

seniors



"The nucleus of the group meet once a week in rehearsal mode, and people look forward to performing," said Phil Carlin (left). | RICH HEIN-SUN-TIMES

Setting the stage for fun

Seniors enjoy performing vaudeville routines, with no memorization requirements

BY CELESTE BUSK
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When some men retire, they go fishing. Not Phil Carlin.

The 83-year-old is busy directing and casting an upcoming vaudeville show with his peers at Smith Village, a continuing care retirement community on the Southwest Side.

The group of about 15 core members are developing their next show, which will be held April 1 at Smith Village and April 8 at Smith Crossing. Unfortunately the show won't be opened to the public, but if it gets good enough, Carlin said he'll take it on the road.

"We have a gentleman who does a great 'Old Man River,'" said Carlin. "We'll also be doing 'Who's on First?,' a vaudeville routine made

famously by Abbott and Costello's version."

"The Jack Benny Program" will likely be a part of Carlin's vaudeville show, too. The radio-TV comedy series that ran for more than three decades — from the 1930s to the 1960s — generally is regarded as a high-water mark in 20th century comedy.

For the show, Carlin says there is one requirement — no one has to memorize lines. "We'll hold the scripts in our hands if we have a hard time memorizing. Some people didn't want to join up because they thought they had to memorize something. So, it's a way to get them involved."

Carlin says the group is casting now. The process includes Aman-

da Mauceri, associate executive director at Smith Village.

"The nucleus of the group meet once a week in rehearsal mode, and people look forward to performing," said Carlin, who is a professor emeritus at the Graduate School of Loyola University Chicago. Carlin says it's a honorary position, but "I do help once in a while and teach a class or do some committee work."

"Plus, before retirement, I was part of many community theater groups on the South Side. I'd audition and maybe get the part. It was fun. I guess I've been in about 50 community shows before I came here," Carlin said.

Why does he do it? Simple:

"Acting is fun! You get to be someone else for a while. It's also fun to hear the roar of the crowd."

"Plus, I like to keep busy. With the theatrical aspect, you get the fun knowing that you don't have to do this to make a living. It's a lot of fun," Carlin said.

Meanwhile, Mauceri says having the seniors get involved in theater helps build self-esteem and character.

"It shows that no matter how old you are, you can learn new skills," said Mauceri.

Smith Village offers four levels of care: independent living; assisted living; Alzheimer's and assisted Memory Support living; and nursing care and rehabilitation.

For more information about Smith Village, 2320 W. 113th Pl., call (773)-474-7300 or visit SmithVillage.org.

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