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Leave 'em Laf-fing: **LafFrantics Cast Recalls** the Good Old Days

By Cathy Dausman



Betsey Young holds a playbill from the very first LafFrantics presentation in Photo Cathy Dausman

instead was an entertainment legacy. Lamorindans of a certain age will recall the LafFrantics and their standing-room-only Town performance antics with pleasure. ence a moment or two to catch on." The rest of us would do well to listen and learn.

Lafayette in 1950, he and his neighbors wanted to build a community center for their as-yet unincorporated city. They formed the Community Center, Inc. (CCI) and Nelson, as president, began fund raising.

Betsey Young, who became Laf-Frantics' choreographer, moved to Lafayette in 1956. She soon introduced herself to neighbor and fellow dancer Geraldine "Jeri" Burnside, raved Barbara Abel. Abel and her and the pair danced wherever they husband Dick were LafFrantics cast could.

Someone suggested putting on a Burnside designed the sets. show. Cue Judy Garland's Babes In Arms character: "We've gotta have a the shows for the first six years; Evegreat show, with a million laughs ... lyn "Ev" McLean became director and color ... and a lot of lights to 1962. McLean also supplied live make it sparkle. And songs – won- piano music throughout the show. derful songs."

history. From 1956 to 1986, May McLean played "Alley Cat" if somethrough September, members of one missed a cue. CCI, the Suburban Woman's Club, Suburban Junior Club and Jr. Cham- goose bumps if she ever hears that ber of Commerce brought laugh-a-song. minute live theater to Lafayette.

They wrote original shows, learned songs, dance steps, made curtain call. costumes, and designed and built

hey wanted to build a commu-sets. The format was a melodrama, nity center. What they built followed by a two part olio, or vaudeville specialty acts. "Charlie Berger wrote original scripts," Nelson recalled, "and he was a pun-ster. Hall Sometimes it would take the audi-

LafFrantics shows bore names like Curses, Soiled Again, Fangs for When Theron Nelson came to the Mem'ries, The Farce Be With You, Camelittle and Medic Heir. In a video memoir recorded last year, Mary Berger recalled how her husband prepared the scripts. "He'd work all week, and come home, and spend the weekend writing. It took him a year to write a script. And when he'd finished writing one, he'd start in on the next," she said.

> "Charlie Berger was fabulous," members from 1978 to 1986. Jeri

Dan and Louise Welty directed "She was just a great lady," said The rest is 30 years of Lafayette Abel, of McLean, who recalled how

To this day, Abel said she gets

Jan Day joined the LafFrantics in 1963, and stayed through its final

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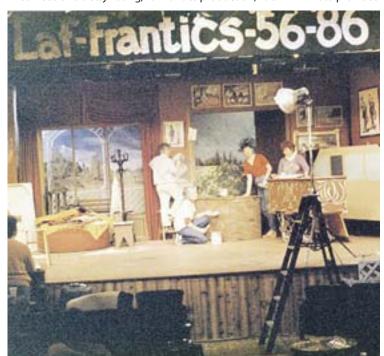


Photo provided Stage crew on final show - One Move Time



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