

IT STARTS WITH “P” AND RHYMES WITH “T”

By Fred Hobbs

Windsor Gardens boasts many attractions and amenities well known and enjoyed by residents, but did you know there also is “trouble right here in Windsor City?” That’s Trouble with a capital “T” and that rhymes with “P” and that stands for pool.

Okay, I’m stealing from “Professor” Harold Hill, “The Music Man” from the fabulously successful Broadway and film musical of the same name. When composer Meredith Willson wrote the lyrics to this whimsical take on Midwest life in the early 20th century, he was thinking of the young ones in the mythical town of River City, Iowa “peekin’ in the pool hall window after school...fritterin’ away their noontime, supper time, chore time, too... (just) to get the ball in the pocket.”

When he created “The Music Man,” Willson was not aware that much later, three Windsor Gardens pals would regularly utilize and enjoy, a perhaps lesser- known attraction, the very well equipped and maintained billiards and pool room at Centerpoint. These three guys have earned the right, all of them retired after long stints in the workplace, to do a considerable amount of fritterin’ if they wish. And, unlike the callow youth in the musical, the trouble they are causing involves the frustration of trying to get the “four ball in the side pocket.”

The trio, hopelessly inadequate to qualify as “pool sharks,” nevertheless have great fun playing the game and even have created names for themselves: “Big Al,” “North Dakota Art,” and “Fast Freddie.” Al and Art seem to alternate as winners of the friendly games.

Freddie is improving, but still suffers from a tendency to hurry in making a shot. Also, he lacks the finesse of the other two in coaxing the elusive ball in the pocket at just the right velocity.

The games are punctuated with gentle ribbing and frequent encouragement such as: “Come on, that’s an easy shot, you can make it.” None of the three appears eager to engage in a pool tournament, if there is such an event in Windsor Gardens. However, there is also one table set up for playing billiards and there is some talk that they could tackle that related game.

Maybe they are encouraged by the declaration of the phony “Professor” Hill, (actually a traveling salesman.) When warning of the evils of playing pool, he proclaimed to the good citizens of River City, “Why sure, I’m a billiard player, certainly mighty proud to say it. I consider that the hours I spend with a cue in my hand are golden. Help you cultivate horse sense and a cool head and a keen eye.”

Al and Art and, especially Freddie could benefit from enhancements of horse sense and cool heads. Being of a certain age, they each may need to consult an ophthalmologist about maintaining a keen eye. But, they can join other Windsor Gardens devotees of the game with the 15 numbered balls and ignore the “Professor’s” warning about “the caliber of disaster indicated by the presence of a pool table in your community.”