

WONDER BOY

Story by
JOSH NICHOLS

Illustration by
MATT HANEY

Omaha native Hazell brings childhood memories to Carson Theater stage

Comedian Pat Hazell remembers when Etch-a-Sketch was the hottest toy around and little green army men ruled his room.

Mixing in such toys as Mr. Potato Head and Silly Putty, he brings distinct memories of his childhood into his stand-up act.

Hazell has described his show as an "evening of escape, where you give yourself permission to think like a kid."

In his act, Hazell finds comedy in family situations that audiences can relate to.

Starting tonight at 8, Hazell will bring his show, "The Wonder Bread Years," to the Johnny Carson Theater for the first of six performances through Sunday.

Lincoln is somewhat of a return home for Hazell, who was raised in Omaha.

Performing in his community as a magician and juggler as early as age 9, he studied drama at Burke High School. He then went to the University of Nebraska at Omaha, where he majored in dramatic arts.

After college, Hazell took his act to Los Angeles.

In 1986, Hazell was doing his act one evening at the Comedy & Magic Club where Jerry Seinfeld was also performing.

That night, Hazell was discovered. He then went on tour as Seinfeld's opening act.

Later, Hazell would write for NBC's Emmy award-winning series "Seinfeld."

Hazell has also written for such shows as "Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman," "Love and War" and Showtime's "Aspen Comedy Special."

He also can add playwright to his name.

His comedy play, "Bunk Bed Brothers," which he co-wrote with Matt Goldman, first appeared in Minneapolis.

It was then shown in Omaha and Los Angeles, where it was critically acclaimed and viewed by packed theaters.

"Bunk Bed Brothers" gained attention from NBC and was filmed as the sitcom, "American Pie."

Not only has Hazell written for and helped develop television shows, he has also made numerous appearances on television.

In 1989, he made an appearance on "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson" and has since been on the show six times with Jay Leno as host.

He has also made guest appearances on "Seinfeld," "MTV Half-Hour Comedy Hour" and Showtime's "Jonathan Winter's Comedy Special."

On the road, Hazell has done shows with Rodney Dangerfield, Sheena Easton, Phyllis Diller and Jay Leno.

He has most recently done work in advertisements for Baker's Supermarkets.

Hazell sees his success as something anyone can accomplish.

"Everyone is creative, but the weird thing is that people think you have to be van Gogh to be successful," Hazell said in an interview in Juggler's World.

"Well, you don't. I think people stop themselves because they say, 'I'm not creative.' The people who are good at it have just gotten these restrictive feelings out of the way. So give yourself the license to create."

Because he talks about life growing up in the '60s and '70s, Hazell's stand-up act is aimed at the 30- to 40-year-old age group.

But he does pride himself on having a "clean" show that people of any age can enjoy.

"Something I'm good at in terms of jokes is to look to the past. I do a lot of reminiscing about growing up. It rings true onstage because it was reality in my life," Hazell said in Juggler's World.

"Other people didn't have a brother who got a raisin stuck up his nose, but they can relate to brothers doing stupid things."



Lied Center The Facts

What: Pat Hazell
Where: Johnny Carson Theatre,
11th and Q streets
When: 8 tonight, 8 p.m. Thursday,
7 and 9 p.m. Friday, 2 and 6 p.m. Sunday
Cost: \$11/students, \$22/others
The Skinny: Comedian brings back
childhood in performance.