

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Bill Hannay and I will serve as your guide and master of ceremonies, this evening.

Several months ago, I was asked by Patty Meroni – the organizer of our 50th anniversary celebrations – to put together some sort of historical pageant for tonight.

I thought about writing a science-fiction play in which Fritz Gohl invents a time machine and takes Bob Abboud with him on a trip back to the 1834 when Jesse Miller and William Van Orsdal first arrived to settle this area. No. Too technical, I decided.

Then I thought about writing a modern opera focusing on the lives of the hundreds of Hungarian workers employed at the American Malleable Iron Company on Northwest Highway, in the 1890s. Something with a revolutionary flavor to it, like “Les Miz.” No. People from Lake County live here. Too political.

Then I started looking into the background of the men and women who led the petition drive for incorporating the area known as the Countryside into a village ... I looked up those who had served as the first mayors ... the first Board of Trustees ... and I discovered a very interesting thing.

All of the men were leaders in the Chicago business community. They were presidents of banks ... presidents of Fortune 500 companies ... eminent architects and lawyers – and they used to share a private railroad car that took them back and forth to Chicago ... but that wasn't the interesting thing.

The really interesting thing was that these hyperions of the business world were ... to a man ... nuts about fox hunting. One of them – a portly, distinguished lawyer who looked like he was born wearing a three-piece suit was the Secretary of the Fox Hunt for decades. Another one – a World War II fighter pilot who was shot down and adrift in a raft in the Pacific – said that all he dreamt of in the raft was getting back to Barrington to go fox hunting again. On weekends, these tycoons and their tycoonettes would get together ... down a stirrup cup of whiskey, and ride over the hills to the Fox River, then they'd get together again ... down some more stirrup cups and sing ribald drinking songs, like Aunt Clara.

And another interesting thing I discovered. All of these business leaders ... who were also wild and crazy fox hunters ... shared another whacky pastime. They were all members of the Barrington Play Reading Group.

The Barrington Play Reading Group was founded 64 years ago ... in 1943. It was the middle of World War II ... tires and gasoline were rationed ... the trains were commandeered to transport troops and munitions ... there wasn't much in the way of entertainment going on in Barrington in those days. So, taking a leaf from the movies of Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland, they decided "let's put on a show!" And they did. Every month they gathered and – after a sufficient number of cocktails – would read aloud a play ... sometimes it was a serious drama ... sometimes a mystery ... and most often a comedy. Scripts in hand, the members of the play reading group acted out the dialogue. Looking through the scrapbooks, there are the snapshots from those play nights ... the mighty lords of business and the Fox Hunt with their ladies ... wearing funny hats and costumes ... immersed in their plays.

From the start, it was a big deal to be invited as a guest to come and see one of the play readings ... it was an even bigger deal to be invited to become a member. Indeed, so exclusive was the Barrington Play Reading Group in those days, that even the children of members could not gain admittance. So their kids organized their own play reading group in the 1960s and called it "Second Set." And, to this day, there are two play reading groups in Barrington Hills.

So all of that led me to my brainstorm. A vision popped into my head of these men and women talking about the idea of incorporating the Village of Barrington Hills at a meeting of the Fox Hunt ... or ... better yet ... at a rehearsal of the Play Reading Group. And that, my friends, is the story you are going to see tonight. A re-imagining of what these men and women ... real men and real women ... might have said to each other at a Play Group rehearsal about the Countryside ... about the Fox Hunt ... about creating a new Village.

In a moment, I will introduce you to the characters in our play. But before I do so, the cast has asked me to give you a couple of footnotes to help you understand some of the references in the play.

First, we talk about the Village of Middlebury. This village was incorporated in 1953 by landowners along Bateman and Algonquin Roads as an effort to stop the growth of the Meadowdale housing development ... that's the area we now know as Carpentersville. The Village of Middlebury eventually voted to join Barrington Hills in 1962.

Second, we talk about the Old Heidelberg. In the 1950s, the Old Heidelberg was a popular bar and grill at the intersection of Brinker Road and Hwy 62. It was located where the Barrington Hills fire department now stands.

All right. Now let me introduce to you sixteen remarkable men and women that lived and led the Countryside in the 1950s. It has been a fascinating experience for me to meet them in person or through interviews with their friends and families. I introduce to you now the cast of characters so you'll know who is who when they are on stage. I will introduce them in the order of their appearance on stage, which is also the order in which their biographies are printed in your program. I am pleased to report that sons or daughters of many of these men and women are in the audience or, in some cases, playing a part in our show. And our audience is graced tonight by two of the men who appear in our play: Tom White and George Van Hagen. Tom, George, please stand up and receive a round of applause from your many fans and friends.

For our play, we find ourselves in the living room of the home of Ralph and Nonie Bard located on Brinker Road. (And, by the way, we sincerely thank our hosts Marian and Jasper Sanfilippo for letting us turn their beautiful theater on Plum Tree Road into the home of the Bards on Brinker Road.) The time is the evening of Friday, September 14th ... the year is 1956. Nonie is about to begin a rehearsal of the play that was actually produced by the Play Reading Group in September 1956: a fine piece of comedy called "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?"

Character	Cast member
Nonie Bard -- Stanford graduate and Member of the first Board of Trustees of the Village of Barrington Hills	Played by Penny Horne – Penny grew up with her family the Roches just down the street on Plum Tree Road
Bill Horne – a Princeton man, an advertising man, a horseman and a friend of Ernest Hemingway in WWI	Played by his son Ted Horne – he and his wife Penny live on Otis Road ... in the same house that he grew up in
Jeanne Fentress – Wellesley graduate and the greatest actress the Play Reading Group has ever had	Played by Lexy Zachrich – daughter of Joe Estes (another character you’ll meet in a moment) – she still runs the family business: Haeger Potteries
Jerry Corbett – insurance man –and perennial leading man – he was married to Tony Bateman’s sister	Played by Jim Voris – you may know Jim in his prior role as principal of Station Middle School
Tony Bateman – longtime President of the Fox Hunt – married to one of the Hart girls (as in Hart Road)	Played by Brian McManus – sometimes known as “the other Brian McManus” – not BM senior or junior – the other one
Harold Byron Smith – his brothers ran the Northern Trust – he ran Illinois Tool Works – quite a character!	Played by quite a character himself, Richard Chambers – Dick is known for his moderate, centrist political views
Ralph Bard – like Bill, Harold and Newt, Ralph was a Princeton man – known as a successful investor	Played by Craig Zachrich – the lucky devil who’s married to Lexy – a regular Oscar winner in the play groups
Andrew Dallstream – name partner in his own law firm and the best connected zoning lawyer in Chicago	Played by Mike Smith – his commanding voice and suave good looks fit perfectly his real life role as a business leader
Orville Caesar – the classic self made man who rose from a mechanic’s job to found the Greyhound Bus Company	Played by Jim Bramsen – whose engineering and business skills and civic interests aptly suit him to play Orville
Newt Noble – a successful mortgage banker – founder of an S&L – leader of the movement to found the Village of Middlebury	Played by Bryan Cressey – a successful private equity investor who was a leader of the No Lights movement when he lived in Wrigleyville
Jane Noble – Newt’s wife – Univ of Chicago graduate – leader of the garden club and the Woman’s Board of the Art Institute – very sparkly	Played by the very sparkly and superbly talented Nancie Tobison who directs the High School’s choral program – next month her Madrigals perform at the White House
Tom White – a great sportsman – Master of the Fox Hounds after Denny Hull retired – and the oldest living member of the BHCC	Played by Walt Smithe – you will perhaps recognize Walt’s face from the clever ads for the family business in which he and his brothers appear
George Van Hagen – Fox hunter – writer and historian of our community – raconteur – and WWII hero	Played by Ned Loughridge – our favorite tenor and marketing guru – Ned has performed as a soloist around the country
Denison Hull – a Harvard man – an architect – a Greek scholar – and a man who loved hunting – Master of the Fox Hounds for 16 years	Played by Frank Konicek – Dr. Frank Konicek ... the man you need if you need a gastroenterologist or to credibly play a Greek scholar and fox hunter

Gina Reinhardt – truly the first lady of fox hunting – one of the first women to ever become a Master of Fox Hounds – daughter of the eccentric landowner, Jay Cardwell	Played by Betsy Bramsen – herself an avid and highly skilled fox hunter – she is a niece of Harold Byron Smith
Joe Estes – dashing leading man in the Play Reading Group – and head of Haeger Potteries – father of our own Lexy Zachrich	Played by Denny Schlemmer – by day a mild mannered patent lawyer but by night he transforms himself into a play reading terror.