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*Dramatic Publishing*





American Association of Community Theatre  
**AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays:**  
Volume 1 (2014)

# **The Boatwright**

By Bo Wilson



# American Association of Community Theatre AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 1 (2014)

**Exit Laughing – Comedy. By Paul Elliott.** When the biggest highlight in your life for the past 30 years has been your weekly bridge night out with the “girls,” what do you do when one of your foursome inconveniently dies? If you’re Connie, Leona and Millie, three southern ladies from Birmingham, you “borrow” the ashes from the funeral home for one last card game, and the wildest, most exciting night of your lives involves a police raid, a stripper and a whole new way of looking at all the fun you can have when you’re truly living.

**The Seamstress – Drama. By Cece Dwyer.** It is 1916, a time when women’s rights are far from equal. Cynthia McFarland, attractive and gracious wife of the extremely wealthy, albeit licentious and abusive, Richard McFarland, finds herself in a desperately compromising position. He wants the requisite wife in an attempt to enter politics. She wants to free herself from a brutal relationship. At Richard’s offhand suggestion, Cynthia hires Andorra Hamilton, a beautiful young seamstress, to be a working guest in their home and outfit her for the upcoming social season and political functions, initiating a series of events that unravel the secret lives of everyone in the McFarland mansion.

**The Vanishing Point – Drama. By Nedra Pezold Roberts.** How do you find your way home when the land, the culture and way of life, and even the relationships of your birth are vanishing all around you? That’s the problem that haunts Pierre, an environmental engineer recently returned to Point Critique to head an experimental program designed to halt the loss of Louisiana’s coastal wetlands. What he finds, in addition to a dangerously fragile ecosystem, is a brother (now engaged to Pierre’s former girlfriend) determined to break free of the trap he sees as Cajun culture, and a father, Paul, still smarting from the pain of his broken relationship with Pierre. When Paul’s shrimp boat sinks in a fiery wreck at sea, Pierre believes that replacing the vessel is the way to connect with his father and heal old wounds. But Paul wants more than a boat; he wants his son back. Gaining his lost son, however, won’t prevent Paul from losing the other one.

**Jellofish – Drama/Comedy. By Jim Henry.** Four World War II veterans have been playing a monthly game of poker and dragging 5% from every pot since 1945, and this “side pot” has grown to a sizable fortune. As the men compete, they struggle over what to do with their shared nest egg. As the debates escalate, their conflicting views on love, friendship, politics, death and taxes are exposed. The events of their lives are revealed as each player comes upon random “history chips,” created during the past 50 years by one of the players when a significant event occurred in their lives. While the significance of history chips such as Grand Slam, Raccoon and Jellofish are revealed, the deeper implications of a lifetime of friendship and competition are explored. The table is set. Shuffle up and deal.

**End Papers – Drama. By Barry Weinberg.** Kathy has to use all her ingenuity and intelligence if she is to avoid losing her home and all her possessions after her husband’s secret life is exposed. At the same time, she is forced to fend off unwelcome romantic overtures from the old boyfriend who reappears in her life. Kathy is convinced she can build a money-making business out of End Papers, the used bookstore where she works, and is encouraged by the store’s 80-year-old owner. But if she is to make her plan a reality, Kathy must use all her wiles to deal with her husband and ex-boyfriend, both of whom insist on dominating her affections and stifling her independence.

**The Boatwright – Drama. By Bo Wilson.** Ben Calloway can’t seem to get his bearings in his own home anymore. Fifty-seven years old, recently widowed, childless and retired from the Kansas Highway Patrol, he’s adrift—and even though he’s never seen the ocean, he decides he should build a boat and sail across the Atlantic, single-handedly. When he decides to let his troubled neighbor, film-school dropout Jaime Watson, make a movie about his project, the two men—generations apart and lonely in very different ways—force each other to confront the isolation in their own lives.

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# **American Association of Community Theatre AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays: Volume 1 (2014)**

*Exit Laughing* by  
PAUL ELLIOTT

*The Seamstress* by  
CECE DWYER

*The Vanishing Point* by  
NEDRA PEZOLD ROBERTS

*Jellofish* by  
JIM HENRY

*End Papers* by  
BARRY WEINBERG

*The Boatwright* by  
BO WILSON



**Dramatic Publishing Company**  
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## INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) is proud to present the six winning scripts and playwrights of the first AACT NewPlayFest cycle. AACT NewPlayFest is an initiative by AACT to address the critical need for new, high-quality plays for community theatre audiences around the globe. It has been embraced by playwrights and theatres across the country, bringing exciting theatrical journeys to producing companies and joyful realization and anticipation to playwrights and their work.

AACT is pleased to partner with Dramatic Publishing Company for this program. AACT NewPlayFest is unparalleled in new play competitions, providing full productions of the winning scripts, plus publication and rights representation by a major theatrical publisher. Also thanks to Texas Nonprofit Theatres, Inc., for pioneering the way. Its TNT POPS! New Play Project served as the model for AACT NewPlayFest.

In this inaugural cycle, ending in 2014, scripts were submitted by more than 200 playwrights. From the two dozen-plus theatres that applied, six were selected from across the country to produce the world premieres of the winning scripts. The benefits of AACT NewPlayFest will grow as additional theatres produce these top-notch plays.

We hope you will consider one of these plays for your next season.

Break a leg,

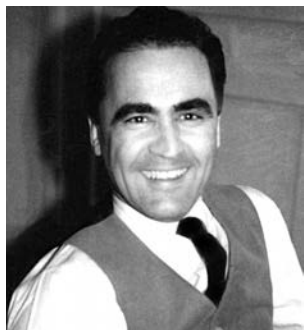
Julie Crawford, Executive Director  
American Association of Community Theatre

The American Association of Community Theatre is the resource connection for America's theatres. AACT represents the interests of more than 7,000 theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Armed Services overseas. To learn more about AACT NewPlayFest and AACT go to [aact.org](http://aact.org).



## FOREWORD

AACT NewPlayFest is made possible in part by a grant from the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Fund.



Jack K. Ayre celebrated his 90th birthday before passing away in December 2011. At his birthday party he sang with a barbershop quartet—one of his favorite activities—and celebrated with his cousin and lifelong friend, Frank Ayre Lee. Though as adults they lived on opposite sides of the country, the cousins kept in touch through letters that displayed a love for the written word and an irreverent sense of humor. Jack had participated in theatre productions at Drew University in New Jersey and at a community theatre in Connecticut in his younger years and continued that interest when he moved to California. Frank was also an avid aficionado of theatre and had dabbled in playwriting, adapting Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* for a children's theatre production, and penning *McSteg*, a tongue-in-cheek discourse ribbing his cousin Jack and based on a scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Upon Jack's death, resources he left were used to create the Jack K. Ayre Foundation for the United States Coast Guard, of which he was a member during WWII, and the Jack K. and Agnes K. Ayre Foundation for Blind Children—his mother, Agnes, was a teacher and pioneer in educating the blind. In addition, the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation has been created by the family of Frank Ayre Lee as a legacy for the creative endeavors of Jack, who was an advertising executive and public relations director. The family is pleased to honor Jack K. Ayre and Frank A. Lee, who passed away in August 2012, through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre through AACT NewPlayFest.

*Photo: Courtesy of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Fund.*

# **The Boatwright**

Drama by  
**BO WILSON**



# **The Boatwright**

## **CHARACTERS**

**BEN CALLOWAY:** A man in his late 50s. A quiet air of fitness and competence. He used to know his place in the world; lately, he's less sure.

**JAIME WATSON:** A young man of 20 with all of the highs and lows of that age. He's never had the slightest idea of his place in the world.

## **SETTING**

We're in Kansas, a bit north and west of Topeka. Present day.

The entire play takes place in Ben's workshop, which may once have been a garage. A door in one upstage corner ostensibly leads to the rest of Ben's house. A door on the opposite downstage corner opens directly to the outside. A long workbench. Three dusty televisions underneath it. Racks of lumber are overhead and/or along walls. If we could see what was overhead, we'd see only beams and the roof. In one corner there is an ancient battered freezer.

A note on the execution of scenic elements: The play features a small boat at varying stages of its construction. I believe there are ways to achieve this that are realistic; I also believe that there are ways to do this that are less realistic but no less effective. In other words, I trust that there's more than one way to get the job done and that each production will find the way that best suits it.

This play is for  
James Jr.,  
Jim Jr.  
and Zachary James

# The Boatwright

## ACT I

AT RISE: *Lights up. A special on BEN who is sitting in what we will later see is his workshop/garage.*

*(He speaks directly out.)*

BEN. I guess I was tired of not *doing* anything, all day every day.  
Not doing *anything*. Just, uh, missing the job  
and missing Amy.  
Eating cereal,  
bitching to an empty house  
about how everything on the television is crap,  
counting the minutes till the mail, kind of, uh, rationing myself?  
“I’ll wait another half hour and then I’ll walk out and check.”  
Reading the newspaper cover to cover,  
I mean the whole damned thing,  
Beetle Bailey, the letters to the editor, grocery ads.  
Timing myself on the jumble, and the crossword.  
The big one, not that little dinky thing.  
I do ’em in ink. Set a new record for the Jumble yesterday,  
47 seconds.  
But there was no one to tell.  
I don’t know whether you know this feeling,  
when you forget that someone is gone  
and you have a kind of uh, knee jerk, instinct thing,  
“Wait’ll I tell Amy,” and then ... you remember.  
It happens again and again. For a long time.  
It started to feel like drowning. Slow drowning,  
like maybe in mud, or quicksand.  
Like there were two of me,  
and one of ’em was thrashing around and getting tired and sinking

and the other one was just watching it happen. Not even helping.  
It was ... morbid.

So I said to Amy—I still talk to her sometimes—I said,  
“I can’t keep being like this.”

And she said, “Then do something!”

It was only in my head, I know that, but I sure did hear it.

Sounded a little irritated with me, too.

“Do something!”

So I started building this boat.

*(Light fades on him. In the black, we hear the sound of hammering: gentle, steady, precise ... Then, from outside, a youthful male voice, under the influence of something or another.)*

JAIME (*voice only*). Show me the way ta go home ...

*(Light is slowly rising on JAIME, who holds a large plastic cup.)*

JAIME (*cont’d, now visible*). I’m tired ’n wanna go bed ...

I had a little drink ...

I had a couple drinks ...

I had a fifth of Vodka

’bout an hour ago

an it got me in my head ...

*(Light builds across the rest of the stage. We can see a large garage or workshop, within which is BEN, who has stopped his hammering, cocking his head, curious to know exactly what sort of irritation he’s in for.)*

*In the meantime, JAIME has reached into one of his myriad, voluminous pockets and produced a small handycam, which he holds at arm’s length, pointed at himself—perhaps it casts a small, harsh light at his face. He adopts an exaggerated Australian accent, a faux documentarian.)*

JAIME (*cont’d*). It’s very late at night

and we’ve taken our position just outside this dwelling

in the hopes of obtaining additional liquid refreshment.

The lights are still on—let’s go see what awaits us inside.

*(JAIME begins moving to the side door of the workshop, but BEN's curiosity has led him to the same spot, and he opens the door before JAIME can complete his Safari-stalk approach.)*

BEN. Who's that?

*(JAIME swings the camera around, and its light shines in BEN's face. BEN winces.)*

BEN *(cont'd)*. Hey!

JAIME *(still in narration mode, and loud, too)*. Suddenly we're confronted by a native!

BEN *(extending his arms, warding off the light)*. Get that thing outta my—Jaime?

JAIME. He's attempting to communicate!

BEN. Shut that thing off, and lower your voice. People are sleeping.

JAIME. Not us! *(Beat.)*

OK. Sorry. *(Closing the camera and putting it away.)*

Who's sleeping, what time is it?

BEN. What can I do for you, Jaime?

JAIME. I saw your lights.

BEN. Your folks know you're over here?

JAIME. I dunno. Guess they're sleeping too.

BEN. I see.

JAIME. I didn't mean to bother you, Mr. C, I was ... hey, whatcha doin in there, you making something?

BEN. I'm laying out plans for—hey!

*(JAIME has pushed past BEN, walking into the center of the shop.)*

JAIME. What's all the paper doing on the—

BEN. FREEZE!

*(It's a whipcrack of a voice, and when it says freeze, you freeze.)*

BEN *(cont'd)*. Turn slowly and face the workbench.

JAIME. Like this?



BEN. Good. Now, you're gonna take big, careful steps forward until I tell you to stop.

JAIME. Like this?

BEN. Keep going.

JAIME. I feel goofy.

BEN. You look goofy, keep going ... OK, Simon says, "Stop."

JAIME (*giggling*). Simon says ...

BEN. How much have you had to drink tonight?

JAIME. Oh, you know. A lot, I guess. Did I mess anything up?

BEN. No ... no, it seems like it's OK ...

JAIME. What *is* it?

BEN. It's called a lofting diagram.

JAIME. Cool. What's a lofting diagram?

*(A quick beat as BEN musters his good manners and a kind of paternal patience.)*

BEN. Have you ever seen anyone make a dress, or sew anything, like a seamstress?

You know how they use paper patterns?

Well, that's what a lofting diagram is, a paper pattern. For a boat.

JAIME. You're sewing a boat? Making one?

BEN. Yes.

JAIME. A real one?

BEN. Yes.

JAIME. That is so cool!

BEN. Thank you.

JAIME. I never knew anyone who made a boat.

BEN. Me neither.

JAIME. What does Mrs. ... Oh shit. (*Beat.*)

I was gonna ask what your, um, I forgot about ...

*(Beat. BEN busies himself with pretending to double check a measurement.)*

JAIME (*cont'd*). I wanted to say, you know,  
I never did, but I meant to, say,  
you know, that I'm  
sorry for your loss. About Mrs. Calloway.

BEN. I appreciate that.

JAIME. She was always real nice to me and stuff.

BEN. She was fond of you.

JAIME. She was?

BEN (*surprised that he's surprised*). Of course.

JAIME. Wow. That's, um ... Thanks. For saying that.

BEN. Jaime—I don't think you need any more of whatever's in that  
cup, whaddaya think?

JAIME. Huh? Oh this! Nah, I know. You're right.

*(JAIME tosses the plastic cup aside. Some liquid probably spills out as it flies, unnoticed by JAIME. BEN is working hard on the whole patience thing.)*

BEN. What you need is probably a big glass of water and a couple  
of aspirin and a good night's sleep, whaddaya say?

JAIME (*oblivious, walking slowly, studying the diagram on the floor*). I don't see how this is gonna be a boat ... What are all  
those numbers?

BEN. Reference points for the hull, they're called offset points,  
they're for—

Jaime, look, it's a little bit complicated.

JAIME. You really gotta do all this stuff to build a boat?

BEN. Well ... some people use kits,

all this stuff is already done for you ...

but I think it's better if you understand things from the ground up.

JAIME. But not everything! Like, here, check it out ... (*He's fumbling for his camcorder again.*)

BEN. Now look—

JAIME. I'm not gonna turn it on, but look what I'm saying.

Like, if I'm gonna make a video? Here. "On." And then here,  
"Record." Two buttons.

BEN. OK ...

JAIME. But dude—I got no *idea* how it works!

BEN. Yeah, well, with boats it's different.

JAIME. Why?

BEN. There's this fella, he's all alone

with nothing but hundreds of miles of Atlantic Ocean  
in every direction

and the only thing between him and that water is his boat.

So he'd best understand that boat.

JAIME. Huh. Like a Marine and his M-16, huh?

BEN. Jaime ...

JAIME. I'm drunk, I know, I suck, I get it.

BEN (*realizing that something doesn't add up*). Is Tech on some  
kind of break right now?

JAIME. Heee ... well that depends.

BEN. They don't give you guys Lincoln's birthday do they?

JAIME. It's the south. They still think Lincoln is the anti-Christ  
down there ...

BEN. Why aren't you in school?

JAIME. It's like you said, it's a break.

BEN (*knows when to abandon a point—it starts to be clear that for  
whatever reason, he has dealt with plenty of drunks in his life*).

Oookay. Well, look, you need to get some rest, so—

JAIME. It's a *special* break. It's like, independent break,

like, you know, independent study

is when you take a course no one else takes,

so independent break is when you take a vacation no one else takes.

BEN. OK.

JAIME. Isn't vacation a funny word? Vayyyy cayyyy shunnnn.

BEN. I never thought about it.

JAIME. Especially the "shun." Very heavy on the shun, in my case.

BEN (*surrender—if the kid won't leave, then he will*). It's time I  
turned in ...

JAIME. They kicked me out.

(*Beat.*)

BEN. The school?

JAIME. You believe that?

All the money we've paid them, and they kick me out?

I mean, it's only temporary. Officially.

Technically, they have to let me back in next semester.

But I don't think I'm going.

BEN. Look. I want you to listen to me, OK?

JAIME. OK.

BEN. I'm sorry about whatever's happening. It sounds like you have a lot to think about.

JAIME. Got that right.

BEN. So here's the plan: Step one, get some rest and sleep off the booze, you can't do big-time thinking worn out *or* drunk.

JAIME. Big tiiiiiiiiimmme ...

*(BEN is steering him toward the door.)*

BEN. Right, so you get back next door and get into your bed, right?

JAIME. Yeah ... you're right ...

Hey, Mr. Calloway?

BEN. Yeah?

JAIME. Are you disappointed in me?

BEN. I don't know you well enough to be disappointed in you.

JAIME. Heh. My parents don't know me very well either but they're *wayyyyyy* disappointed in me.

BEN. Then you know what you do?

JAIME. What ...

BEN. You wake up tomorrow and you start giving them reasons to get past that.

JAIME. How?

BEN. Decide what you want to do. Make a plan to get it done.

Step one, make a plan.

Step two, stick to the plan.

Step three, remember that booze gets in the way of steps one and two.

JAIME. 'Swat you're doing isn't it. This boat. Big plan ...

BEN. Exactly.

JAIME. I'm sorry I bothered you.

BEN. Don't worry about it.

JAIME. Can I come back sometime and see your boat?

BEN. Sure.

JAIME. Cool ... OK, well, anyway, Good night, Mr. C.

BEN. Good night.

*(He watches JAIME go ... And he watches for a good while after that before returning to regard the various bits of his work spread all over the floor. A deep breath.)*

BEN (*cont'd*). Stick to the plan.

*(Lights fade on BEN resuming his measurements. After a beat or two in darkness, they restore to the "testimonial" light with which we opened the play.*

*Again, BEN speaks out.)*

BEN (*cont'd*). I've never seen the ocean.

I know that seems ... odd. Especially with me building this boat.

I always wanted to. Especially when I was a kid.

That's probably when I first got, uh , caught up,

by this idea, you know,

of sailing the open seas.

I went and saw any movie with ships,

*The Black Swan*, you know, and *Captain Blood* , oh,

there was a television show, *Adventures in Paradise*,

*(Adopting an announcer tone.)* "Starring Gardner McKay as Adam Troy," heh,

this terrific show about sailing and the ocean.

I guess most people don't even remember it now.

Television used to be better.

Anyway, point is, I wanted to *do* that.

I never stopped wanting to do it.  
 I just ... never did it.  
 Amy and me, that was one of our big dreams,  
 you know travel, see the ocean,  
 not just *one* ocean, *all* of 'em.  
 Then life keeps rolling by  
 and you keep thinking tomorrow is soon enough  
 and then Amy got sick ...  
 So. Tomorrow isn't soon enough anymore.  
 The first word on the new plan is "today."  
 I'm going to build this thing  
 and I'm going to learn to sail it  
 and then I'm going to put it on a trailer  
 and hook it up to my gooseneck  
 and I'm gonna drive east until I run out of road  
 and then I'm going to see what I've been missing.

*(As the lights begin to fade, we hear a growing sound—the sound of wind and waves, of wild, open water.*

*In the darkness, the sound grows, surrounds us, peaks ... And then slowly recedes, scaling back until it's clearly coming from a single source onstage as the lights come up.*

*It's the next day.*

*BEN is in the shop, and there's a good-sized stack of lumber along the upstage wall. He is inspecting it piece by piece. The sound from the blackout, faint but still audible, is coming from a small set of speakers on his workbench.*

*His inspection process is simple—two sawhorses spanned by a piece of plywood to create a simple table. Onto this table, he places each piece of lumber, first flat and then on-edge, to check it for curves, warps, etc. He will occasionally hunker down to get eye level with a piece.*

*The lumber is being sorted into one of two stacks, one of which has only two or three pieces in it.)*

BEN (*cont'd*). Okayyyy ... You're good.

*(BEN places a piece with most of its siblings, gets another from the original stack and inspects it.)*

BEN (*cont'd*). You're good ...

*(As BEN's inspection continues, we see JAIME emerge and approach the side entrance to the workshop. He raises a hand, hesitates and then raps twice on the door.)*

BEN (*cont'd*). Come!

*(JAIME enters and holds at the door. BEN looks up.)*

BEN (*cont'd*). Jaime.

JAIME. Hey, Mr. C.

BEN. How are you this morning?

JAIME. Uhh, not bad. You know.

Not as bad as I could be, I guess. I took the aspirin and drank the water and everything.

BEN. Good.

JAIME (*indicating the speakers*). Um ... what's that?

BEN. Huh. (*He quickly switches the sound off.*)

Sorry. I forget it's on, sometimes.

JAIME. What was it?

BEN. Just ocean sounds.

JAIME. Like some kind of sound effects CD or something?

BEN. It's a cassette.

JAIME. Kind of, what, gets you in the mood?

BEN. Yup.

*(A beat.)*

JAIME. Well, um, I came over, because I wanted—I thought I should apologize.

BEN. Yeah?