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*Dramatic Publishing*

A FULL LENGTH PLAY

# happy daze

OR  
THE SHORT, HAPPY MADNESS  
OF JULIAN THADDEUS SPRINGER

BY  
WILLIAM GLEASON



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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## HAPPY DAZE

*A Two-Act Comedy*

For a Large Cast

(Note: With doubling, a cast of ten or eleven is necessary.)

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J. T. SPRINGER..high school age boy  
JULIAN SPRINGER. . his father  
ANN SPRINGER..his mother  
LINDA SPRINGER..his sister  
GRANDPA SPRINGER..his paternal grandfather  
GRANDMA SPRINGER..his paternal grandmother  
GRANDMA FISK..his maternal grandmother  
GRANDPA FISK..his maternal grandfather  
JEFF/RICKY..high school boy in present/in the Fifties  
JOE/BOB ..the same  
MELANIE/JULIE..high school girl in present/in the Fifties  
STEVE CHAMPLAIN..sophisticated young man  
ARLO FATSARONI (FATSIE) ..young thug of the Fifties  
MRS. TEMPLEWHITE..junior high school teacher  
BABS ..waitress in the malt shop in the Fifties  
PRINCE ..a Fifties thug  
SLICK..the same  
LOREEN..Fifties girl  
DELORES..the same  
BASEBALL CATCHER  
UMPIRE  
COACH  
TOM..high school boy in the Fifties  
NEWSPERSON..television type  
LODI ..a cowboy in television scene

**STRANGER..a cowboy in television scene**  
**SALOON GIRL.. in television scene**  
**WESTERN STREET URCHIN..in television scene**  
**OLD MAN.. cowboy in television scene**

**JANICE, MARY, TOM and other Fifties' teenagers**  
**MR. DINGLEMEYER.. principal of high school**

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# ACT ONE

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As the audience is seated, rock and roll music of the Fifties is played. The houselights dim and J.T. appears through the curtains.

J.T. My name is J.T. Springer. Actually it's Julian Thaddeus Springer, but everyone calls me J.T. My father once described me as a manic-depressive, obsessive-compulsive, psychotic, paranoid schizophrenic with delusions of grandeur that eats too much. My mother told him not to worry about it. She said all teenagers are like that. Most people spend two thousand, five hundred and fifty-five days as a teenager — or sixty-one thousand, three hundred and twenty hours. Of those, approximately twenty-one thousand hours are spent sleeping, twenty thousand are spent in school, ten thousand in front of the television set and the last ten thousand are equally divided between eating and worrying about your complexion. A person is born and thrust onto the road of life. People continue down this road in relative peace and comfort until their thirteenth birthday. At this time they are blindfolded, put on a pogo stick and pushed into a minefield known as adolescence. They bounce around in this minefield for seven years — years filled with pain, confusion, doubt, trauma, embarrassment, ridicule, torture, grief, rage and Clearasil. If you come through alive, they patch you up, slap you on the back, give you the keys to the kingdom and welcome you to the world of adulthood. Some of us

come through clean — and some of us don't. The teenage years are filled with emotional pitfalls, and to escape from painful reality, some teenagers turn to dope, some to alcohol and still others, like myself, retreat into a world of their own making. Faced with a world in which I felt out of place, I decided to create my own world; to move back to a time when life was no more complicated than a hula hoop. That's right! I was a Fifties' freak — and this is my story. (He is handed a blanket through the curtain and begins to wrap it around himself.) My problems started when I was twenty-six hours old. It was at that point that my father began to expect too much of me.

(J.T. lies down on the stage — head pointing downstage — and lets out a shriek, crying like a newborn baby. The curtain is opened and reveals [stage R to L] GRANDPA FISK, GRANDMA FISK, ANN, JULIAN, GRANDMA SPRINGER and GRANDPA SPRINGER. They stand shoulder to shoulder and wave at the newborn baby. ANN wears a bathrobe. The others are casually dressed. They make baby talk and smile. J.T. cries out again.)

JULIAN (bursting with pride). Listen to that! Listen to those lungs! That boy has the lungs of a future opera singer . . . or a politician! (Laughs.) A President's lungs! What a boy!

GRANDMA SPRINGER. He looks just like you, Julian.

GRANDPA SPRINGER. Got the Springer jaw. No doubt about that.

GRANDMA FISK. He's got your eyes, Ann. Those are Fisk eyes.

GRANDPA FISK. And Fisk hands. Good hands on that boy.

JULIAN. Surgeon's hands if I ever saw any! Or a sculptor!

There's art waiting to be born in those hands. (J.T. gropes clumsily.) Look at that coordination! The boy's got a natural sense of rhythm. I can already tell that he's athletically inclined. (J.T. gropes again.) You see there? Rhythm, speed, grace and agility! The kid's a natural.

ANN (smiling as she holds JULIAN's arm). Oh Julian! Isn't he the most . . . the most beautiful little boy you've ever seen in your whole life? And he's ours, Julian. Our little boy.

GRANDPA FISK. Good feet. The boy's got good feet on him.

JULIAN. Those are the feet of a professional quarterback if I ever saw any! Look at those toes. Those are pro caliber toes. Championship toes! Those toes are destined for glory.

GRANDMA SPRINGER. Glorious toes. I'll grant you that.

GRANDPA SPRINGER (squinting). Springer toes. The boy has Springer toes.

GRANDMA FISK. Maybe so . . . but he's got Fisk ankles.

(J.T. makes a cooing sound.)

ANN. Oh look, Julian! He's smiling!

ALL. Aw! (They go into a collection of waving combined with goo-goo baby talk.)

JULIAN. Would you look at those gums!

GRANDMA FISK. Good gums.

GRANDPA SPRINGER. Springer gums.

GRANDPA FISK. All American gums.

GRANDMA SPRINGER. You don't see gums like that anymore.



ANN (smiling). He looks so helpless.

JULIAN. Helpless! There's nothing helpless about that boy.

Not a helpless bone in that body. I see determination in those eyes. I see potential. I see greatness! What you see before you is eight pounds of the rootin'-tootin'est snakes 'n' snails 'n' puppy dog tailed all-American got the world by the ears son of a gun that ever graced a hospital nursery!

GRANDPA FISK. Solid shoulders.

GRANDMA SPRINGER. Good neck.

GRANDPA SPRINGER. Nice forehead.

GRANDMA FISK (correcting him). *Beautiful* forehead. A Fisk forehead.

JULIAN. Tell me the truth, Ann. Did you ever see a forehead with more potential?

ANN. No, dear. That's potentially the best forehead I've ever seen.

JULIAN. Look there! He's going to sleep.

ANN (smiling). I wonder if he can dream yet.

JULIAN. He can dream all right. He's dreaming about rounding third base after his first home run. Dreaming about that first touchdown. Dreaming about hot dogs and state fairs and fishing and Christmas trees.

ANN. You think so?

JULIAN. He's our son. I know so. That boy is going to be something special.

(The adults back away slowly, waving and smiling. They stop after a few steps. J.T. rises and throws blanket to one side.)

J.T. Suddenly I was a year older, a year wiser, and ready to try

and take my first big step . . . literally. (He turns to face upstage. The adults all hold out their hands and smile expectantly. J.T. totters trying to balance.)

JULIAN. Come on, big fella! You can do it!

ANN. Come to Momma!

JULIAN. Come to Daddy!

(J.T. raises one foot and they all smile in anticipation and hold their breath.)

JULIAN. He's gonna do it! He's gonna do it! He's gonna . . .

(J.T. steps forward and falls flat on his face. Their faces all drop.) He didn't do it, Ann.

J.T. (sitting up and facing the audience with his legs crossed).

And the years passed.

JULIAN. Baby teeth and potty training.

ANN. You can't go outside – it's raining.

GRANDMA FISK. Brush your hair and go to school.

GRANDMA SPRINGER. Don't forget the Golden Rule.

GRANDPA SPRINGER. Dirty diapers, scrapes and scratches.

GRANDPA FISK. No you mustn't play with matches.

JULIAN. Doctors, dentists, whooping cough.

ANN. Turn the television off.

GRANDMA FISK. We took J.T. to the zoo.

(ANN walks to stage L, meets LINDA.)

GRANDPA FISK. Showed him Captain Kangaroo.

GRANDMA SPRINGER. Lots of progress he's been showing.

GRANDMA SPRINGER. You can't play outside – it's snowing.

JULIAN. Put the ball into the basket or your daddy blows a gasket!

(ANN crosses back with LINDA.)

J.T. Mom left home. I really missed her. Brought me home a  
baby sister.

LINDA (kicks J.T.). Creep!

(All the adults smile and clasp their hands, "Aw!".)

ANN (smiling). She's an angel !

LINDA (kicks J.T. again). Creep!

JULIAN. Daddy's little girl !

LINDA (kicks J.T.). Creep!

(J.T. jumps up and raises his fist to LINDA.)

LINDA (screams). MOMMY! (The adults all gasp.)

GRANDMA SPRINGER (grabbing J.T. and spanking him once,  
passing him down the line). Naughty!.

(All the adults slap him on the bottom and say, "Naughty.")

LINDA grins gleefully. J.T. is passed along until he  
comes face to face with JULIAN.)

JULIAN (shaking his finger). Don't you ever! Now see here!  
Mark my words! I've a good mind to! When I was your  
age! Because I say so, that's why! AND DON'T YOU  
FORGET IT!

J.T. (turning to audience). HELP!

(The others break away and move upstage to the bleachers —  
two benches. An UMPIRE, CATCHER and COACH

enter. The UMPIRE begins to dust off home plate as the CATCHER watches. The COACH approaches J.T. He carries a baseball hat and a bat which he gives to J.T.)

J.T. Suddenly I was eight years old and Dad signed me up for Little League where I was supposed to learn teamwork, good sportsmanship, discipline, "esprit de corps," and the value of competition. There was only one problem . . . I couldn't play baseball.

COACH (constantly rubbing his hands together as he chews nervously on a large wad of bubble gum). Hey, Ump? You got a time out over here! Time out.

UMPIRE (yelling). TIME OUT!

J.T. (standing with bat as COACH crosses to him. He waves to the bleachers) Hey!

ANN. Look, Julian, it's J.T.! He's going to bat! (They all cheer except for LINDA who boos.) Stop it, Linda!

JULIAN. We need a hit, J.T.! Big hit, baby! You can do it!

COACH (chewing his gum, putting his arm around J.T.). Well, kid. This is it! This is the biggie! The biggie, kid! Last game of the season, bases loaded, two outs, tie score, bottom of the ninth, and the Championship at stake . . . But I don't want you to think about it.

J.T. Coach?

COACH (ignoring him). I know you haven't played much, kid. But three of our regulars are out with the measles, so it's up to you.

J.T. Coach?

COACH. The Championship is at stake here, kid. So I'm gonna be perfectly honest with you. I want you to try and let the pitcher hit you. It'll only hurt for a little while and we get a run in and win the game.

J.T. Coach?

COACH. We're all depending on you, kid. Now go out and get hit!

J.T. Coach?

COACH. What is it, kid?

J.T. (with bat). Do I hold this end of the bat or this one?

COACH (clenching his teeth). The small end, kid . . . the small end.

UMPIRE. Batter up! (All cheer.)

JULIAN. Big hit, J.T.! Big hit!

ANN. You can do it, son.

LINDA. He's gonna strike out!

(J.T. walks to the plate. The CATCHER and the UMPIRE get ready. The CATCHER smacks his fist into the glove.)

UMPIRE. Steeeee-rike one!

COACH (under his breath). Hit him . . . hit that kid. (The CATCHER strikes his glove again.)

UMPIRE. Steeeee-rike two!

COACH (clasps hands). Please . . . hit him. Hit that kid!

(J.T. prepares to swing, then falls to the dirt. The fans scream and the COACH jumps for joy.)

COACH. He's hit! He's hit! We win! (J.T. climbs back up.)

UMPIRE (gesturing). Take your base, son. (Fans cheer.)

ANN. Is he all right?

J.T. (brushing himself off). Oh, it didn't hit me. (He smiles and the fans moan.)

COACH. It did too! I heard it! Shut up and take your base!

J.T. No, coach . . . it hit my bat.

JULIAN (rising). Shut up, you idiot! (ANN pulls him back down.)

UMPIRE. Foul ball!

COACH. The kid is delirious! Can't you see that? It must have hit him on the head.

J.T. No it didn't, Coach. It hit my bat.

JULIAN (covering his face). Oh, no! Oh, no!

(The CATCHER slams his hand into the glove again.)

UMPIRE. Steeee-rike three!. You're out!

(Fans boo and the COACH throws his hat down in disgust.)

JULIAN. That is *not* my son!

CATCHER (jumping up and running off shouting.) We won!  
We won!

(The fans look at J.T. and slowly exit with the exception of JULIAN and the COACH. J.T. stands with the bat over his shoulder.)

LINDA (as she exits with her mother). I told you he would strike out.

COACH (walking to J.T. and removing J.T.'s hat; taking the bat). Do me a favor, kid. Don't try out next year. (He crosses and exits.)

J.T. (to audience). I learn a valuable lesson about life from my father.

JULIAN (crossing down to J.T.). You realize what **you** have done?

J.T. I was just telling the truth.

JULIAN. That isn't what is important here. What *is* important is that you lost the game. You let down your teammates. You let down your coach . . . and you let *me* down.

J.T. But . . .

JULIAN. In this world there are winners and losers. Those who lose at baseball are often those who lose at life. I don't ever want to see you pull a stupid stunt like that again.

J.T. You told me I should always tell the truth.

JULIAN. I said you should never lie. In this case you didn't have to lie. All you had to do was to take your base. You didn't have to say a word. The umpire said "Take your base." Why didn't you do it? Now, because of you, all your teammates will have to live with the pain of this loss for the rest of their lives. You blew it for everybody. A whole season down the drain because you didn't have the courage to keep your mouth shut. (J.T. looks down and JULIAN puts his arm around J.T.'s shoulders and walks him toward stage R.) Look, son, I'm not saying you shouldn't be honest . . . I'm just saying there's a time and place for everything. You're not going to get many breaks in life, but when you do, you should take advantage of them. Right? You see what I mean?

J.T. I think so.

JULIAN (stopping at stage R exit). Winners and losers, J.T. That's what it's all about. The sooner you learn that, the better off you'll be . . . I'll see you at the house. (He exits.)

J.T. Thou shalt not lie . . . unless it becomes necessary. (Crosses L.)

J.T. (moving downstage. To audience). Time marches on. I become inquisitive. I start asking sensitive questions.

(ANN walks out L. and moves toward R.)

J.T. Hey, mom?

ANN (pausing). Yes, dear?

J.T. Where do babies come from?

ANN (continuing on toward exit). Ask your father, dear.

(JULIAN enters R. and passes ANN as she exits.)

J.T. Hey, Dad?

JULIAN. Yes, son?

J.T. Where do babies come from?

(JULIAN whispers in J.T.'s ear, then crosses off L.)

J.T. (with eyes wide). Holy Mackerel!

(LINDA enters, crosses L. to R., carrying a doll. She stops by J.T.)

J.T. Linda! Did you know that you're half-bird and half-bee?

LINDA (kicking him). Creep! (She exits R.)

J.T. (rubbing his ankle). Some things never change.

(MRS. TEMPLEWHITE, a teacher, enters. She is dressed severely with her hair in a bun. Glasses rest on the edge of her nose. She carries a ruler and a book. She points the ruler at J.T.)



MRS. TEMPLEWHITE. J.T.! Don't dally! You'll be late for class! (She crosses and stops with her arms crossed.)

J.T. I'll be right there, Mrs. Templewhite. (To audience.)  
Junior High School and the first stirrings of young love.

(MELANIE enters. She carries books and stops at the edge of the stage.)

MELANIE. My name is Melanie Webster and even at the tender age of fourteen I am already considered beautiful. I play the piano with dexterity and can sing in three languages. I also take tap and ballet lessons, own a horse named Pepper and have played three ingenue roles in community theatre. I am an excellent student and teachers adore me. (She starts to cross.) And I can't say I blame them.

MRS. TEMPLEWHITE (smiling). Good morning, Melanie.

MELANIE. Good morning, Mrs. Templewhite.

MRS. TEMPLEWHITE. Would you please set out the chairs, Melanie?

MELANIE. I would love to, Mrs. Templewhite. (MELANIE begins to unfold chairs and put them one behind the other.)

J.T. (to audience). Melanie! Was ever a name so fair? I am at odds. I am in love. Fair damsel! Hold out thine hand to me so that I might place my heart therein. (He crosses to her.) Can I help you, Melanie?

MELANIE. Suit yourself. (He helps her set out six chairs in a line across the stage.)

J.T. (as they put out the chairs). Can I carry your books after class?

MELANIE. No.