

# The Birmingham Eccentric

SECTION C

Thursday, December 5, 1957

## LEND AN EAR

### 'No Time for Sergeants' Fails to Amuse

At the risk of becoming the only dissenter, I am afraid that in my opinion "No Time for Sergeants" is for the most part neither funny, nor clever, nor any of the other thigh-slapping adjectives which have been heaped upon it.

I agree that it is not in any way offensive; but I do not hold that offensiveness, morality wise, (or the lack of it) should be the cause for so much felicity among the critics.

It appears that any satire on Army life, especially when free of offensive remarks, is guaranteed to throw an audience into paroxysms of laughter, and at the same time be immediately eligible for the New York Critic's Award.

There were several spotted moments of real comedy in "No Time for Sergeants." But for the most part the audience appeared to be laughing from the recognition of stereotype characteristics rather than from genuine enjoyment of the particular situation.

AND, INDEED, the stereotypes

are derived from embarrassing but likely situations. The audience, in order to identify with the characters, must see a play in which many-faced with human paths or sadness many times standing just below the surface smile.

THE PLAY in question was too broadly drawn. The mechanism was often pure slapstick. No pies were thrown, but this would have fitted in nicely with the general level of humor.

The protagonist, "Will," skillfully played by James Holden, is a slow-witted Georgia boy who proceeds to make mince-meat out of an entire Army base by a simple and embarrassingly direct approach to all situations.

With this device, there were some fairly fresh sequences at the beginning. But after that we were disappointed from one unbelievably

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corny situation to another with dialogue of such sparkling content as "Who sees" and "Ah did."

The sets were wonderful. The special effects, especially of an airplane in night flight, were terribly good.

BUT THE level of humor in this case, where the main problem seemed to revolve around where they were and the fumbling attempts of our hero to conquer a complicated radio complete with flashing lights and twirling knobs, was so pulchre that it left one gasping for a subtle nuance or speck of sophisticated humor.

As I watched this play, I could not help but wish I were watching "Mr. Roberts," a play of Navy life I remembered for moments of high color, sentiment and the portrayal of adult feelings and situations. Holden did a good job in characterization of vanity that

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