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Flanagan has something theatrical in common with Guthrie's new Jane Eyre

The Flanagan memo -- RE: Campaigning to "walk the walk," but how about those times when we shouldn't, plus, a return of Jane, sweet Jane and I can't wait.

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Ah, Jane Eyre. It is a tale of love and loneliness by Charlotte Bronte that was turned into a play. This week, it opens at the Guthrie Theater for a nice little stay. The show is scheduled to close Nov. 10.

And so begins my story.

It takes place in 1947 and is about Cedric Adams, who for many years, was THE columnist on this newspaper as well as chief newscaster on WCCO. Cedric was truly a character and he loved new experiences. When he was asked to take the leading role of Sheridan Whiteside in "The Man who Came to Dinner," he said yes.

But when director Arthur Sircom of New York told Cedric that he had to learn the lines and not read them, as he intended to, he said, "NO." And that was that.

Sircom, who had been the favored director of Gertrude Lawrence, the Broadway star, had a new idea. "We will do 'Jane Eyre'," he said. We all gasped. You see, we were members of the North Star Drama Guild, a theater group that enjoyed the services of lots of amateurs and a few pros.

His next announcement got to me. "You, miss," he said, pointing at me, "will be Jane." And I was, believe it or not. Some stalwarts in our production included the late Ken Senn and Ed Viehman. Our reviews were good; well, not so bad.

When I blurted this story out to Stacia Rice, the Guthrie's Jane, she was understanding. Rice will be playing her first leading role in Jane Eyre and, of course, she is excited and I assume a bit nervous.

Rice is a Minneapolitan, who attended school in Edina and worked in an ad agency until she decided to try for the Guthrie. That was five years ago. On Saturday, she takes on a wonderful role. I salute her and as I said before, I can't wait.

Walking Foundation has its work cut out

The first priority of the new Walking Minneapolis Foundation is to make walking in downtown Minneapolis easier to navigate. Well, I am for that.

There is a problem, however. It is the people who disobey the "don't walk" signs and signals. They are placed everywhere and are aimed at over-zealous walkers.

Don't misunderstand. Cars and their drivers can be and are a problem. But walkers only add to the mess when they pound across the streets when the sign is telling them to stay put. Cars that want to turn right legally are often stopped by walkers who either don't care or can't read.

You will hear more about the foundation as it is planning several events this fall. It is asking for private support and has a hotshot lineup on its advisory committee including Dan Avchen, Burt Cohen, Sage Cowles, Judy Dayton, Chuck Denny and Judge David Doty, to name a few.

New biography of Jack Hawley

The late John B. Hawley, who was always known as Jack, told his wife-to-be how to get a job.

"Look directly into the eyes of the interviewer," he said, "have a firm handshake and answer all questions ... Don't ask them."

Zita Hofmeister Hawley Wright followed his directions and soon was flying as a "stewardess" for Pan American Airlines. She worked a couple of years and then married Jack. He was 44. She was 20. There was much chitchat about it, but they were married 34 years until his death. And they had four children.

Their story and more importantly, Jack's success story with his Northern Ordnance Co., is told by Zita in a new biography of Jack, "Follow Me," by Carol Pine. It is readable and interesting because Jack was known for his expertise, his toughness and his dislike of many business leaders, locally and nationally.

Two more books worth a read

My friends, Kathryn Strand Koutsky and her daughter, Linda Koutsky, have done it again. Their third big book is about the Minnesota State Fair. It includes everything to love including those Blue Ribbon recipes and great photos. One to disbelieve is of me, standing stupidly with a thin roll of paper in my mouth while Midway cowboy, Lash LaRue wields his bullwhip. It was taken by the late Earl Seubert and it is cherished.

Guide to Twin Cities buildings

Larry Millett, our renowned author of books about Twin Cities history and architecture has worked with the American Institute of Architects on an up-to-date AIA guide to Twin Cities buildings. Some are here now and others are long gone and there are maps galore. If I criticize it would only be for omitting The Towers Apartments from the list. Opened in 1965 on S. First Street, between Hennepin and Marquette Avenues, it is memorable for being the first building in town to include a swimming pool, tennis courts and a doorman.

30th anniversary of Milwaukee Avenue

If you love historic Milwaukee Avenue or, perhaps, you have never seen it, look alert. On Sunday, Sept 23, from noon to 5 p.m., you can celebrate the 30th anniversary of its preservation, truly a success story. There will be home tours of at least seven of the houses that were saved and renewed, plus other good stuff. For tickets, call the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota. It's a major day for rejoicing, believe me.

Barbara Flanagan, longtime columnist for the Star Tribune, writes on the first Monday of each month. Her interests are the metropolitan area -- what's good and what's bad -- and the fascinating people who live here. She can be contacted at barb-flanagan@comcast.net.

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