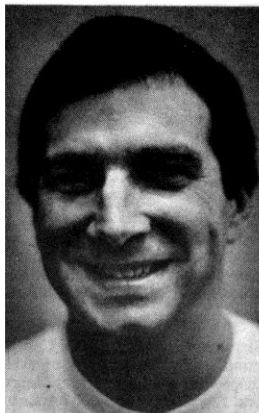


## AREA ACTIVITIES



# SVCT's show on the move

The South Valley Civic Theater is going on the road with its dinner show production of the dramatic comedy *Same Time Next Year*.

The play, starring Belinda Stearns and Andrew Donlon as the unconventional couple who meet one night a year, opens Nov. 15 at the Good Food Company banquet hall in Morgan Hill. The play will then move to the Gilroy Elks Lodge for performances Nov. 16, 21, 22 and 23.

The play tells the story of George and Doris — both married

to other people — who meet one night at an inn in northern California. After their first night together, they meet at the same time and place every year for 25 years. Their annual encounters range from hilarious childbirths to mournful discussions of death and reflections on aging.

Betsy Andrade, well known in South County for her acting appearances with both SVCT and Center Stage, steps behind stage for the first time to direct this play. Belinda Stearns played the lead character Ellen in Center Stage's

*Supporting Cast* and also acts professionally in industrial/educational films and commercials. Andrew Donlon is a newcomer both to South County and the stage.

Tickets for the show cost \$17.50 and include dinner. Good Food Company will cater the Morgan Hill shows and the Elks will cater the Gilroy shows.

Approximately 150 tickets will be sold for each show. The shows often sell out and advance reservations are recommended. For reservations, call 842-SHOW.

Belinda Stearns and Andrew Donlon star in a SVCT play.

# SVCT newcomers fulfill dreams of drama

By Billy Allstetter  
Staff Writer

The South Valley Civic Theater will present two fresh faces to audiences at this weekend's opening of the dramatic comedy *Same Time Next Year*.

Few people have had time to see Andy Donlon anywhere, since he just moved to the area from Colorado this summer, but people all over California may have seen his leading lady Belinda Stearns in industrial films and television commercials.

Then again, they may have seen Stearns years ago, interviewing Gov. Ronald Reagan for KABC in Los Angeles, or at Disneyland, parading around the park dressed as Snow White.

Stearns has played many different parts in her life, but she will be none of them for the next two weekends. She will play a happily married Oakland woman who escapes one weekend a year for a romantic affair. Donlon will play her lover George, a lovable, guilt-ridden accountant who flies to the annual rendezvous from his East Coast home.

The dinner show production opens at the Good Food Company's banquet hall in Morgan Hill Friday. After Saturday evening's show in Morgan Hill, the production will move to the Gilroy Elks Lodge for three shows next Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Dinner begins at 6:30 p.m. before the show, with curtain at 8 p.m. Reservations must be made by calling 842-SHOW at least 72 hours in advance. Tickets cost \$17.50.

There are only two characters in the play, but it may seem like 12 different people are involved, as the play follows the affair through 25 years and six episodes. Doris changes from uneducated and insecure housewife to pregnant mother to Berkeley hippie, while George changes from bumbling accountant to overstressed, drinking businessman to debonair post-analysis know-it-all.

"It's pretty crazy," said Donlon. "It's like learning six different roles."

Donlon admits the play has been a challenge. He hasn't acted in a play since high school. He always had an interest in drama, but

theater was not a booming activity in Colorado's 5,000-population Archuleta County. His job there as assistant director of public safety gave him little time for rehearsals.

After moving with his family in August to Gilroy and taking a position with Dover Elevator Company in San Jose, he found the time, and dove right into a demanding dramatic role.

He didn't realize what he was getting into when he auditioned for the play. The name *Same Time Next Year* rang a bell, but he didn't remember it was only a two-person play.

Nonetheless, director Betsy Andrade picked him for the part. She



Belinda Stearns, in character for *Same Time Next Year*, talks about her husband to her lover, played by Andy Donlon.

wanted a sympathetic character whom audiences could like in spite of the fact that he was cheating on his wife.

"It's so important that people in the audience fall in love with him," said Andrade. She did at the audition. "His warmth and sincerity showed through in the auditions. He's just terrific."

Stearns, on the other hand, has quite a bit of acting experience behind her, as well as living up to being the energetic and vivacious character Andrade sought.

Stearns currently works as a professional model and actress in commercials, industrial films, and print media. In the past 20 years she has also held a range of jobs that would be enough for several people.

In addition to short stints as a television reporter and Snow White, the Morgan Hill mother of two worked as a press aide for Illinois Senator Charles Percy and as

a school teacher.

Stearns and her family moved to Morgan Hill nine years ago. She had long dreamed of an acting career but believed it would never be after she gave birth to her second child in 1978.

Her volunteer work at O'Connor Hospital led to a fashion show fund-raiser and training as a model with the Frazer-Nicklin talent agency in San Jose. That led to fashion modeling for print advertisements and store such as Macy's and Nordstrom's. The modeling, in turn, led to commercials and industrial films.

Coit Drapery and Carpet Cleaners hired her for her first commercial because of her large, expressive brown eyes. She had no lines in the commercial. The commercial showed a close-up of the upper half of her face. As a "voice from the sky" narrated the woes of a

dirty carpet and what Coit could do, Stearns rolled her eyes and peered deep into the fibers of a carpet that had been loaded with dust.

Since then she has done five television commercials.

Another role involved portraying a stressed blue collar worker in four films for the United States Department of Labor and Mental Health. The film was designed to teach people how to deal with stress, but it increased the stress for Stearns, who said she brought some of her character's bad temper home with her.

She credits her husband, William, with tremendous understanding of a schedule that takes her to San Francisco several times a week for auditions, performances and classes. Her current role has been especially difficult, she said, because of the intimate

relationship she must develop with her leading man Donlon.

"It's tough on a man," said Stearns, who hugs, kisses and climbs into bed with Donlon several times during the play. "It does bother him a bit."

The three to six play rehearsals per week she has attended since early October has brought a halt to her more lucrative modeling and acting work, but she has no regrets in spite of having to give up a chance at a five-day shoot in Bermuda for Club Med.

"It's wonderful training," said Stearns.

Although a newcomer to South Valley Civic Theater, she did play a lead last year in Center Stage's *The Supporting Cast*.

Both Stearns and Donlon will be much more familiar to South County audiences after the next two weekends.

Evans Yee-Vasa