

King Ralph falls on it's face

By DIAHANN NADEAU
Herald Special

King Ralph asks the question: what if white trash America suddenly ruled England? The answer: who cares! Ralph is a shabby, tired retread of an old theme - a noble English family dies off and the only heir is some common, ignorant, ill-educated American - gasp!

Well, this time it's England's Royal Family, and John Goodman is the boorish heir apparent. You've seen it all on the Flintstones and at least they only took half-an-hour to tell the tale.

The movie falls on its face within seconds of rolling the credits. The Royal Family, the 'Windhams,' has gathered at the back of Buckingham Palace for a family portrait. Everyone is there. The rain is barely over and the grass is wet. Somehow the whole family is electrocuted on the lawn. Not only is this incredibly implausible, it's not even funny! This was a scene full of possibilities (remember Kind Hearts and Coronets?), but the opportunity is wasted. It sets the tone for the whole movie.

Goodman is a good ol' boy who happens to be a Las Vegas lounge singer. His act is so tired he's being replaced by a chimp. Enter the royal secretary, and voila, he's off to England to be King.

Only problem is, he barely knows where the country is, let alone understands what's happening in it.

He is aided in his quest for royal bearing by Sir Cedric, (Peter O'Toole), who finds educating the big ape a near impossible task. He is diverted from his duty by a pretty would-be stripper, Miranda Greene

(Camille Coduri), and no court is complete without a treasonous plotter, and Lord Percival Graves (John Hurt) is the snake in the grass here.

The plot is so predictable, it hurts, and few scenes stand out.

Goodman has the odd moment, but he is overwhelmed by an outstandingly lacklustre screenplay. The name of the game in this movie is money: it seeks to capitalize on Goodman's happy-slob image, and the tie-in with the Burger King ads (a scene is set there - a flagrant

grab for the advertising dollars) is another attempt to rake in the bucks. Movie-making doesn't come any more cynical than this.

Some wonderful actors are wasted here, especially John Hurt and Peter O'Toole. One expects they were only in it for the money.

Hopefully, they made a lot, because this is not going to look good on the old resume. However, my 10-year-old companion enjoyed the film well enough, and it is definitely suitable for family viewing.

Problems of disabled addressed in series

What impact will new reproductive technologies and genetic engineering have on disabled people? What is being done to combat the alarmingly high rate of illiteracy among the disabled? Why do members of Deaf Culture want to be recognized as a separate cultural group? These and other issues affecting disabled Canadians will be explored in a new series of half-hour programs, Challenge Journal, premiering on TVOntario Monday, March 18 at 7:30 p.m. (Series 1 of Challenge Journal was broadcast on CTV affiliates in 1989).

Producer Carolann Reynolds says, "Our series is about real people striving to live with dignity in a society that will more often give them a handout rather than a hand up."

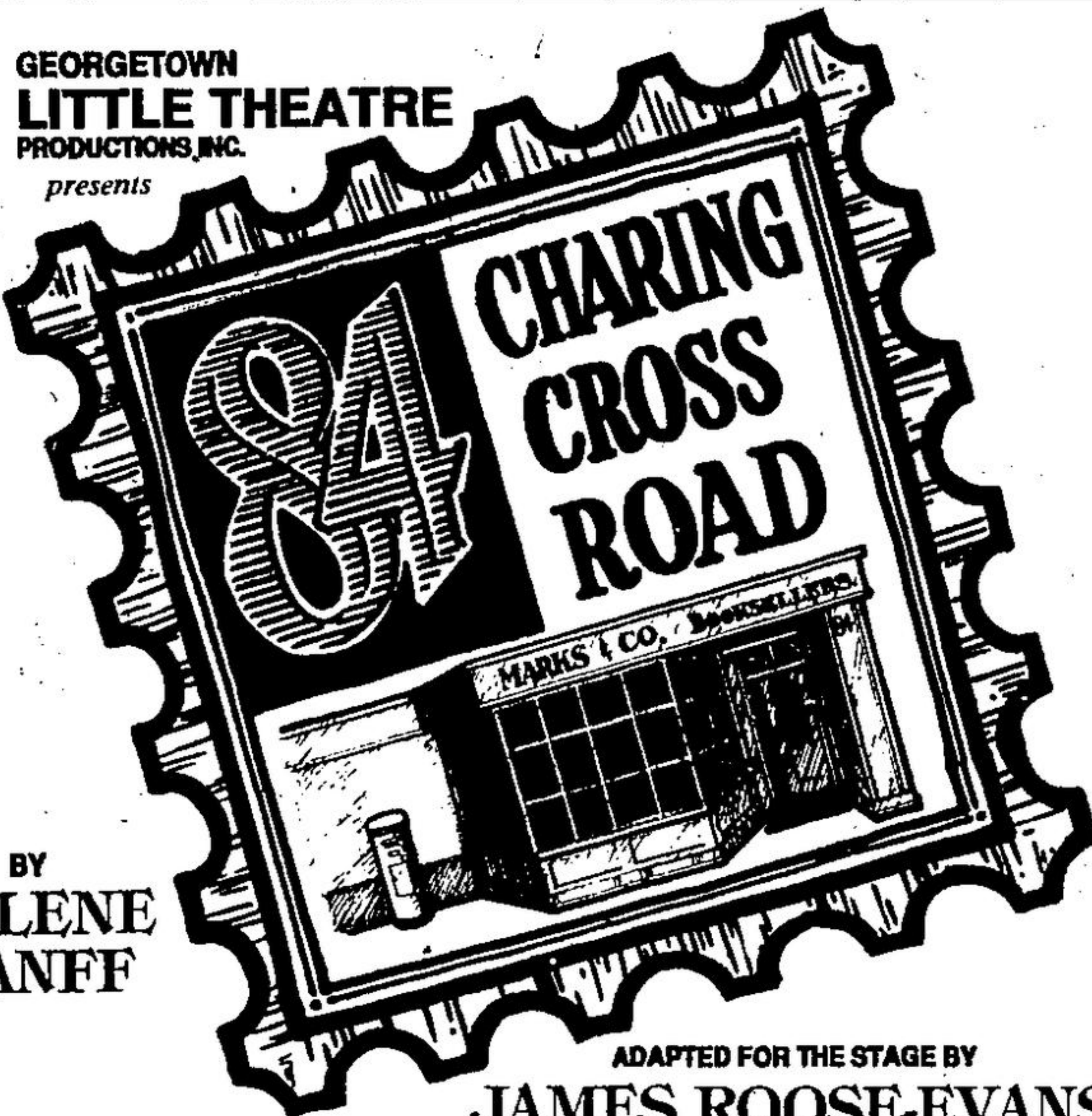
Challenge Journal host Ed

Wadley, who became disabled several years ago as the result of an auto accident, combines broadcast experience and personal insight in this probing series. Each week he will invite guest experts to discuss issues of disability that influence our community. Profiles of disabled individuals throughout Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario portray lives in contexts of arts, athletics, and leisure, literacy, poverty and abuse.

Actress Kyra Levy of Degraasi High, farmer and double-arm amputee Murray Bedel, gold-medal triathlete Joanne Bouw, and Ontario MPP Gary Malkowski, the first deaf candidate in Canada to be elected to a legislature, are a few of the people to be featured on Challenge Journal.



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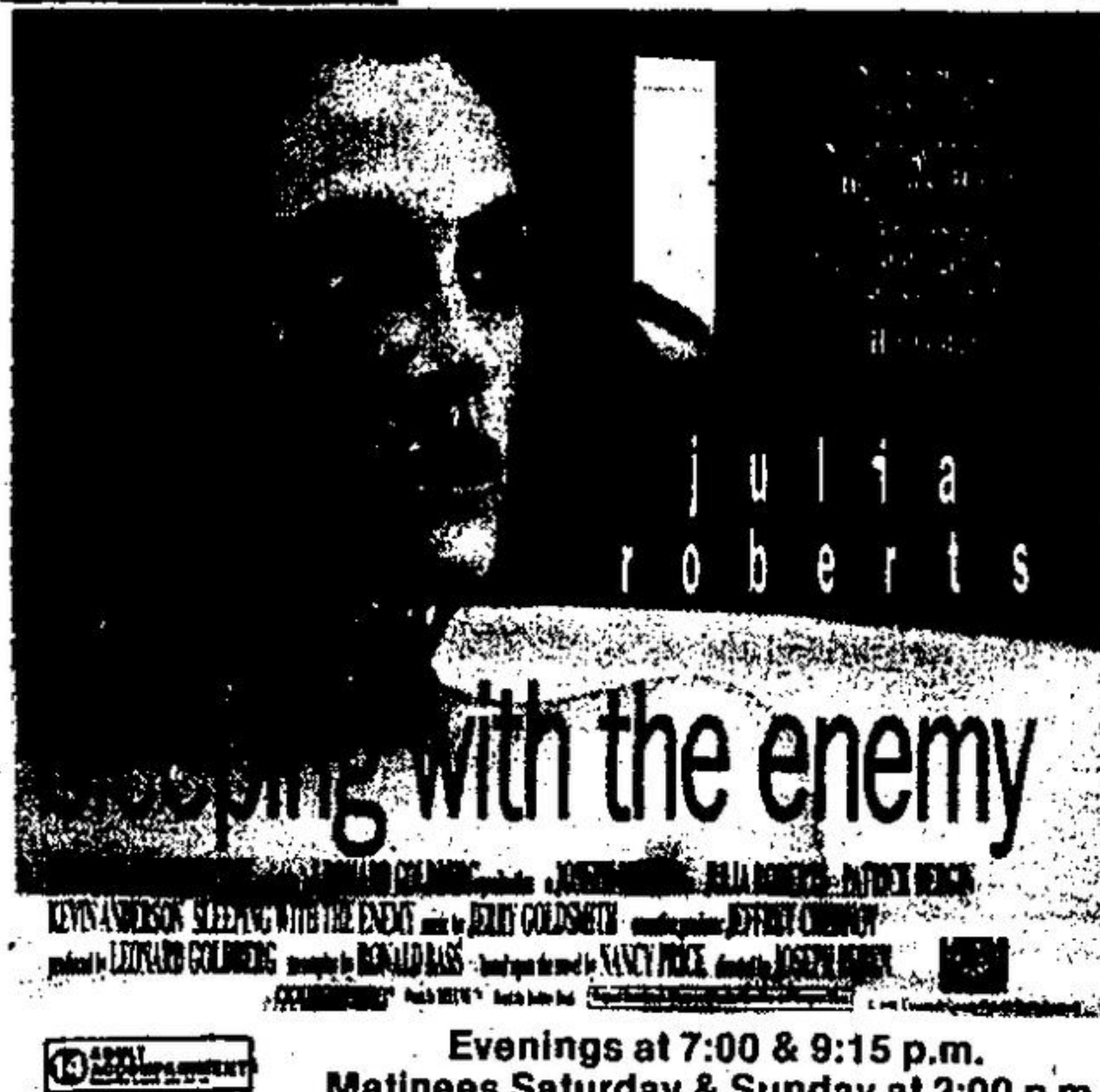
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