuler Theater in its midst. Directors love to work in this historic venue, and local actors have developed their skills through the several community-theater productions and professional plays the Shuler mounts each year. This weekend, Raton's most seasoned actors, "The A Team," will wrap their comedic skills around Neil Simon's beloved "The Odd Couple." Yet the Shuler version contains a twist.

Simon's story had already been a hit Broadway play, a movie and a TV show when the playwright decided in 1986 to have more fun with it, changing the mismatched, divorced New York City roommates, Oscar and Felix, into strong women characters, Olive and Florence. This weekend, the Santa Fe Trail School for the Performing Arts presents the female version of "The Odd Couple" at the Shuler Theater on Friday and Saturday nights, plus a Sunday-afternoon matinee.

Rick Trice, a veteran Raton actor and director, chose this play as the follow-up to his successful direction last summer of the zany comedy "Murder at the Howard Johnson's." Trice has acted on the Shuler stage for 30 years, and he has been beloved for such roles as Noah in last year's "Two by Two,"

Sancho Panza in "Man of La Mancha," Kris Kringle in "Miracle on 34th Street" and Daddy Warbucks in "Annie."

"As much as I love acting," Trice says, "I love directing even more, and especially working with great comedies. Neil Simon is possibly the best American comedic playwright of the past century, giving us such a rich look at human emotions through a comedic lens." Trice has long wanted to stage the female version of "The Odd Couple," but he didn't have the right combination of players. "Until now," he says.

For 30 years after her rich college acting experiences, the only stage Adrienne Coleman had mounted was the pulpit of the United Methodist Church, where she is the pastor for congregations in Raton and Des Moines, New Mexico. As a direct response to fighting cancer two years ago, she embraced acting again and has become a favorite at the Shuler through roles such as Esther in "Two by Two" and M'Lynn in "Steel Magnolias." In "The Odd Couple" she plays Florence, the high-strung perfectionist.

Florence's opposite is Olive, the sloppy but highly successful sports news producer, played this weekend by Shuler veteran Brenda Ferri, whose memorable roles include Ouiser Boudreaux in "Steel Magnolias," Mavis in "Church Basement Ladies," Aldonza in "Man of La Mancha," Katherine in "Taming of the

Shrew" and Logan Swartzengrubner in "25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee."

Elizabeth Record, Sara Kowalski, Janese Little and Susan Ward play the roommates' friends as they gather to play Trivial Pursuit in Olive's apartment every Friday night. The regular appearance of six women draws the attentions of hot-trot upstairs neighbors Manolo and Jesus Costenzuela, played to the hilt by Clint Henson and Mark Jansen, respectively. The brothers "from Barcelona" proclaim themselves "bery, bery available."

Add some intimate girl talk, an emotional crisis or two — and guacamole. As shaken together by Neil Simon, this combination can't miss.

The weekend production will be the last at the Shuler for Stefani Milstrey, who designed the show's sets, lighting and sound. She has worked virtually every Shuler show since arriving exactly two years ago. She leaves this month to attend Stagecraft Institute of Las Vegas.

"The Odd Couple" will be presented at 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights, May 9 and 10, at Raton's Shuler Theater. The show will close with a 2:30 p.m. Sunday matinee on May 11. General-admission seating costs \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and \$5 for students, with tickets available at the door. Further information is available by calling the Shuler at 575-445-4746.

# First inflation — Had veterans kicking, screaming

By **Don Kingery**  
Special to The Chronicle-News

For the past few decades, Americans have accepted inflation as a fact of life. We don't like it, but we're not surprised when the government announces that the prices of almost everything have gone up from a year ago.

Everything starts somewhere, and it was so with inflation. Because of the steady increases in the costs of just about everything, Americans under 60 may find it hard to understand the shock and anger displayed by grown-ups when inflation occurred for the first time in their lives.

The effect was a traumatic and shocking experience, and to understand it best, a brief history is necessary.

The veterans of World War II were members of the so-called Greatest Generation, a name invented by television newsman Tom Brokaw for a book about the generation.

Members of this generation were born in the 1920s, were children during the Great Depression, went into the military during World War II, came home, got married and became parents of the Baby Boomers, another unusual name given to children born between 1945 and 1964.

Members of this older generation, because of circumstances, had never experienced an increase in the cost of living. When they were kids during the 1930s, gas was 17 to 19 cents a gallon, rent was \$15 to \$18 a month, new cars cost \$450 to \$550, a can of pork and beans cost a nickel, roast beef was 15 cents a pound and white potatoes cost 19 cents for 10 pounds.

Prices remained at that level for most of the decade of the 1930s. When they did change toward the end of the decade, they went down slightly.

The Great Depression was still very much in effect when Japanese bomb-

ers struck the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941, and America entered World War II.

When America entered the war, the U.S. government froze both prices and wages at pre-war levels for the duration of the war. As a result, members of the Greatest Generation lived through infancy, childhood, youth and young adulthood without ever experiencing an increase in the cost of living, whether for toys, groceries, clothing, autos or houses. Incredibly, World War II veterans in their 20s and 30s had never seen an increase in the price of anything that mattered.

World War II ended in August of 1945 after Germany, then Japan surrendered unconditionally, and restrictions on wages and prices were lifted. The demand for goods was huge. So were the demands for higher wages.

In 1940, a new house had cost \$3,920. Four years after the war ended, the same house cost \$7,450. Incomes went up during the same period, from an average of about \$1,750 a year to \$2,750 a year.

Veterans faced their first inflation kicking and screaming. The veterans complained, loudly and of-

ten. They felt caught in a whirlwind of rising prices they had never experienced before. Nothing, it seemed, stayed the same anymore.

In 1940, a gallon of gas cost 11 cents. By 1949, it had jumped to an incredible 17 cents a gallon. Cars that cost \$850 at the end of World War II sold for \$1,450 by the end of 1949.

Women accepted inflation because there was no choice. Men took inflation head-on, believing that if they shouted long enough and loud enough, price tags would automatically reduce themselves.

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# LakePueblo hosts high school fishing tourney

Special to The Chronicle-News

The Bass Federation (TBF) and FLW have partnered to present the 2014 Colorado/New Mexico State High School Fishing Championship on Saturday, May 17. The tournament will take place on Lake Pueblo in Pueblo, Colo., and is open to any high school fishing team in the two states.

This is a two-person (team) event for students in grades 9-12. Registration for anglers and their coach, who will provide the boat they compete in, is online at [HighSchoolFishing.org](http://HighSchoolFishing.org). For more information, call 580-716-4251 or 330-993-0014.

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