

One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest

FIVE GROSSMONTERS FEATURED IN KESEY REVIVAL

By Bud Sonka

Sometimes a great notion is so obscured by adherent petty notions that, like the forest obscured by its trees, the great notion is lost to view.

"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," which has just completed a brief run at the Carter Centre Stage in Balboa Park, is a case in point. Based on the novel by Ken Kesey, Dale Wasserman's play sets a parable of our technological era in a psychiatric ward peopled by resigned inmates making the least of a bad situation and dominated by Big Nurse Ratched, a paragon of a society gone mad with power.

Into this caricature of contemporary culture, where physical and psychological security are to be had at the price of submission in the machinations of the power elite - and personal freedom of development be damned as disruptive and anti-social - into this parody of Freud's technological metaphor of psychology, is introduced one Randle P. McMurphy, hustler, roustabout, boisterous, bon vivante of working class pleasures. Having conned his

way off a prison farm by feigning psychosis, McMurphy leaps with naive gusto from the frying pan into the fire, which he plays for the angles, fights for the fun of it, and ultimately attempts to conquer with every man's firehose, only to be consumed in the end by the man-hungry maw of a situation more voraciously entrapping than the steel walls of prison.

McMurphy to whom his fellow ward citizens look for release from the tedium of their lives, fails as deus ex machina because he is neither arbitrary nor god-like. He is exuberantly human, and no match for the diabolus ex machina which is the ever-watchful therapeutic system incarnate in Big Nurse, and dreadfully symbolized by the fantasy of inmate Chief Bromden - a great machine eighteen stories below the floor, where abnormal behavior is surgically removed and replaced by mechanically predictable devices.

Chief Bromden (played with painfully aware withdrawal by Grossmont's own Jack Barranger) is the man who breaks loose to freedom and a future. Unlike McMurphy, the Chief's quest is inward. Playwright Wasserman



THE CHIEF — Jack Barranger teaches English here

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LIFE OF THE PARTY — Jeri Dexheimer (right) and Amelia C. Johnston were among five Grossmonters in stage production of Ken Kesey's novel.

Photo by Tom Grund

Cuckoo's Nest Continued

has given the Chief a series of liturgical soliloquies in which he blossoms spiritually under the nourishment of McMurphy until it is he, finally, who overthrows the machine.

Novelist Kesey, a student of Zen, had the great notion that a man's most meaningful struggle is within himself. Unfortunately, Craig Noel, who directed Wasserman's stage version of Kesey's work, had the notion that a man's inner struggles are comical, and directed the play as a laff-a-minute farce.

Noel's superficial direction is doubly unfortunately because it sent McMurphy, played by Russell T. Rohrer, rushing headlong past some superb characterizations by

the rest of the cast, many of them from Grossmont.

John Newhouse played Aide William as a slightly amused, not altogether detached attendant in the ward; the character was as appropriate to the scene as it would have been in *Catch-22* or *M*A*S*H*.

Amelia C. Johnston, as Candy Starr, was everything McMurphy promised, the very incarnate hope of hopeless men. Jeri Dexheimer, as the raucous Sandra, was a one-woman personification of all the non-sterile, non-serious, nonsense of life missing from the lives of the ward inmates.

Highest accolades go to Ralph H. Jones for his sensitive portrayal of Dale Harding as a man struggling to retain his dignity even in the

face of his own despair.

Had Director Noel slowed down the pace of the first act, and

allowed McMurphy to establish the kind of sympathetic relationships that are the stock-in-trade of the

conman he is, the play would have justified the efforts of Kesey and the cast.

TUTORING FOR VETS AVAILABLE

GI Bill students with academic problems can get Veterans Administration financed tutoring more easily under the provisions of a law that became effective October 24, according to Gordon R. Elliott, Director of VA's Southern California Regional Office.

The new law, which also increased educational benefits, removed the requirement that a student must be failing a course to be eligible for a VA-paid tutor. It also made tutoring available for

the first time to wives, widows and children studying under the agency's Dependents' Educational Assistance program.

Tutorial assistance first became available in March 1970 under For this help, VA paid tutors up to \$50 for each month or portion of a month they tutored, up to a maximum of nine months.

Under the new law, however, VA Public law 91-219, Elliott said. It was designed for veterans and servicemen studying on a half-time or more basis at post second-

dary level who needed help in passing courses essential to the programs of education.

pays tutors for the actual time they tutor, up to a maximum of \$50 a month. This tends to stretch tutorial benefits which eligible persons may continue to use until a total of \$450 is exhausted.

Neither law charges tutorial assistance against the veteran basic educational entitlement earned during military service,