

MOUNTAIN FIELD CENTRAL HIGH
Forteau, Labrador

presents

"PULLING UP ROOTS"

CAST:

Joe Whitman.....Derrick Bell
Matha Whitman.....Joy Buckle
Nan Whitman.....Terra Hancock
Charlie Whitman.....Craig Toms
Jake Whitman.....Colin Hancock
Isabelle Whitman.....Cindy O'Keefe
Aunt Aggie.....Terra Hancock

TEACHER:

Maureen Clements

The setting is on an island off the northeast coast of Labrador. The time is the mid 1960's. At present, the Whitman family is preparing to move from their hometown of Bakeapple Bay to Partridge berry Cove. The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Joseph Smallwood, is implementing what has become known as the resettlement program of the sixties. As the play opens, Martha and Joe Whitman are in the kitchen of their outpost home discussing the move. Martha is putting bread in the oven while Joe is filling his pipe.

Susan Pardy Elementary
Spruce Park Gr. 5



MOUNTAIN FEILD CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTS:

JOE WHITMAN (Derrick Bell)
 MARTHA WHITMAN (Joy Buckle)
 NAN WHITMAN (Terra Hancock)
 CHARLIE WHITMAN (Craig Toms)
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IN:

PULLING UP ROOTS

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MARTHA: Now, Joe, don't forget to take my bread out of the oven about quarter past eight. Remember what happened the last time. It was burnt as black as me boot.

JOE: Don't worry, I'll remember this time, maid. Dudder time, I was listen'in to Joey on the radio and forgot all about it.

MARTHA: Well, my man, if all goes O.K. tonight, you'll watch Joey on the television the next time he makes an important speech.

(SOUND: Joe doing something in the kitchen but then turns to Martha)

JOE: Do you think t'will go through, Martha?

MARTHA: I certainly 'ope so.

JOE: I 'spose if we gotta go, we gotta go. But no other fishin' room will ever seem the same to me.

MARTHA: You don't really want to go, do you, Joe?

JOE: It ain't that I don't want to go 'cause I know its the only thing we can do. To be livin' in a community with only eight families is foolish but it's home and to move anywhere else... I---I don't think I'll be happy.

MARTHA: I can tell you one thing I'LL be. I'll be happy knowin' there's a doctor to call if anyone takes sick. I'll be happy knowin' Jake and Isabelle are goin' to a decent school and gettin' their proper education instead of bein' stuck in that one-room school house.

JOE: Charlie did alright.

MARTHA: Yes, but Charles is smart. He read a lot but now THAT Jake. He's a completely different breed all together. Got his mind on nothin' but the girls.

MARTHA: Now Joe Don't get me mad before I goes to the meetin'. The women are dependin' on me so I wants to stay calm.

JOE: Women! Its the women who got this place as bad as it is. They're all so worked up 'bout leavin' they've forgotten about the men. The men'd just as soon live their life here.

MARTHA: Ah yes, but they've never had a baby in the spare room with an old cranky midwife tendin' to'em. And in the wintertime, they take off into the woods when the place starts to get on their nerves. So don't tell me about the men around here!

JOE: The lumber woods ain't no picnic either, Martha.

MARTHA: I know that but it ain't the same, Joe. A bunch of men together playin' cards and talkin' is better than frettin' over a sick child or wonderin' if you have enough wood for the winter.

(SOUND: Door opens and footsteps are heard)

ISABELLE: Runnin' down BakeApple Bay again Mom? Can't wait to get away, can ya? Jenny Simms say there's lots of shops up at Patridige Berry Cove.

MARTHA: Enough about the shops for now. Charlie'll be here tomorrow. He'll be able to tell you all about it when he comes back from ST. John's.

ISABELLE: Can I go down with you in the motor boat when you goes to get Charlie? Can I Dad?

JOE: I s'pose maid. (turns to Martha) Where's Mom tonight?

MARTHA: She went down to the Carter's to do a little bit of knittin' with Clara.

ISABELLE: Anything there to eat Mom?

MARTHA: I 'spose you'd find something in the cupboard if you weren't too lazy to get up and look.

ISABELLE: (To herself so Martha can't hear) God Mom. You're some crocked lately.

(SOUND: Tap on door. Door opening and closing.)

AGGIE: Ready Martha?

MARTHA: My God, I didn't realize it was that late. I don't even have the rollers out of my hair yet. Come on in and sit down.

(Martha hurridly takes the rollers from her hair)

JOE: Aggie maid, you're a queer stick. You've been coming 'round here for sixteen years and you won't walk in without knock'in. Real BakeApple Bay manners I suppose.

AGGIE: Now Joe, you knows what I'm like. I don't like to butt in boy.

JOE: (under his breath) Ha! You don't mind buttin' into anything else though.

AGGIE: My, Isabelle, you are certainly growing up. Seems like only

(SOUND: Embarrassed grunt from Isabelle)

84

ISABELLE: Aunt Aggie! Oh my.

MARTHA: You hair is nice, Aggie. Did young Betsy give you the perm? I soon got to get something done with mine too.

AGGIE: Yes, Maid. She did a fine job.

MARTHA: (turning) Now Isabelle you'd better remember to take the bread out of the oven if your father forgets.

ISABELLE: (Getting another snack out of the cupboard) Yes Mom. Stop worrying about the bread will ya. Goodnight now.

JOE: So long, Aggie. Don't be too late Martha. I'll be anxious knowin' whats happenin' at the meetin'.

MARTHA: I won't. Goodnight now.

AGGIE: (On her way out the door) Goodnight. See ya after the meetin' fer a cup of tea.

JOE: (To himself) I say you won't be takin' much more out of this oven. Guess she'll want one of them l'ectric ranges when we gets to Patridge Berry Cove.

ISABELLE: What are you talking to yourself about, Dad?

JOE: Nothin', love.

ISABELLE: Oh, O.K. Don't forget the bread 'cause Mom'll kill you if you do. I'm gonna run down to see Aunt Maude fer a while.

JOE: You'll soon be done runnin' fer visits when we gets to Patridge Berry Cove.

(She kisses her father on the forehead and begins to leave.)

ISABELLE: I know, Dad. I know.

(Her father just sits there listening to the radio as the curtain falls.)

SCENE 2

TIME: The next morning. Jake and Martha are sitting around the kitchen table. Nan is sitting in her rocking chair knitting.

JAKE: I suppose Charlie'll be blow'in his nose with dollar bills when he gets here, and I bet he'll ignore me. He was bad enough Christmas.

NAN: We're lucky he's not comin back with a ring on his left hand and a woman on his right. You member Reg Coorey, Brians youngest? He got married and went off to some ungodly place in the States.

MARTHA: I hope Charlie has more sense than that. Anyway, I'll know he'll agree with me 'bout moving to Partridge Berry Cove.

(SOUND: Motorboat, faint in distance, gets louder)

JAKE: Listen, I think that's the boat. (Running to the window) Yip, that's them. Charlie is stand'en up in the stern. He looks like a real prep, or what ever they call'em.

MARTHA: (Going to look over Jake's sholder) I guess he'll be hungry and lookin' for a bite to eat, so I made his favorite turr soup. I hope the meats not to tough.

NAN: If only his poor grandfather was here now. Oh he'd be so proud. He always knew he'd go far.

MARTHA: How in the name of God could Grandpa Whitman have known how far Charlie was gonna go. Sure Charlie was only three then.

NAN: My dear, you're some snibby lately! You're so shook up about movin' to Partridge Berry Cove you ain't got time for anyone or anything else.

JAKE: Be quiet you two. Charlie is comin' up the hill, don't let him hear you squeelin'!

(SOUND: Door opens: Charlie and Isabelle enter and put down luggage)

CHARLIE: (Running to hug his Grandmother) Oh, It's wonderful to be home. Nan, you are looking better and better every time I see you. (Running to hug his mother) Mom, I could smell your cooking all the way down the road. And Jake, de real young man, got a girl yet boy?

(SOUND: chair creaks as Charlie sits down)

ISABELLE: One! He got one for every day of the week. The other night, Sally Jones and Kathy Brown came over from Partridge Berry Cove and Jake didn't know which one to pick so he walked down the road between the two of 'em..

JAKE: Shut up, Isabelle. Charlie don't want to hear about me. So Charlie, got a new woman or do you still go with Patrica?

CHARLIE: There's lots to pick from in St. John's. I found my self a real baby. She'll be coming here on the boat on Monday for a couple of days.

MARTHA: Leave Charlie alone now. Charlie, want a slice of mollasses and bread?

CHARLIE: No, that's ok Mom. It'll soon be dinner time.

JAKE: Mom, Charlie and I are gonna go down to Uncle Bill's to get Dad. We'll be back in a little while.

MARTHA: Don't be too long now.

CHARLIE and JAKE (Together): We won't.

The curtain falls. As the curtain rises, they are preparing to eat supper. The family chorus "Amen" and they begin to eat.)

CHARLIE: Mom, this turr soup is delicious. Now where's that figgy-duff?

NAN (Butting in): Don't worry t'is in the oven.

CHARLIE: I don't think I'll ever want to leave here again. (Pause) Mom, is it true that everyone is moving to Partridge Berry Cove?... I hope not.

MARTHA: Yes it's true. I thought you'd be glad to hear it.

NAN: Everyone is not like you Martha. How you can leave when poor Tommy is buried here is more than I can understand.

MARTHA: If we'd been living in Partridge Berry Cove, maybe it wouldn't have happened.

JOE: That's enough now ladies! Enough!!
Swear to God you were gonna kill each other there.

CHARLIE: Yeah, so it's true then- we are moving.

MARTHA: Yes, we got a government grant, each of us, the problem now is that nobody wants to go except for me, or so it seems.

JOE: Martha, you can't believe us for not wanting to leave our home to move to a different place altogether.

JAKE: I bet ya can't go troutin' in Partridgeberry Cove and ...

MARTHA: That's all you got your mind on, the worst things. You don't look at these things with an open mind. You could at least try. Now, you and Isabelle bring those suitcases upstairs for Charlie and no more of your nonsense.

ISABELLE AND JAKE (Together): Yes, Mom.

Martha is pacing the floor somewhat upset because no one seems to understand why she feels the need to move from BakeApple Bay. They all seem to be afraid to speak and are waiting for her to calm down. Nan finally addresses the group.

NAN: Course it is totally different for Martha. She wasn't born here. She isn't a real native of this community.

(Martha prepares to defend herself but Joe speaks up.)

JOE: Now that's enough mom.

MARTHA: That's O.K. Joe. I know what your mother is trying to say. (turns to Nan) I've lived here twenty-five years but that's twenty-five to long. Living in fear every time a child get's sick or sending you're kids to a school where they don't get no learnin'. It ain't no fair a'tall.

Charlie: Mom, I understand how you feel and I don't blame you one bit for wanting to leave. But I can't imagine this place not being home anymore. All the fun we had, all the times we shared together- trouting, bakeapple picking, swimming in the pond, and one of the nicest things was that you could be alone when you wanted to be.

Martha: Alone when you wanted to be! My God Charlie, that's just it. For the past twenty five years I've been alone so many times when I didn't want to be, when I needed someone to be there! I don't want to be alone anymore..... When Tommy took sick I knew nothing more could be done for him since there was no doctor around but (Hitting her fist on the table) I vowed then and there that if there was ever a time that I could leave here, I would.

NAN: You wouldn't have lost him if I'd been here.

MARTHA: Yes but Nan you lost five youngsters of your own. So its not much use in snapping at each other, or Charlie'll be taking the boat back to . ST. John's.

CHARLIE: I didn't come to fight with you Mom. I think I really do understand how you feel. But to tell the truth I can't imagine a summer anywhere else.

MARTHA: That's the point. It's a fine place to come for the summer. I'd be happy to do that to but not every day of every year. I bet you wouldn't want to settle down here yourself.

(Door opens and Jake and Isabelle return from upstairs)

ISABELLE: Anything else to bring up stairs?

JOE: Got it all poked away have you?

JAKE: Whew! They were heavy! What in the world did you have in 'em anyway? Rocks?

CHARLIE: I'll show you later. Anyway Jake, how do you feel about moving away.

JAKE: It dosen't make much difference to me, I spose. Wherever you go there are girls and the school has dances every Friday night. That's the main thing.

JOE: Now my son if that's the only reason you go to school then...

MARTHA: Charlie always wanted to be a doctor so now's his chance.

ISABELLE: Please ya self, but I wouldn't want him looking after me.

JAKE: You ungrateful scUlpin!!!

JOE: Now that's enough you two.

MARTHA: Look, why don't you boys go outdoors and help your father. Now Isabelle, I think it's time to be gettin' those dishes off the table if they're ever gonna be done this day.

Scene 3

Time: The final day before moving to Patridge Berry Cove. Martha and Joe are in the kitchen, which now looks empty because they have packed most of their belongings. AS the curtain rises, boxes are littered around the floor into which Martha is putting kitchen utensils. Joe enters the room and quietly looks around. At first, Martha does not notice him and as a result does not try to hide the feelings of dismay and confusion which are evident on her face.

JOE: (Moving towards the table) What's wrong Martha? You don't look like yourself tonight.

MARTHA: It's just one of these days. All the kids are gone out tonight to have a good time. I wish I could be young and wild again. Free as a bird, no problems. No problems at all.

JOE: Thinking about moving again are ya?

MARTHA: Again? When haven't I been thinking 'in about it Joe? You know how I've convinced the family to go, the government grant is fixed up... I'm not sure if I want to leave.

JOE: So that's the trouble. I should 'ave known. Look you'll be happy enough when we get to Partridge Berry Cove - trust me.

MARTHA: 'Tisn't that I don't trust you Joe boy. I know it's too late to turn back now and when I come to my senses, I won't want to. I'm just frightened. What about the kids don't like it, what if we don't like it, what if...

JOE (interrupting): What if, what if ... look, that's a chance we'll have to take. As a family we'll be able to do it.

MARTHA: But- they'll all leave us one after another.

JOE: But I'll always be here for you.

MARTHA: Oh Joe, if anything ever happened to you, I don't know what I'd do. I'm the loud one but you're the strong one.

JOE: Well, this strong one is gonna be a shopkeeper when he gets to Partridgeberry Cove. That is if you don't get mixed up with another committee to move all Partridgeberry Cove to some other God forsaken place.

MARTHA: I've had enough committees for one lifetime.

JOE: For one thing I don't believe you and for another thing I don't want you to. All the same, I'm glad you're not too anxious to leave after all. Partridgeberry Cove is not too far away, so we'll be able to come back every once in a while. We've got a lot to do tomorrow but what about going for a walk since this is our last night in this community.

MARTHA: Alright, love. Let's go.

Martha and Joe prepare to leave the house. Hand in hand, they pause at the door of their home and turn around to look at it as if they have never seen it before. They look at each other sadly. The curtain falls as they are leaving the room.

THE END

POSCRIPT: The 1960's in Newfoundland and Labrador were trying times for the inhabitants, especially for those living on isolated islands. At that time in our history, Mr Joseph Smallwood began to implement the resettlement program. This program urged people who occupied islands off the coast to move from their native homes to a nearby town. He felt that people in such areas were in danger of not receiving proper medical care, education, food supplies, etc. As a result, supply boats bringing such services were no longer required to make scheduled stops in such ports. As well, the medical boat was required to service only the larger ports.

As this play portrays, there were mixed feelings about the move. Many people were exalted while others felt betrayed. In PULLING UP ROOTS, we observe the conflicting feelings experienced by each member of the family.

By writing this play, our only goal is to remind ourselves and others that even though the 'great move' took place over two decades ago, it is still remembered by some. And as Joe Whitman so aptly put it: "Its home".