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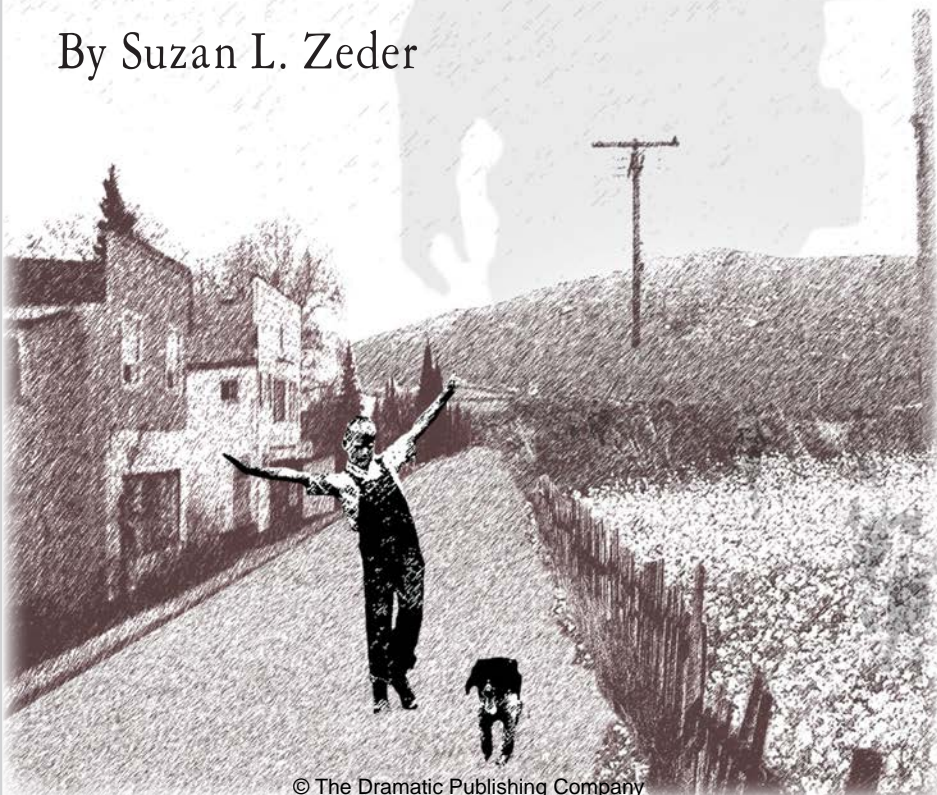
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*Dramatic Publishing*

# The Edge of Peace

By Suzan L. Zeder



# The Edge of Peace

**Drama. By Suzan L. Zeder.** Cast: 5m., 6w. *The Edge of Peace* is the third and final play in the acclaimed Ware Trilogy, which includes Zeder's award-winning plays *Mother Hicks* and *The Taste of Sunrise*. It is set in the same tiny town of Ware, Illinois, and follows many of the same characters as they spin the conclusion of their stories. Set in 1945 in the last desperate days of World War II, this play deals with the impact on a family and a community after a young man from the town is declared missing in action and the soldier's little brother refuses to believe what seems inevitable. In the visual poetry of sign language, Tuc, who is now a mechanic and the deaf postman for the town, takes us on a journey of hope through a landscape of loss. But there is suspicion and mystery afoot. Not far from town, a German prisoner of war escapes from a nearby camp and has been seen lurking in the shadows. Up on Dug Hill, the mysterious Nell Hicks is suspected of being a "sympathizer" because she listens to radio broadcasts in German. A recruiter from the Goodyear Plant comes to town with an offer for Tuc to leave a home, where he is valued and respected, to join a Deaf community far away in Akron. Eleven-year-old Buddy patrols the streets, searches for clues and tries to hold his family together as everyone waits for news about the missing soldier and prays for peace. "Full of rich pathos, believable characters and a stunning storyline." (*Austin Lifestyle Magazine*) Each of the plays in the Ware Trilogy can be produced independently, but taken together they lead us through three pivotal eras of American history as reflected in the lives of the families who live in Ware. At the core of each play is an issue important to Deaf and hearing cultures, but most important are the human stories of longing and loss, humor and hope that will resonate with audiences of all ages. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: E84.*

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Drama by  
SUZAN ZEDER



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“*The Edge of Peace* was originally commissioned by Seattle Children’s Theatre and developed in association with The University of Texas at Austin. The world premiere was a collaborative production between Seattle Children’s

*The Edge of Peace*

Is dedicated to my friend and collaborator  
Linda Hartzell

And to Seattle Children's Theatre  
My companions on this long road to Ware

The world premiere of *The Edge of Peace* in February of 2013 was a collaborative production between Seattle Children's Theatre and The Department of Theatre and Dance at the B. Iden Payne Theatre at The University of Texas at Austin.

## CAST

Tuc ..... Robert Schleifer  
Voice..... Dan Lenzian  
Nell Hicks ..... Franchelle Stewart Dorn  
Buddy Ricks..... Nate Kelderman  
Clovis P. Eudy..... Todd Jefferson Moore  
Alma Ward ..... Antoinette Robinson  
Izzy Ricks..... Therese Diekhans  
June Ricks ..... Liz Kimball  
Margaret..... Suzanne Bouchard  
Girl ..... Alexis Scott  
Soldier/Ricky Ricks ..... Kyle Cotton

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Director ..... Linda Hartzell  
Lighting Designer ..... Rachel Atkinson  
Costume Designer..... Hope MacRoberts Bennett  
Stage Manager ..... Rusty Cloyes  
Scenic Designer ..... Jeff Kurihara  
Technical Director..... Dave Vieira  
Sound Designer ..... Chris R. Walker



## AUTHOR'S NOTES

*The Edge of Peace* is the end of a very long road that began for me over 30 years ago when the character of Tuc first appeared in the theatre of my mind and astonished me when he spoke in sign language. This play represents the third and final play of a trilogy that also includes *Mother Hicks* and *The Taste of Sunrise*. All three plays are set in the same tiny town of Ware, Ill. and each play captures the essence of a pivotal area of American history, the Roaring '20s, The Great Depression of the 1930s and the last days of World War II, as reflected in the lives, loves and losses of the townspeople of Ware.

All three plays have at their core seminal issues of Deaf and hearing cultures, courageous young protagonists and, of course, Tuc, the Deaf character who led me on this journey. In *The Taste of Sunrise*, Tuc's deafness is both pathology and promise as young Tuc is caught between the strictures of "oralism," which forced Deaf children to try to speak and read lips, and the depth of expression of sign language. In *Mother Hicks*, Tuc's deafness renders him an outsider, but here in *The Edge of Peace*, Tuc, as both person and Postman, is at the very center of his community. He has become the town's primary source of communication with one other and with their loved ones far away at War. He is the emotional fulcrum of Ware.

In this play, each of the characters has a different method of communication with Tuc, and it is important to understand the differences in production. Buddy relies on broad gestures and a kind of "home sign" they have constructed through their friendship. He also finger spells. Clovis, Tuc's employer, exchanges written notes with Tuc. June and Alma speak slowly, enunciate clearly and rely on lip reading and simple gestures. Izzy, still as insensitive as ever, simply speaks louder. Nell and Girl have been taught sign by Tuc. They use "home sign," a simplified gestural language, with ease and fluidity.

Margaret, a professional Deaf recruiter, uses American Sign Language (ASL) with professional efficiency, and Tuc responds in kind. In their one scene together, Margaret both speaks and signs. If this were “really” happening, she would not speak, but since this is theatre, I have taken the liberty to have her speak her own words, while the character of Voice voices for Tuc here and throughout the play. Voice has, perhaps, the most complex relationship with Tuc. He is much more than an interpreter of Tuc’s signs for an audience; he is Tuc’s alter ego, that part of Tuc which exists in the hearing world. Tuc and Voice are one being.

Because Deafness is at the heart of this play, and all the plays of the trilogy, it is vitally important to me and to any eventual production that Tuc be played by a Deaf actor. I cannot over-emphasize this point. To cast a hearing actor in this role is ethically, politically and aesthetically wrong! I have been told by some producers that they have “no choice” but to cast a hearing actor in this role, to which I reply, “You DO have a choice. You can choose to do a different play!”

*The Edge of Peace* is about more than Deafness. It is a play about home: about coming home, staying home and leaving home, in a time when the adventure and danger of the world threatens and beckons. It has been my honor and my privilege to have had all three of these plays in my life for over three decades. They have taught me everything I know about the courage of young people who survive desperate times with dignity and humor, about the beauty of a language that is silent, about the humanity of a community capable of change. I offer this play, and all these plays, to you with all my heart.

Suzan Zeder, Santa Fe, 2014

# The Edge of Peace

## CHARACTERS

TUC: Postman and mechanic, mid-30s, Deaf.

VOICE: Tuc's alter ego and the manifestation of his voice in the hearing world.

BUDDY RICKS: The little brother left behind, 11.

NELL HICKS: The woman who lives on Dug Hill, known to some as Mother Hicks.

RICKY RICKS: Missing in action.

CLOVIS P. EUDY: Shopkeeper and air raid warden of the town.

IZZY RICKS: War mother, 60s.

JUNE RICKS: War bride, early 20s.

ALMA WARD: War wife, 40s.

MARGARET: Recruiter for Goodyear Company, 39.

GIRL: WASP (Women's Air Force Service Pilot), 23.

SOLDIER: Prisoner of war, also plays Ricky.

RADIO VOICE

PRESIDENT'S VOICE: Voice of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

## TIME

1945

## SETTING

The road: The road through Ware. Tuc's mail route. Soldiers come home from the war along this road ... or don't.

Porches: Houses of the women left behind. Peaked roof lines and window frames. Blue stars in the windows of Izzy's, June's and Alma's houses signify family members in battle. Gold stars for soldiers killed in action. There are no gold stars in Ware ... yet.

The store: Clovis P. Eudy's General Mercantile. A counter, a barrel full of peanuts and a huge map with pins for all the townspeople stationed overseas. A spotter's post is on the roof.

Dug Hill: A tarpaper shack where Mother Hicks has lived all these years. On the front porch is a shortwave radio. There are cages for critters, an outdoor cook fire and maybe a rocking chair.

The foxhole: On a battlefield far away and later in memory.

The campsite: In the woods on the west slope of Dug Hill. A tree stump.

# The Edge of Peace

## ACT I

### PROLOGUE

AT RISE: *Home front / battlefield. A fragmentary set reveals multiple locations: the store, Dug Hill and the road. TUC enters, riding his bike and ringing a bell that he cannot hear. TUC stops and dismounts as VOICE enters. VOICE and TUC give each other a brief nod. TUC signs. VOICE speaks.*

TUC. This town is Ware

W. A .R. E.

Streets, three

Houses, fifteen

Farms, ten

Churches, four

A garage, sawmill and a store

Not much more.

*(TUC points to the spotter's post above CLOVIS P. EUDY's store.)*

TUC *(cont'd)*. Down in town a boy waits

While he waits he dreams of war.

*(Lights up on BUDDY RICKS in the cockpit of an imaginary plane.)*

BUDDY. Deep into enemy territory, ace pilot Buddy Ricks grabs the joystick of his F4F Wildcat and pulls up hard! He shouts to copilot: "We're taking flack from the ack ack!"

*(Lights up on NELL HICKS at the shortwave radio on Dug Hill.)*

TUC. Up on Dug Hill

A woman sits at a radio

Listening to a language she doesn't know.

Spoken from somewhere she will never go.

RADIO VOICE. *Hier ist Radio Berlin mit dem Programm "Anrufe Nach Hause."*

*(The radio goes to static.)*

NELL *(smacks the radio)*. Blast!

TUC. Far away,

A soldier sits in a foxhole all alone,

Waiting for the battle to begin.

While he waits, he dreams of home.

*(Lights up on RICKY RICKS in the foxhole on the other side of the world.)*

RICKY. Dear Momma, last night I dreamed of your lemon vinegar pie. It was so sweet and tart that I made little smacking sounds in my sleep.

TUC *(as VOICE hands him a mail sack)*. I am Tuc,  
Mechanic, farmer and postman

For this town.

The government says Deaf men cannot soldiers be.

So, this is a town of women, children, old men and me.

We are all waiting, waiting, waiting for peace.

*(TUC delivers three letters to BUDDY, IZZY and JUNE RICKS.)*

BUDDY. Thank you, Tuc.

IZZY. Thank you, Tuc.

JUNE. Thank you, Tuc.

TUC. It is 1944.

The whole world is at war.

*(Lights up on the foxhole. Sounds of gunfire.)*

IZZY. It's from Ricky!

RICKY. Dear Momma, they say we're shipping out, headed somewhere really cold.

*(CLOVIS enters with a map.)*

CLOVIS. Belgium.

JUNE. It's from Ricky!

RICKY. Oh, Juney Blue, I miss you so bad it hurts! I dream about you every night and wake up kissing my own arm.

CLOVIS. Bastonge.

BUDDY. It's from Ricky!

CLOVIS. Battle of the Bulge.

*(Explosion. Gunfire intensifies. As BUDDY, JUNE and IZZY read RICKY's letters, we hear their voices and RICKY's voice, until RICKY's voice drops out, and they continue to read his words.)*

RICKY & BUDDY. "We started taking fire last night."

RICKY & JUNE. "It's so cold here my feet keep freezing in my boots ..."

RICKY & IZZY. "My foxhole feels like an icebox and I haven't had a hot shower in two months!"

RICKY & BUDDY. "I started laying down cover fire so we could dig in but the snow was packed hard as cement!"

BUDDY. “I keep firing and my heart is hammering. I can feel the bullets whizzing past me, and everyone is yelling ...”

RICKY & BUDDY. “Keep your head down!”

BUDDY. “So, Gus and I start running.”

BUDDY & RICKY. “RUN!”

*(A mortar shell explodes in light and smoke.)*

RICKY. I can’t see you! I can’t hear you! I can’t ...

*(Explosion. Pandemonium. RICKY disappears in a blinding flash.)*

IZZY. “Don’t worry about me, Momma.”

JUNE. “Don’t worry about me, June.”

BUDDY. “Don’t worry about me, Buddy.”

*(TUC rings the bell. He hands IZZY a yellow envelope. She reads the telegram aloud.)*

IZZY. “I regret to inform you that your son, Private First Class Richard Ricks, was reported missing in action near Bastogne on December 18, 1944. If further details or other information of his status are received, you will be promptly notified.”

*(Lights out on CLOVIS, IZZY, JUNE and BUDDY. TUC steps into a spotlight.)*

TUC. Three months pass.

His family waits day after day after day.

Their hearts break from the silence

Half a world away.

*(TUC and VOICE exchange a glance and exit.)*



**SCENE 1**

*(The store—morning. Lights up on BUDDY in the spotter's post above CLOVIS' store. He is flying an imaginary plane in an imaginary battle.)*

BUDDY. We're taking flack from the ack ack! Let 'em have it! Kerpow! We're hit! The right engine's on fire. Take it easy, we've still got the left one!

*(Battle sounds stop abruptly as CLOVIS enters, switches on a light and opens his shop. CLOVIS grabs a broom and raps on the trap door that leads to the spotter's post above his store.)*

CLOVIS. Buddy Ricks, are you up there again?

BUDDY. Yes, sir.

CLOVIS. I'm not even open yet, how did you get in?

BUDDY. You gave me a key, remember, in case I needed to take a night shift in the spotter's post.

CLOVIS. You up there alone?

BUDDY. Kind of, sort of ...

CLOVIS. Do you have that dog up there with you?

BUDDY. He's my copilot.

CLOVIS. That dog is older than dirt and heavy as sin. He better not be messing up my spotter's post.

BUDDY. No, sir, he's housebroke ... mostly. He just makes bad smells sometimes.

CLOVIS. That dog is a 45 pound gasbag.

BUDDY. Good thing we got this.

*(BUDDY pokes his head through the trap door. He is wearing a gas mask.)*

CLOVIS. You put that away. That's not a toy; it is U.S. government property. You had breakfast yet?

BUDDY. No, sir, I left before my momma was up.

CLOVIS. I got pickled eggs down here and some jerky.

*(BUDDY climbs down the ladder. CLOVIS fishes an egg out of a large jar with a long handled spoon.)*

CLOVIS *(cont'd)*. So, what have you got?

BUDDY. Surveillance Report, April 5, 1945, Ware, Illinois, Civilian Defense Station 10476. Junior Lieutenant Buddy Ricks reporting: "Absolutely nothing happened!"

CLOVIS. At ease!

BUDDY. Just like yesterday and the day before and the day before that! Mr. Eudy, don't you wish just once SOMETHING would happen?

CLOVIS. Nope.

BUDDY. Over there, where Ricky is, things happen all the time! Ace fighter pilot Smokey Joe Foss shot down five German planes! FIVE in just one day! *(Makes the sounds of shooting.)* POW ... POW ... POW ... POW ... POW ... YEowwwwwww. BOOOM ! CRASH! How many kills do you suppose Ricky got?

CLOVIS. How many what?

BUDDY. Kills, how many kills do you think Ricky's got?

CLOVIS. Buddy, Ricky was in the infantry ...

BUDDY. IS ... Ricky IS in the infantry.

*(TUC enters, lugging a large cash register. CLOVIS grabs a small pad and writes a note to him.)*

CLOVIS. Fixed?

*(TUC nods "yes.")*

CLOVIS (*cont'd*). How?

(*TUC writes on CLOVIS' pad.*)

CLOVIS (*cont'd, reading*). “The machine told my fingers what to do.” (*Scribbles.*) “I’ve tried to fix that blasted thing for a week and you do it in one hour!”

(*TUC writes a reply.*)

CLOVIS (*cont'd, reading*). “I know how to listen.”

(*BUDDY runs to TUC and signs in an animated gestural 'home sign' as he speaks. TUC reads BUDDY's lips.*)

BUDDY. We goin’ fishin’ today, Tuc?

(*TUC shakes his head “no.”*)

BUDDY (*cont'd*). But the crappies and blue gills is running.

(*TUC indicates that he has to work.*)

BUDDY (*cont'd*). You work ALL the time. (*Finger spells.*)  
N. O. F. A. I. R.

CLOVIS (*scribbling on the pad*). “Mail train late?”

(*TUC nods “yes.”*)

CLOVIS (*cont'd, scribbling*). “How come?”

(*TUC draws a question mark. TUC grabs his mail sack and exits.*)

BUDDY. Mr. Eudy, can you give me a job? You know, like for money?

CLOVIS. Why?

BUDDY. Mz. Ward just lost her job at the Goodyear plant, and June's worried she could lose hers, too. And if June loses her job, she'll have to move in with us, and sleep in my room, and I'll have to sleep out in the doghouse with Old Watch. So, I need a job!

CLOVIS. What could you do?

BUDDY. I could count peanuts. Every morning, I could see how many peanuts you have in the barrel and then when people eat them, they could pay a penny apiece and I could collect the money!

CLOVIS. Peanuts are free.

BUDDY. Then how are you going to pay me?

CLOVIS. Let's just hope June doesn't lose her job.

BUDDY. I'm going back to the spotter's post. If my momma comes, promise you won't tell her I'm here?

CLOVIS. If she asks me, I'm telling her you're up there!

BUDDY. But, Mr. Eudy, it's Monday and every Monday she makes me go to the war office in Jonesboro and we check the lists to see if Ricky's name is there. Last week they told her that soldiers named Ricks was discharged to Alabama, Indiana and Ohio, but none to Illinois!

CLOVIS. How's she holding up?

BUDDY. She cries almost every night. I hear her through the wall. I don't know what to do. If I talk about Ricky, it makes her sad and if I don't, it makes her mad.

CLOVIS. Just do what you can.

BUDDY. I tell her, "Ricky's not lost! He's somewhere; the Army just doesn't know where." I saw this newsreel of soldiers coming back from Iwo Jima and I swear one of them looked just like Ricky.

CLOVIS. Come here, Buddy.

*(CLOVIS leads BUDDY to the map.)*

CLOVIS *(cont'd)*. Now, here ... this is Belgium, where Ricky was in the Battle of the Bulge. And way over here, this is Iwo Jima. Now, what do you think?

BUDDY *(changing the subject)*. Can we do an aircraft drill again today?

CLOVIS. Buddy, you've got all those planes memorized backwards and forwards. Besides, the Civil Air Patrol says we won't be needing to do drills anymore.

*(There is the sound of barking in the spotter's post.)*

CLOVIS *(cont'd)*. Buddy, you left that dog up there all alone!

*(BUDDY grabs the long handled spoon and runs up the ladder.)*

BUDDY. I told you, Old Watch is a good dog ...

*(BUDDY disappears through the trap door.)*

BUDDY *(cont'd)*. Oh, NO! Old Watch! Bad dog! Bad dog!

CLOVIS. What did he do?

BUDDY. Nothin'!

CLOVIS. Did that dog make a mess in my spotter's post?

BUDDY. Uhhh, nope! No mess up here. Not anymore!

*(BUDDY can be seen catapulting something out of the spotter's post with the spoon.)*

BUDDY *(cont'd)*. Bombs away!

*(JUNE enters.)*

JUNE. Mr. Eudy, what's that flying off the roof of your store?

CLOVIS. You don't even want to know, June.

JUNE. Is Buddy here?

CLOVIS (*simultaneously*). Yes?

BUDDY (*simultaneously*). NO!

JUNE. Buddy, are you going to Jonesboro with your mamma this morning?

BUDDY. Not if I can help it.

(*BUDDY scrambles down the ladder.*)

JUNE. Come on, Buddy, she needs someone to go with her. She's always so sad when she comes back.

BUDDY. Hey, June, my scout troop is doing another scrap drive. You got any nylon stockings, rubber girdles, bacon grease, tin foil or shovels?

JUNE. I don't think so.

BUDDY. Franklin Delano Roosevelt himself says that you can turn your old junk into fighting weapons: 200 nylon stocking and 36 girdles can make 50 powder bags, a pound of bacon grease makes enough ammo for 30 bullets and one old shovel will help make four hand grenades!

JUNE. I don't eat bacon, I don't have an old shovel and I doubt seriously that the president of the United States is interested in my underwear.

BUDDY. He is! He says EVERY citizen must do his part, no matter how small!

JUNE. Buddy, I've got something important to ask you. Were you sneaking around my house in the middle of the night?

BUDDY. Why would I do something like that?

JUNE. I got home from the night shift at the factory dead tired at about midnight, and I woke up at 2 a.m. and I swear someone was watching me through my bedroom window.