

## ARKANSAS VALLEY VOICES

To quote an old saying, "The more things change the more they stay the same." This idea was reinvented by director Jeanne Rasmussen as she and her team of 35 conducted the research for the upcoming performance of "Arkansas Valley Voices" (AVV). This theater production will debut at the Salida Steam Plant in June.

AVV tells the story of the history of Chaffee County from 1870 until the end of World War Two. In researching this tale some common themes emerged: concerns over disobedient adolescents, complaints of over-watered lawns, and predictions of the demise of the family, themes that still in vogue according to the local press.

Over 2 years ago Rasmussen gathered 25 enthusiastic volunteers at the Salida Regional Library for their first meeting. Each volunteer was given the task to go through old newspaper files for a specific 5 or 10 year period and select the best materials for the production. The group met monthly to compare notes, laugh over humorous articles, and look for major themes. Local historians such as Wendell Hutchinson, Joe Cogan, and Dick Dickson gave presentations for the researchers and kept the historic mood alive. This phase took about a year and a half.

The next phase was one of editing down these first cuts into a workable and balanced presentation. Twelve volunteers worked hard for six months to accomplish this task. Unfortunately, since the lore was so rich, many interesting articles had to be eliminated. The pieces that remained were judged to best tell the story, or represented a common emotion, or just elicited a good laugh.

The third phase, that of knitting together a complete production, is now underway. A cast of six men and women to read the newspaper articles has been selected. A female Greek Chorus which will perform the task of narrators is learning their lines. In addition, original and traditional dances and songs are being worked into the production. Short skits illustrative of the times will provide laughs and perspective.

As background and to set time and place slides of archival photographs will be projected on a large screen during the performance. The originals of these photographs were generously supplied by long time residents of the valley.

To set the tone for the performance, the theater lobby will be filled with classic and rare old photographs of the area. A history buffs delight. One delightful part of this display will be a set of photos taken of glass slides around the turn of the century by a woman photographer in Buena Vista. Original art of old buildings will also be part of the display.

To accommodate the older residents of our community, who may be particularly interested in AVV, a matinee will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 14. The other dates for the show are June 12, 13, 19, and 20 at 8:00 p.m. at the historic Salida Steam Plant. Tickets are available in



Salida at: Salida Bank and Trust, Soho Art Gallery, First Street Books, and Tierra Madre. In Buena Vista you can get tickets at Collegiate Peaks Bank, The View, and Art and Music. Tickets will be available at the door at the time of the performances. General Admission is \$8:00, Seniors, \$7:00, and children under 12, \$6.00.

As a benefit to help defray the production costs of the show a High Tea will be held on May 31 at 2:00 p.m. at 125 E. Fifth in Salida, the home of John and Barbara Bredfeld. The cost will be \$12.00. Tickets are to be purchased in advance at Fresh Ideas Galleries, Fabulous Finds, and Adventure Media in Salida. The Bredfeld home is one of the oldest in Salida and had been beautifully restored to its original condition.