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Dramatic Publishing

Jellofish



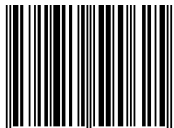
Drama/Comedy
by
Jim Henry

Jellofish

Drama/Comedy. By Jim Henry. Cast: 3m., 1w. Four World War II veterans have been playing a monthly game of poker since 1945. They have been dragging five percent from every pot for more than 50 years, and this “side pot” has grown to a sizable fortune. As Billy, Earl, Kooch and Dale compete in this monthly game of skill and luck, 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 revealed. The only referee in the is Judy Clabber, Billy’s cleaning lady. She is both adored and revered by the men, who seem to look to her for a shred of common sense. As each player comes upon a random “history chip” the events of their lives are revealed. The history chips were created over the past 50 years by the players whenever a significant event occurred in one of their lives. A child or grandchild is born, and the baby’s name is forever memorialized with a black marker on a poker chip and tossed back into the pile. As the significance of chips such as Grand Slam, Raccoon, Celery, Nazi, Limpy G and Jellofish is revealed, the deeper implications of a lifetime of friendship and competition are explored as the cards are dealt. In the end, which player holds the trump card? Who will survive this game of wits and be the heir presumptive to their poker fortune? The table is set. Shuffle up and deal. *Jellofish* is a winner of the AACT NewPlayFest. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes. Code: J70.*

Phoenix Stage Company, Naugatuck, Conn.,
featuring (l-r) Tim Phillips, Timothy Cleary and Ed Bassett.
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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



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

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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.

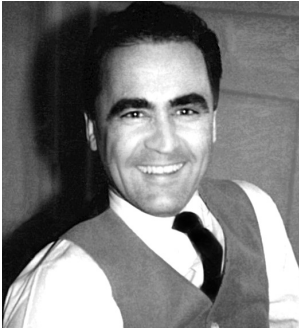
Break a leg,

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.

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.

Jellofish

Drama/Comedy by
JIM HENRY

Jellofish was premiered by Phoenix Stage Company in Naugatuck, Conn. on May 2, 2014, with the following cast and crew:

Billy.....	Ed Bassett
Kooch.....	Tim Phillips
Earl.....	Timothy Cleary
Judy.....	Deborah Forish
Director.....	Ed Bassett
Stage Manager.....	Agnes Dann
Props.....	Lori Poulin
Set.....	Mark Rees
Lighting Design.....	Al Hathway.

Jellofish was developed in part at Chicago Dramatists and Chicago Street Theatre where Jim Henry is a resident playwright.

In addition to the information on the Important Billing and Credit Requirements page (p. 3), all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*Jellofish* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Phoenix Stage Company in Naugatuck, Conn.”

Jellofish

CHARACTERS

BILLY DIAMATTI: 80 years.

EARL MUMFORD: 78 years.

ALFRED KUCHINSKI “KOOCH”: 80 years.

JUDY CLABBER: mid-30s.

Time: Throughout the year of 1999.

Dedicated to the memory of Robert J Minniti Sr.
and all his fellow comrades who fought in the great wars.

Jellofish

ACT I

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *A square table and four chairs. There are four stacks of poker chips on the table in front of each chair.*

(In the chair L, BILLY DIAMATTI is shuffling a deck of cards. BILLY is wearing a green plastic dealer's visor that looks like it has been through a war.

Seated at the upstage chair, facing the audience, is EARL MUMFORD. He is wearing a Chicago Cubs baseball cap that is worn and tattered. He is wearing an oxygen hose that is hooked to his ears and feeds air to each nostril. A small oxygen tank on wheels is next to his chair. The other two chairs are empty.

BILLY pulls a cigar out of his shirt pocket and pops it between his teeth.)

EARL. No smokes.

BILLY. You know, Earl, I could light this seegar and blow us both to Texarkana. But I wouldn't give our friend Kooch the satisfaction.

EARL. Kooch is late.

BILLY. Kooch is perpetually late.

EARL. Every game.

BILLY. Yeah, but this takes the cake, icing and all, when we're playing cards at his house, and we get here before him.

EARL. Roosevelt knew all along.

BILLY. If Kooch doesn't get here in five minutes, you, me and Dale here are starting without him.

(On the word "Dale," he points to the empty chair that is pulled up to the table with its back to the audience. There is a blue and gold scarf hanging over the back of the chair. BILLY reaches down to a six pack on the floor. He picks up a can of beer, cracks it open and swigs.)

EARL. He knew months and months before.

BILLY. Who?

EARL. FDR. He knew the Japs were coming. Pearl Harbor was planned ...

BILLY. Snap out of it, sailor, come back to 1999, Earl. We got a whole new millennium coming at the end of the year, gotta move on.

EARL. Deal the cards.

BILLY. Now you're talking sense.

(BILLY starts dealing cards to Dale, EARL and himself. The cards in front of Dale's chair are dealt face up.)

BILLY *(cont'd)*. That'll teach Kooch to be late for his own poker game.

(EARL starts to rub his chest.)

BILLY *(cont'd)*. Your heart hurting again, Earl?

EARL. No.

BILLY. If it is, you take your nitro.

(EARL takes a small bottle from his shirt pocket and offers it to BILLY.)

BILLY *(cont'd)*. No thank you, Earl.

(EARL sets the pill bottle on the table next to his poker chips.)

BILLY *(cont'd)*. You won't ever catch me with nitro in my mouth. I was a munitions man in the war and we used that stuff to take out bridges.

EARL *(feeling his teeth)*. Bridges?

BILLY. No, not the kind in your mouth, the kind that spans a river in Germany. But come to think of it, if you don't watch it with that nitro, you'll blow your dentures clear through the picture window. OK, everybody ante a dollar. *(Picks up a white poker chip from his stack. He looks it over.)* Well, would you look at this, Earl?

EARL. What?

BILLY. I hold in my hand, the Brian chip.

EARL. Who?

BILLY. This ain't a good omen when I get the Brian chip right off the git go.

EARL. Who's Brian?

BILLY. My son? Brian?

EARL. Smiley?

BILLY. Yeah Smiley. Yes he was.

EARL. Smiley died.

BILLY (*stares at the chip, looking at both sides*). I wrote this history chip when he hit that grand slam at sectionals.

EARL. Kaboom.

BILLY. That boy could kill that ball.

EARL. They killed him.

BILLY. Yeah.

EARL. The Vietnam.

(BILLY places the chip back on his stack.)

BILLY. Yeah, the Vietnam.

EARL. Smiley Brian was dead pull when he hit the ball. Right down third base liner.

BILLY. Dead pull.

EARL. Where's little baby Karen?

BILLY. She grew up. Moved to Florida.

EARL. With Mickey Mouse.

BILLY. Actually, you're not to far off. Her husband is a moron.

EARL. More off or more on?

BILLY. Exactly. (*A beat, he deals some cards.*) Well, screw it, we're playing.

(ALFRED KUCHINSKI "KOOCH" enters with a grocery bag. He stops dead in his tracks when he sees BILLY dealing the cards. KOOCH is wearing an old fishing vest with lures pinned all over its many pockets.)

KOOCH. You wouldn't dare.

BILLY. You're late.

KOOCH. It's my house for Chrissake, you shit.

(KOOCH sets the grocery bag on the chair R, opposite BILLY's chair. He unpacks the pretzels, chips and diet soda and sets it on the table.)

BILLY. Don't clutter the table.

KOOCH. I'm unpacking.

BILLY. Dale and Earl and I are in the middle of a hand.

KOOCH. It's a dead hand, Billy. You started without me. I'm hosting this month's game and this is my house and you play by my house rules, in my house. It's dead.

EARL. Dead pull.

KOOCH. See Earl agrees and that's two against one, democracy. Besides, you three haven't even anteed up.

BILLY. Fine, this hand's dead. Now sit down and let's go.

KOOCH *(looks at the hand face up in front of Dale's empty chair)*. Too bad, Dale had a pair of kings.

BILLY. Put 60 bucks in the pension bucket to cover your chips.

(KOOCH places \$60 in a rusted bucket under the table.)

BILLY *(cont'd)*. Do you always have to be late?

KOOCH. I'm not always late.

BILLY. Never once have you showed up on time.

KOOCH. You sound like a woman with your always this and never that.

BILLY. Kooch, we been waiting 20 minutes.

KOOCH. Did you knock before you came in?

BILLY *(throws two poker chips into the middle)*. Everybody ante two bucks. Why should we knock? You weren't here.

KOOCH *(throws in two chips of his own and then two chips from Dale's stack)*. Earl, you're light. *(To BILLY.)* It's still a courtesy to knock before you barge into a man's domicile.

BILLY. Domicile? This place is a pigsty. Earl, pot's light, ante up. *(To KOOCH.)* You didn't drive to the store, did you?

KOOCH. How else am I supposed to get there?

BILLY. The bus, a taxi?

KOOCH. I am not going to be a slave to public transportation, schedules, fare disputes, crazy foreign drivers.

BILLY. Our taxi delivered us perfectly safe, didn't he Earl?

EARL. Yep.

KOOCH. I offered to come get you guys.

BILLY. Better to be safe.

KOOCH. What's that supposed to mean?

BILLY. It means, Kooch, you don't follow the two second rule.

KOOCH. I do too.

BILLY. Last time you picked us up ...

KOOCH. Yeah, I know, you counted one thousand one, blah blah blah.

BILLY. You follow too close.

KOOCH. No, you count too slow.

BILLY. Guys your age shouldn't even have a license.

KOOCH. Guys my age? You're the same age as me.

BILLY. I'm eight months younger and besides, I took a taxi.

KOOCH. They'll have to pry my driver's license out of my cold dead fingers.

BILLY. You don't have a license, you lost it.

KOOCH. Well, if I did have one, they'd have to ...

BILLY. It's a license to kill that's what it is.

KOOCH. Let's play cards.

(BILLY deals a hand, Dale's cards are face up again.)

BILLY. Five card draw, guts to open.

EARL. What's wild?

BILLY. Shut up. *(To KOOCH.)* Get that stuff off the table.

(KOOCH takes the groceries off the table and puts them on the floor. BILLY looks at Dale's cards.)

BILLY *(cont'd)*. Dale has a pair of fours, I say he opens for two bucks.

KOOCH. I agree

EARL. Yep.

(BILLY throws two chips from Dale's pile into the pot.)

BILLY. Two bucks to you Kooch.

KOOCH. I'll call Dale's two bucks.

(They look at EARL, who is staring at his cards.)

BILLY. Well?

EARL. What?

BILLY. Dale's got a pair of fours and he's challenging you with a two dollar bet. Two to you or toodle-loo.

EARL *(chuckles)*. Toodle-loo. *(Throws in two chips.)*

(As the scene progresses, the poker game proceeds with the three men throwing chips in, dealing cards and drawing for new cards.)

BILLY. I'll call Dale's two bucks. And I say he'll keep the pair of fours and draw three cards.

KOOCH. OK by me. I'll take three cards too.

EARL. I'll take two.

BILLY. Dealer takes three cards.

KOOCH. Who's hosting the game next month?

BILLY. It's Earl's turn next month. I think Dale should fold his pair of fours.

KOOCH. Fine, and I'll bet three dollars. Earl? Is Sarah going to let you host the game next month?

EARL. At my house.

KOOCH *(to BILLY)*. You can't smoke those cigars around Sarah, she'll have a conniption.

BILLY. I'm just chewing it. You think I'd light this thing with a live O2 tank sitting here? I used to handle precious gases during the war.

KOOCH. You pass precious gases maybe.

BILLY. Hardy har, I'll call your three bucks, what do you have, Kooch?

KOOCH. Two pair.

(EARL lays his hand down. BILLY throws his cards in.)

BILLY. Take it, I'll deal for Dale, ante two.

(KOOCH takes his winnings, takes two chips out of the pot and tosses them into a rusty bucket under the table. Throughout the scene, anytime anyone wins a pot, they throw a few chips into the bucket.)

KOOCH. Billy, I'll bet you 10 bucks that Sarah doesn't let Earl have the game at his house next time.

BILLY. Earl's been hosting his turn for the past 50 odd years. You're on, Kooch, 10 bucks. Earl, don't you let me down, you hear?

EARL. With who?

KOOCH *(picks up a white poker chip)*. Well, would you look at this.

BILLY. What?

KOOCH. I hold in my hand the Vasectomy chip.

BILLY. 1971.

KOOCH. No it was '69.

BILLY *(grabbing the chip)*. Let me see that. I swear it was 1971 ...

KOOCH. 1969.

BILLY. Gracie and I had just gotten back from the Grand Canyon ...

KOOCH. 1969, the year of the moonwalk ...

BILLY. No, the moonwalk was in November, Dale got his vasectomy in the summer ...

KOOCH. The moonwalk was in July ...

BILLY. Dale hobbled in here complaining about the heat ...

KOOCH. Right, it was July and Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin stepped on the moon and Dale just had his vasectomy.

BILLY. You might be right, we should have written the date on these history chips.

KOOCH. It was '69, sure as a turd. It was after Dale and Margie's seventh kid was born. How old is their youngest?

BILLY. How the hell should I know?

EARL. Thirty-three.

(BILLY places the Vasectomy chip on his stack.)

KOOCH. Whoa, cowboy, that was my chip.

BILLY *(tosses a white chip to KOOCH)*. Here.

KOOCH. Wait a minute, this chip is blank, gimme the Vasectomy chip.

BILLY. What's the difference? They're both worth a buck.

KOOCH. I drew the Vasectomy chip and I want to play it, you'll have to win it fair and square.

BILLY *(holds up the chip)*. Fine, here it is, V-A-S written all over it, there you go, but don't hog it, throw it in the pot on your next bet.

KOOCH. I'll play it at the appropriate moment based on the strength of my hand.

BILLY. I'm winning that Vasectomy chip by the end of the night.

KOOCH. We'll see. Hey, do you know if the Raccoon chip made it to the table tonight?

EARL. My raccoon.

BILLY. I don't look, I just dig in the box and grab whatever chips and stack 'em up.

EARL. That bastard raccoon.

BILLY. How much is in the pension bucket?

KOOCH pulls a savings passbook out of a pocket in his fishing vest and opens it.)

KOOCH. Eighty-eight thousand, three hundred forty-two dollars and 18 cents.

BILLY. Thank God none of us waited to actually retire on that.

KOOCH. How did we ever figure the pension bucket would be up to a million bucks by the time we all retired?

EARL. Billy did.

BILLY. What?

EARL. You.

BILLY. Hell I did.

KOOCH. You sat right there in that chair 50 some years ago and said it too, a million bucks, right there in that chair.

BILLY. You just bought these chairs last year.

KOOCH. In your spot, you sat there in your spot and agreed we'd all retire millionaires, split four ways.

BILLY. It was Dale, he was the accountant, he figured out some compound interest thing.

KOOCH. We should'a pulled 20% from each pot like I said, not five, and we'd have a nest egg on our hands right now.

BILLY. If Dale would have put it in the stock market like I told ...

KOOCH. What are you goofy? The stock market?

EARL. Dale died.

BILLY. Really, are you sure about that, Earl?

KOOCH. Stop it, Billy.

BILLY. Or is his lucky scarf just sitting there waiting for him to get here.

EARL. Notre Dame. He loved ...

BILLY. Yes he did, and he was also too conservative or we'd be sitting in Irish green right now.

KOOCH. Well, I say we start pulling 20% from each pot.

BILLY. What good is that gonna do us now?

KOOCH. Every little bit ...

BILLY. Helps, yes, if you know how to invest it, we could have put some of that money into Microsoft or Wal-Mart.

KOOCH. That's hind sight.

BILLY. Let's just split it and forget it.

KOOCH. What did you just say?

BILLY. Split the pension bucket and be done with it.

EARL. Split it?

BILLY. Split it four ways and trash the whole idea. Each of us gets 25 percent.

KOOCH. What about Dale's 25 percent?

BILLY. Give it to his Margie, she put up with him being at these games all these years. Send her a cashier's check, she'd shit a golden brick.

EARL. Margie's in Phoenix.

KOOCH. That's not what we agreed to.

BILLY. Forget that.

KOOCH. You're saying forget our agreement, buck tradition?

BILLY. I'm saying this whole thing is a waste and it's a stupid waste.

EARL. The pension bucket?

BILLY. Yes.

KOOCH. We all agreed that we'd split the pension when it reached a million.

BILLY. You gonna live to be a thousand years old?

EARL. Methuselah.

KOOCH. A million bucks or whoever is left with it.

BILLY. Oh, the last guy standing contingency.

KOOCH. Exactly.

BILLY. I agreed to the million, not to the last guy to kick that bucket.

KOOCH. Awe, bull crap, that was the contingency. In case the rest of us met with an untimely death, then somebody's got to get the money.

BILLY. Untimely? Dale died when he was 81. Earl here is the youngest and he's 77.

EARL. Seventy-eight.

BILLY. Whatever.

KOOCH. That was the agreement and we're sticking to it.

BILLY. And what about Margie?

KOOCH. What about her?

BILLY. Dale gets none of it, his wife sits home alone all those years and ...

KOOCH. Margie's suffocating in money, have you been to their ranch in Arizona?

EARL. They got cows.

KOOCH. They got herds. They got acreage, and a house on Sanibel Island. You know what she sold their place in Aspen for?

BILLY. Doesn't matter. She should get a fair and commensurate share.

KOOCH. Ah, Judas Priest, she don't need the money.

BILLY. She can give it to her seven kids, or her thousands of grandkids.

KOOCH. Now that's where I put the foot down. We all agreed on day one that none of our kids get any of the pension bucket.

BILLY. Let's take it to a vote.