



Inside:
These games
are good, but
could be better.

LIFE

The Intelligencer



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FYI

Shock Factor

The electric eel's shocking power is so great that it can overtake its victims while 15 feet away.

TV Tonight

"DECODING THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS"

National Geographic Channel at 9

The Dead Sea Scrolls are among the most important archaeological finds of modern times, still stirring debate and discussion among scholars. This special examines the modern-day impact of those ancient treasures, which, comprising more than 900 manuscripts, were discovered just 60 years ago but are the oldest known collection of biblical texts.

Wicked Ending

In the original Grimm brothers' fairy tale "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," the wicked Queen was condemned to dance in red-hot iron shoes until she died.



Back Then

Wolf packs could once be found in all the forests of Europe, and in 1420 and 1438, wolves roamed the streets of Paris.



Weight Gain

Earth is putting on weight day by day as meteors and microscopic space dust fall from space.

Toil & Trouble

The three witches' famed incantation has claimed another victim as the curse of "Macbeth" strikes The Actors' NET of Bucks County.

By ANDY VINEBERG
THE INTELLIGENCER

George Hartpence wasn't thinking about any 400-year-old curses as he repeatedly carried his wife and "Macbeth" costar Carol Thompson up a ramp, four, five, six times during rehearsal a month ago.

It was only after director Cheryl Doyle shared a story of another actor hurting himself during a rehearsal of William Shakespeare's play that Hartpence grew leery.

"With a play that's cursed, with all sorts of superstitions, do you think you should be telling war stories about people getting injured?" Hartpence good-naturedly asked Doyle. "The very next time, that's when it happened."

On his next trip up the ramp, Hartpence, who plays the title character in The Actors' NET of Bucks County's snake-bitten production of "Macbeth" in Morrisville, tore calf muscles in both legs, delaying the play's opening for two months and adding to the lore of one of the most infamous curses in the history of theater.

Originally set to open Feb. 16, "Macbeth" is scheduled to run April 27 through May 13, in place of "Cyrano de Bergerac."

Spirits permitting, of course. Ever since Shakespeare decided to include spells from an authentic black-magic ritual when he created "Macbeth" See **MACBETH, Page D 6**

An injury to George Hartpence, has postponed the production of "Macbeth" for two months.

Cursed?

Here are 10 instances of misfortune befalling a production of "Macbeth":

1606: A boy named Hal Berridge, who was to portray Lady Macbeth in the play's very first performance, dies of a sudden fever. Shakespeare takes over the role.

1703: A revival of "Macbeth" in London is marred by one of the most violent storms in England's history.



1849: More than 10,000 New Yorkers gather at the Astor Place Opera House to protest the presence of British actor William Charles Macready. In the ensuing riot, the militia kills 23 and injures hundreds.

Early 1930s: Esteemed actress Lillian Boylis, who was to play Lady Macbeth, dies on the day of the final dress rehearsal. Years later, her portrait falls from the wall during opening night of a



revival in the same theater.

1937: A 25-pound stage weight crashes down during a rehearsal at the Old Vic Theatre, barely missing Laurence Olivier. Meanwhile, the director and the actress playing Lady Macbeth are injured in a car accident on the way to the theater, and the proprietor of the theater dies of a heart attack during dress rehearsal.

1942: A production



headed by John Gielgud suffers three deaths in the cast — the actors playing Duncan and two of the three witches — and the suicide of the costume and set designer.

1947: Actor Harold Norman is stabbed during the climactic swordfight and dies.

1953: Charlton Heston appears in an open-air version of the play in Bermuda and suffers severe burns in his leg and groin area when the wind shifts during the scene of the burning of the castle, blowing smoke and flames into the audience.

1998: In an off-Broadway production starring Alec Baldwin and Angela Bassett, Baldwin somehow slices open the hand of the actor playing Macduff.



2007: Actor George Hartpence tears muscles in both legs while rehearsing for his role as the title character during a production in Morrisville, forcing the postponement of the play by two months.

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Macbeth

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in 1606 — "Double, double toil and trouble, Fire burn and cauldron bubble," and all that spooky supernatural stuff — the play has been marred by endless misfortune.

Legend has it that the folks who considered these spells sacred were angered by their use in the play, and they responded with a curse on the show and all its productions.

The curse appeared immediately, as a young actor named Hal Berridge, who was to play Lady Macbeth on opening night, Aug. 7, 1606, died of a sudden fever, forcing Shakespeare to take over the role.

Since then, productions of "Macbeth" have been plagued by calamitous storms, deadly riots, violent clashes between actors and audience members, bizarre accidents and injuries and fatalities both on stage and off.

A nonbeliever would no doubt point out that many of the injuries have been due to the play's frequent swordfights, but still, how does that explain the death and despair away from the stage?

Or, for that matter, a physically fit actor tearing muscles in both his legs during a not-so-demanding rehearsal scene?

"I've done a lot of stage combat over the years, a lot of very physical roles, and the worst thing that ever happened to me before this was my hand got whacked by a broad sword," says Hartpence, 51, who had appeared in three previous productions of "Macbeth" with no misfortune other than a broken sword during a fight scene.

So what was different this time? Perhaps it was director Doyle's insistence on saying the name of the play during rehearsal.

According to the legend, just

saying the name "Macbeth" in the theater can trigger the curse. Often, actors use euphemisms such as "the Scottish play" or "the Bard's play" to ward off the misfortune.

"I have to confess I've always been good about the superstition," says Doyle, who founded the Actors' NET with her husband, Joe, 11 years ago. "But I figured I'd have to be able to say it if I'm going to direct it. Maybe I should have behaved myself."

Joe came up with a big plan that we could collect money from the audience and send it to restore Shakespeare's burial place to ward off the curse. I couldn't believe we actually got hit anyway."

Originally, Hartpence thought he'd only be hobbled for a couple of days, and opening night was pushed back a week. But he re-aggravated the injury a week later, forcing the two-month postponement.

Even before that decision, however, something was rotten in the state of Morrisville (to paraphrase another Shakespeare play).

Hartpence's injury was only the most potent in a series of eerie events that have plagued the production.

"It's just been one crazy thing after another," says Doyle. "We've had people getting the flu, a speaker fell on me and just missed my head, one of the actors got locked out of his car and had to take the train home and the heater in the theater broke down and we were without heat the next few nights."

"Even the nonbelievers are getting pretty spooked by all this."

Determined to avoid a similar fate in April, the cast members who play the three witches and the ghost Banquo have been researching ways to thwart the curse.

"They don't like giving in to negative forces, but I think we're past that at this point," says Doyle.

"We're going to do what's necessary to beat this thing."

"We haven't figured out exactly how yet, but Steve Lobis (who plays Banquo) says the answer might lie in the 'Brady Bunch' episode starring Vincent Price where they go to Hawaii."

When the curtain finally does open on "Macbeth" in Morrisville, Hartpence hopes to be able to do all the originally choreographed fight scenes.

"One of the things I hate about stage combat is that when it's bad, it really looks bad," he says. "But our guy (Steve Kazakoff) did a great job choreographing the fight, and I'd hate to lose any of it."

"There are no big leaps I have to do, nothing in the fight that should cause injury. I just have to avoid getting kicked in the calf — and I think we can pull it off."

Hartpence doesn't blame his injury on the use of the word "Macbeth" in the theater.

"The safety valve is, if you are in production, you can, of course, say the name during rehearsal," he says. "It's when you're doing another show and you mention the name — that's when the curse applies."

"It wasn't his name that brought this about. I firmly believe it was the war story about the other injury."

Or, Hartpence acknowledges, it could have been the fact that he didn't stretch his calf muscles properly before walking up a ramp seven times carrying his wife.

On the bright side, he realizes he could have been cursed far worse than two torn leg muscles.

"Since it was my wife I was carrying, dropping her was not an option," he says. "The calves at least will heal."

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Women

Continued from Page D 1

the alleged promiscuity of prominent men of the time, she was jailed for sending obscene materials through the mail.

She spent election night in prison.

Fun fact: Woodhull served as spiritual adviser to railroad magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt, who financed many of her ventures.

Quote: "I shall not change my course because those who assume to be better than I desire it."

■ Margaret Chase Smith

Lived: 1897-1995

Biography: Margaret Chase Smith managed circulation for a newspaper in her native Skowhegan, Maine, before her unexpected entry into politics.

She was working as a secretary for her husband, Rep. Clyde H. Smith, at the time of his death in 1940. She campaigned for and won his seat in the House, and eight years later won a Republican seat in the Senate.

That made her the first woman elected to both Houses.

She gained national attention with her "Declaration of Conscience," challenging Sen. Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist policies.

Candidacy: Smith took her 1964 presidential run to the Republican National Convention in San Francisco, where she came in second to Barry Goldwater.

The effort made her the first woman to be placed in nomination for the presidency by one of the two major parties.

Fun fact: Smith maintained a perfect attendance record in Congress and held a Senate voting record until 1981, with 2,941 consecutive roll-call votes.

Quote: "Moral cowardice that

tion of ambassador to Jamaica in 1993, but she declined, citing poor health.

Quote: "I was the first American citizen to be elected to Congress in spite of the double drawbacks of being female and having skin darkened by melanin. When you put it that way, it sounds like a foolish reason for fame. In a just and free society it would be foolish."

■ Patricia Schroeder

Lived: 1940-present

Biography: A Democratic Congresswoman from Colorado, Pat Schroeder served for 12 terms, from 1973 to 1997.

The Harvard-educated lawyer worked with Planned Parenthood and the National Labor Relations Board before her election to Congress.

Candidacy: Schroeder contemplated running for president in 1987, but decided not to partly due to lack of funds. At one point, she ranked third in a Time Magazine poll.

Fun fact: Schroeder worked as an insurance claims adjuster to support herself through college. She was the first woman to serve on the House Armed Services Committee.

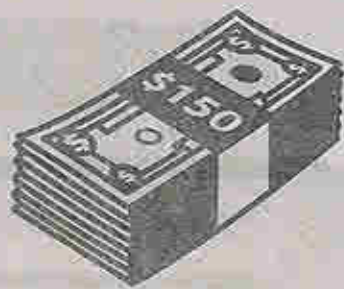
Quote: "I have a brain and a uterus, and I use both."

■ Elizabeth Dole

Lived: 1936-present

Biography: Born in Salisbury, N.C., Elizabeth "Liddy" Dole entered policy-making early. After graduating from Harvard law school, she moved to Washington, D.C., to take a job with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

She'd landed a job in the White House as a consumer



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