

# Tales of Mulgrave

by Elmer B. Gladstone III

The *Mulgrave Road Show* could be billed as highly entertaining, vastly informative tourist publicity. "If you've never heard of us before you won't forget us now." Yet, happily, it is more than eye-catching advertisement. This concerted effort to put Mulgrave, Nova Scotia on the map of its audience's collective mind is an original and effective piece of theatre conceived, written and produced by a very capable and energetic quartet. Two of the players, Robbie O'Neil and Wendell Smith, are from Nova Scotia. Michael Fahey (from "Upper Canada") and Gay Hauser, the only female member, comprise the other half of the group.

Using the regional disparity of Guysborough County, N.S. as its theme, and with the town of Mulgrave itself as a focal point, the show draws upon a wealth of cultural and economic history to reveal the land in a complexity of images. It begins with a young Mulgrave, full of self-confidence and expectant enthusiasm at being a part of the most prosperous province in the land before confederation. From Nova Scotia's entry into confederation, at which point free trade with the eastern United States was severed bringing about Guysborough's eventual loss of self-reliance, the economic and spiritual decline that the region has undergone is unfolded.

The show is well balanced between some very attractive "folkish" ballad-type music, with several fine solos as well as numerous

ensemble efforts, and a series of amusing, pointed, and oftentimes moving, vignettes centering around local characters. These short episodes reveal how the local populace feels regarding "big businessmen," politicians and political promises long-undelivered. But aside from the satiric and the comical these 'mini-portraits', as it were, show a more real and immediate side to the town's problems. Lack of employment in a land short on opportunity leads men away from families in search of a livelihood. "He came home last Christmas. But the children don't really know him . . . and I don't think he really knows me anymore," explains one young mother 'widowed' by a lack of employment in the area. And the youth, too, suffer, growing up without hope and aspiration.

In a sense the show itself resembles the people it is portraying. Produced on a shoe-string economy (it is a government-funded Happy Days project) and working with a sparse set, the entire performance is marked by an intimacy and informality which characterizes the subject, lending itself to a greater rapport between audience and performers.

Perhaps there is no answer to Guysborough's troubles, or perhaps it lies out of sight just around the corner. *The Mulgrave Road Show* did not bring any solutions, but it created a little joy. Whether Mulgrave itself prospers or disappears is certainly anybody's guess — but at least it won't be forgotten for awhile.

## Mini-Rocky low punch

by eddie the madao-grinder

"One On One," Robbie Benson's latest venture, is a definite success as far as entertainment goes. It

happening in the professional heavyweight ring the action revolves around a large university's basketball team in L.A. Robbie Benson does an excellent job in his performance of the small town boy, slightly taken aback by the wilds of the big city, and the wiles of the Athletic Department in a big university.

Some of the problems he faces and some of their roots hit pretty close to home; the non-acceptance of the "jock" and the tendency to typecast all athletes as non-thinking lunks exists seemingly everywhere. One needn't make the trek to L.A. or even S.M.U. for that matter to hear evidence of this phenomenon. It is often applied even to the Phys. Ed. Dept. Despite the trouble Robbie is caused by these attitudes he doesn't find it difficult to accept his four year no cut scholarship with car of his choice thrown in, or his high paying university "job" watching automatic sprinklers go off and on.

When his frustration over his unfulfilled crush on his highbrow (and incidentally beautiful) tutor affects his performance on the court the coach asks him to resign his scholarship. He refuses (what would Daddy think, it would break his heart) so the coach comes down real hard. Thus arises the conflict in the movie, and the way is paved for the not such a surprise ending.

Robbie Benson's portrayal is, as I have said, Excellent. So is John Davison's supporting role as coach. The movie flows nicely, never drags, and does have a bit of punch at the end. It's quite enjoyable but it certainly is no heavyweight. Playing at the Paramount on Barrington.



doesn't present any really new ideas, and there really aren't any unusual twists to the plot, but what is presented nonetheless captivates the audience.

The movie has been called a mini-Rocky and the analogy is very much to the point. Instead of

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