

# **CRENSHAW**

## ***Family Reunion***

*By Marc F. Holland and Michael J. Davis*

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## **THE STORY OF THE PLAY**

The Crenshaws hold a family reunion only every five years and that may be too often! The ill-fated reunions are always such disastrous affairs that everyone wishes they were orphans. This year young Teddy takes his new wife, Susan, home to meet the clan and winds up kidnapped - along with everyone else - because no one showed up at the last reunion at Aunt Sophie's and she's ready for revenge. Teddy and Susan are the narrators and occasionally speak directly to the audience in storytelling style.

Although Teddy and Susan are the most normal of the Crenshaws, you still can't help loving the other family lunatics. Get ready for an explosive reunion which finally turns a group of related strangers into a real family.

Originally performed by the Novi (Mich.) Community Theatre Players.

*The play is dedicated to the twelve hard-working individuals who brought the characters to life for the first time in June, 1992. We'll never again read CRENSHAW FAMILY REUNION without seeing their faces between the lines.*

*The Playwrights.*

TEDDY CRENSHAW ... FUAD KANDAH  
SUSAN CRENSHAW ... ELIZABETH RACER  
HENRY CRENSHAW, SR....LLOYD E. YOUNG III  
CHUCK CRENSHAW ... PETER ERIC CONDIT  
JEANNIE CRENSHAW ... ANN DUFFY  
VANESSA GELDMACHER ... LIBBY THOMAS  
LEON GELDMACHER ... RAMI FARHAT  
HELEN CRENSHAW ... HELEN WEISS  
HENRY CRENSHAW JR. ... MIC KELLY  
THELMA CRENSHAW ... KATHY HOLLAND  
AUNT SOPHIE ... PAT SPENCER  
CARL FUTZER ... YORK GRIFFITH

**CAST OF CHARACTERS** (6 m, 6 w)

**TEDDY CRENSHAW:** Our narrator, 25. Newlywed school teacher hardly fazed by the lunacy.

**SUSAN CRENSHAW:** Teddy's wife, 25. Also a teacher and is, along with Teddy, brighter than the rest. Excited by meeting the family.

**CHUCK CRENSHAW:** Teddy's brother, 33. Office supplies are his life. He's a salesman who never stops. Married to Jeannie.

**JEANNIE CRENSHAW:** 34, sweet and earthy. Aspiring writer. Loves Chuck against her better judgment. Is writing professionally, to the chagrin of her husband.

**LEON GELDMACHER:** Failed businessman, 40. Hates the Crenshaws a lot. Married to Vanessa.

**VANESSA CRENSHAW-GELDMACHER:** 38. Invented the highly successful Oatburgers. Is now focusing on a performance art career, along with making tons of money on other ventures.

**HENRY CRENSHAW, SR.:** Patriarch of family, 65. Inventor of the Crenshaw Cough Drop. Forgetful but very kind, always has bowls of cough drops available.

**HELEN CRENSHAW:** Matriarch of clan, 65. Responds to pressure by making jam.

**HENRY CRENSHAW, JR.:** The oldest son, 40, and heir apparent to the cough drop kingdom. Isn't very smart, but doesn't have to be. Married to Thelma.

**THELMA CRENSHAW:** About 40. Acid-tongued wife to Henry Jr. and mother of the brood. (The brood consists of six children, all just a year apart. Unruly and unseen.)

**CARL FUTZER:** Cough drop company foreman, about 30. Also sweeps floors. Lives with his mother, next door to Crenshaws.

**AUNT SOPHIE:** Older woman, 60. Wears eye patch. Aunt Bea on a very bad day.

**Time:** Current year. Summer.

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**PROPS**

**Act I, Sc. 1:** Slides of family, clicker and screen (or photo album if it is too difficult to preshoot slides); suitcases; brochure for Chuck; leis for Leon and Vanessa and zinc oxide on Leon's nose; silver tray and apron for Helen; toys thrown in from offstage; *Highlights* magazine for Leon; Indian headdress in closet; car keys for Teddy; cut pieces of rope and suction cup arrows offstage for Henry Sr.; toy grenade for Thelma.

**Act I, Sc. 2:** Photo albums and snacks; glass bowl of jam; beer cans; rifle for Aunt Sophie; duct tape for Carl.

**Act II, Sc. 1:** Eye patch (worn over right eye), huge knife and plate of sandwiches for Aunt Sophie; pocket knife for Carl; needlepoint by Sophie's chair; cane by chair or sofa; aerosol air horn and paper and pen in desk.

**COSTUMES**

No special costumes are needed except the men should wear boxer style underwear or swimsuits under their pants which are yanked.

**SFX**

Doorbell, children's screams and yells, glass breaking, electric voltage, car horn.

**SETTING**

We are in the comfortable rural farmhouse of Helen and Henry Crenshaw Sr., in Wiley Falls, Pennsylvania. Its furnishings and decorations make it very clear that it is the home of comfortable, conservative people. SL is the door from the front porch which leads directly into the living room which is typically furnished with a sofa and chairs. The desk DSR holds a phone and the coffee table DSC holds a bowl of cough drops and a small, portable TV will be stored in a closet, USL.

To the right is the dining room with table and chairs. A bottle of wine and bowls and/or glasses sit in the center. SR is a doorway which leads to the kitchen. USC are the stairs leading to the bedrooms.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: It's early afternoon. Preset in the middle of the darkened set is a small screen on a tripod. TEDDY CRENSHAW comes on stage with a slide machine clicker. He points to light booth and clicks. On screen is a group photo. Seventeen people are shown.)*

TEDDY: This is the only known photo of the Crenshaw family reunions. Every five years we all gather together and every five years someone says, "Somebody should have brought a camera." For years we said that. I finally took the initiative and bought a camera. I bought a Kwakimoto X3500 Series B. *(Pause.)* Do you know how much a Kwakimoto X3500 Series B costs? I could have bought controlling interest in another camera company. This picture was snapped just seconds before my nephew, Chuckie Jr. *(Points HIM out in picture.)* threw a softball into the lens, demolishing the camera. He's the one pulling the dog's ears. The cast of characters that meet, thankfully, only twice a decade, looks like a line-up for "Dragnet." It looks like an average American family, right? Looks all-American ... normal? Wrong. We're all convinced Dad ... *(Points to the picture.)* made a gypsy very angry once, because every time we have a reunion ... something ... odd happens. *(Thinks.)* I'll cite brief examples.

*(Click.)* 1973: Uncle Fred brought his prize possession- his cat, Spunky. During the picnic, Spunky was carried away by a hawk.

*(Click.)* 1978: Cousin Stan had driven his new RV to the reunion. During dinner, it spontaneously combusted. 1983: Uncle Fred's wife, Aunt Sophie, not pictured, fell on her oyster fork and lost her right eye. Uncle Fred doesn't come to the reunions anymore. He's resting comfortably upstate. Aunt Sophie has dropped pretty much out of sight ... er, so to speak.

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*(Click.)* This is my father, Henry M. Crenshaw. After World War II, he took Grandma Crenshaw's cough remedy recipe and opened the Crenshaw Cough Drop Company which made him a great deal of money. His only prior business experience was selling piano stools door-to-door.

*(Click.)* This is my mother, Helen Crenshaw. She married my father some time in the middle ages. She's a great mom. Her gourmet specialty is Concord Grape Jam. She makes it all the time. She has gallons of the stuff in the cellar. She once made pancakes with gunpowder, but she can make Concord Grape Jam in her sleep.

*(Click.)* This is my oldest brother, Henry M. Crenshaw, Jr. He's been running Crenshaw Cough Drops for ten years now. He's not terribly bright, but, then again, how smart do you have to be to think up the slogan, "When there's junk in your lungs, think Crenshaw"? I've tried to live my life by that slogan...

*(Click.)* This is his wife, Thelma. Thelma is a remarkably intact woman for having given birth to six children in the span of 60 months. I've never known Thelma when she wasn't irritable and complaining. Then again, I've never know her when she wasn't pregnant.

*(Click.)* My sister, Vanessa. She was an innovative child. Once, when laughing, she passed an entire cheese Danish through her nose. This obviously had a profound effect on her. Long before meeting her husband, Leon Geldmacher *(Click, audible shudder, then click back to Vanessa.)* Vanessa made a fortune. You may not recognize the face, but you're all familiar with the product. Vanessa created the Oatburger, made entirely of oatmeal but fried in bacon grease. After the Mrs. C's Oatburger franchises reached their zenith, she sold out and pursued her performance art career. The last time I heard about Vanessa was in the *New York Times*. The drama critic characterized her production of *Caesar Salad With Ranch* as brilliant. She wore a nude leotard and did jumping jacks to accentuate the glowing light bulbs mounted in her armpits.

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She's married to *(Click.)* Leon Geldmacher. He hates the Crenshaws for a number of reasons, some of whom will be here this weekend.

For instance ... *(Click.)* my brother, Chuck Crenshaw. Office supplies are his life. He's loud, obnoxious and boorish... but he loves everyone ... if they have money. He's married, oddly enough *(Click.)* to Jeannie Crenshaw. She's sweet, she's kind, she reads Nietzsche ... we've never been able to figure that out. That leaves only me *(Click.)*, Teddy Crenshaw, baby of the group. I graduated top of my class from the University of Pittsburgh. Chuck told me he thought magna cum laude was the title of a French porno film. Henry confided that he thought it was one of the Gabor sisters.

I am happily married to *(Click.)* Susan Crenshaw. We have been married a short time and teach at the same high school. We have forsaken part of our precious summer vacation to attend ... the Crenshaw family reunion.

*(SUSAN walks on stage carrying a few suitcases.)*

SUSAN: Well, am I going to carry these all by myself?

TEDDY: No, I was just making sure we had enough emergency flares in the trunk.

*(TEDDY and SUSAN exit stage as screen is removed by stage hand. LIGHTS up on HENRY SENIOR, watching a portable TV which sits on the coffee table. The DOORBELL rings.)*

HENRY SENIOR: Helen! Helen! The door, Helen! *(It RINGS again.)* I think the paper boy is here! *(Still watching TV as DOORBELL rings again.)* Helen! Pay the paper boy, will ya? Aw, crimentlies! *(Rises and crosses to front door keeping HIS eyes on the TV. He opens the door and TEDDY and SUSAN enter.)* Teddy! Helen, Teddy's delivering our papers now!

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