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PORT CITY PLAYHOUSE

“The Last Meeting of the Knights of the White Magnolia”

Any minute I expected Jackie Gleason and Art Carney to barge in on the initiation proceedings of **“The Last Meeting of the Knights of Magnolia,”** at the *Port City Playhouse*. Set in the fictional town of Bradleyville, Texas in 1962, a bunch of simple local guys plan to initiate a new Magnolia member, Lonnie Roy, played by David Seemiller, the first new member in 15 years. The play was written as part of a trilogy by Preston Jones, who spent a lot of time in Texas. The club members are a mildly red-neck bunch who are a reflection of that period of segregation, but not evil. This is a fun show put on by *Port City Playhouse* at the Lee Center for the Performing Arts in Alexandria. Bernie Engel plays the leader of the group, L.D. Alexander, who has more brains than all of them. George Campbell is hothead, Red Grover, who physically challenges nutty Skip Hampton, played by Richard N. Isaacs. Cal Whitehurst plays flaky, Olin and John T. Adams III is Rufe, who carries his spit can with him. Paul Andrew Morton plays the “colored” clean-up man with dignity. Michael J. Fisher makes the most of a minor role. But the center of attention is the old WWI soldier, in uniform and in a wheelchair, who fades in and out of reality. Joe Schubert as Col. Kinkaid is unbelievably real as he is funny and poignant. I can see why veteran actor./director Donald Neal, who grew up knowing these type of people, wanted to direct this show again after doing it many years ago. He made it real where it could have been farcical. Judy Kee handled set dressing and props while Beverly Nicholson Benda took care of costume design and wardrobe---both contributing to the realism. Good show even without Ralph Cramden and Ed Norton. **“The Last Meeting of the Knights of the White Magnolia”** plays Fridays and Saturdays through February 4 and on Tues., January 31. Call *Port City Playhouse* at 703-383-2880 for information and tickets.

